

Series - Revamp

Date/s - 17 September 2017

Topic - What does Jesus mean to you?

Speaker/s - Senior Pastor Lionel Goh

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < [go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS](#) >

Worship [15 min]

You may select songs like “You Are Good”, “One Thing Remains”, “God I Look To You” or “My God Reigns”

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Understand that our heart posture matters with God's leading in our lives
2. Commit to take practical steps to break free from Cynicism and Criticism and move up the “virtuous spiritual cycle”.

Word [45 min]

Pastor Lionel started by recapping why a spiritual revamp is timely at this juncture. At both a personal and corporate level, we as Riverlifers/Riverlife church are not in the best of spiritual health. As God wants to involve us in a fresh season of ministry soon, we need to break free from the ropes that tie us down, namely: 1) the Rope of Consumerism and Non-commitment; 2) the Rope of Complacency and Compromise; and 3) the Rope of Cynicism and Criticism.

Pastor Lionel then expounded on the Rope of Cynicism and Criticism. He shared that “cynicism” is the feeling of distrust; that something is not going to work out well. It is synonymous with skepticism, doubt, unbelief and suspicion. “Criticism”, is the expression of disapproval of someone or something based on perceived faults or mistakes. It also means censure, disparagement and fault-finding. Pastor Lionel shared that the root causes of both cynicism and criticism are pride, unbelief and distrust. For example, a cynical believer thinks that he has heard many such messages preached countless times before, so there is nothing new. A critical believer thinks that he is able to do a better job leading, preaching or organizing compared to his leaders.

Pastor Lionel next shared about the destructive power of unbelief, cynicism and criticism, from the passage of Numbers 13:26-14:35. When the destructive power of cynicism and criticism was unleashed through the dismal report of the majority, it demoralized the entire community of the Israelites, bringing about hopelessness, fear and despair. It also caused people to lose faith in God and His promises, instigating them to rebel against God's appointed leaders. Unfortunately, it ultimately brought God's judgment on Israel as a nation and the ten cynical leaders, preventing Israel from fulfilling God's agenda for 40 years. As can be seen, the Rope of Cynicism and Criticism can immobilise us from entering God's fresh season of ministry!

Pastor Lionel then taught from Luke 7:36-50. The sinful woman was remorseful, contrite and grateful. She showed great devotion to Jesus, washing His feet with tears and drying them with her hair. She also anointed Jesus' feet with expensive perfume, and could not stop receiving Jesus' love and forgiveness. Simon on the other hand, though a leading citizen, was a self-righteous and proud legalist. He was skeptical about Jesus' real identity and had little honour for Jesus. As such he did not wash Jesus feet, neither did he anoint Jesus with oil

- instead, he was busy looking for opportunities to find fault with Jesus. Unlike the sinful woman who loved Jesus dearly, Simon could not love Jesus at all. Pastor Lionel drew out the following principles from this account:

a) The sinful woman was able to receive love, forgiveness and restoration from Jesus because:

- She honoured Jesus with her expensive gift and extravagant devotion;
- Her heart was humble and contrite; and
- She knew she desperately needed God's love and mercy to forgive her many sins.

b) Simon was unable to receive any love and forgiveness from Jesus because;

- He was doubtful about Jesus' identity as God's Prophet - Cynicism;
- He gave no proper honour to Jesus as his guest - Pride; and
- He was too busy looking for faults to appreciate Jesus' ministry- Critical spirit.

Pastor Lionel concluded with the exhortation to remember an important principle: the posture of our heart determines how real and close God is to us. **Only a personal encounter with Christ can set us free from the Rope of Cynicism and Criticism.** It helps us break free of the "vicious spiritual cycle" (i.e. Unbelief → Cynicism → passivity → critical spirit), and move up the "virtuous spiritual cycle" (i.e. God's love → gratitude and thankfulness → service and sacrifice → worship and devotion).

As we walk with God intentionally, may He become more and more real and close to us!

Discussion Questions

1. **Pastor Lionel shared his observation that today's society is growing increasingly abrasive. He cited in particular the character assassinations engaged in by news agencies and the press, who dwell inordinately on and magnify the flaws of various political figures. What are some other ways that the society encourages criticism/cynicism? Do you think society over-emphasizes fault-finding (which could encourage criticism if taken to the extreme) and "fact-checking" (which breeds cynicism if excessive)?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: *This is a recap and ice-breaking question for cell members to share behavioral patterns of unhealthy criticism/cynicism (either from culture or their own upbringing) which they may have been exposed to. If time permits, have the cell discuss the difference between destructive criticism and constructive feedback - are we guilty of conflating these two concepts? The only criticism that is ever constructive is that which speaks the truth in love (Ephesians 4:5), to build up or edify another person for his or her good and for God's glory. "There is a great man who makes every man feel small. But the real great man is the man who makes every man feels great." (GK Chesterton)*

2. **Pastor Lionel shared about the destructive power of unbelief, cynicism and criticism from the passage of Numbers 13:26-14:35. Because of their rebellion against the Lord, an entire generation failed to enter into the Promised Land. What is one experience or some personal promises God has given to you, which you struggle to claim because cynicism and/or a critical spirit has seeped in and affected your faith?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: *A relate question. Cynicism and Criticism immobilize us from entering God's fresh season of ministry, by preventing us from seeing with eyes of faith on how God can perform His miracles and fulfill His Word. This question allows members to identify and share deeper on some areas in their walk with God where cynicism and/or criticism has become 'acceptable' stronghold in their lives, and how it may be preventing them from achieving breakthrough.*

3. **Read the account of Jesus in Luke 7:36-50. It shows the different responses of two sinners, as determined by the posture of their hearts. He who is forgiven much, loves much while he who is forgiven little, loves little. What might be the inner posture of the “sinful woman” and the leading citizen, Simon? What is your heart attitude towards God like recently?** [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: *A reflect question. Are we like the “sinful” woman”, loving Jesus deeply because we are lowly in heart and ever-conscious of our great need for mercy? Or are we like Simon, prideful with a critical and cynical spirit, not recognizing our need for a Saviour and thus not loving Jesus? Have members explore their daily posture of their hearts, and assess their relationship with Jesus in light of this account. This question allows members to share about the condition of their spiritual walks, and understand the direct correlation between the posture of their hearts and their intimacy with God.*

4. **C.T Studd, a renowned missionary who founded WEC (Worldwide Evangelisation for Christ) came from an affluent background and was a man of many talents. He however walked away from all of these to serve God at a great cost to himself because he had a personal revelation of the deep love of God for him. (“If Jesus Christ be God and died for me, then no sacrifice can be too great for me to make for Him.”)**

List some practical steps we can take to deepen our daily walk with the Lord. How can we avoid the vicious spiritual cycle, and instead move up the virtuous spiritual cycle? [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: *This is a response question. Have members brainstorm concrete ways they can deepen their personal walk with God, and to which they can commit to. The sermon outline provides some suggestions as follows:*

Come before God and ask Him to examine your heart.

- *Acknowledge our need for Him*
- *Ask God to show us if there are sins, attitudes and lifestyles that we need to repent from*
- *Seek the Lord for forgiveness and turn from these sins and evil ways*
- *Ask God to give us a new revelation of His love for us*

Take action steps as a cell community.

- *Fast a meal a day for 40 days starting 25 Sept*
- *Pray as a cell for our individual and cell spiritual renewal*
- *Come for a special “Fast & Pray” gathering on Fri, Oct 20, 8pm at Worship Centre*

Live out our faith.

- *Ask God to awaken our spirits to hear His prompting. Obey Him when He speaks. Walk in step with the Holy Spirit on a daily basis*
- *Go out into our marketplace, schools, and homes, and share the love of Christ with others*

Leaders may get members to break into small groups to share more and if time permits and to pray for one another for specific action steps that they can commit to.

Works [10 min]

1. Be involved as a cell group to participate in the Church’s call to:
 - Fast a meal a day for 40 days starting 25 Sept
 - Pray as a cell for our individual and cell spiritual renewal
 - Come for a special “Fast & Pray” gathering on Fri, Oct 20, 8pm at Worship Centre

Announcements

1. **Water Baptism Class Sat, 30 Sep | 9.30am-3.30pm | Faith Chapel**
Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 24 Sep. For enquiries, please contact Clara Tan at 65114160 or email her at claratan@riverlife.org.sg. Our next baptism service will be on Sun, 5 Nov.
2. **EA Leaders' Retreat, 10-12 Nov 2017, KSL Resort**
Online Registration @ <https://riverlife.churchretreat.com.sg>
Closing date for registration and payment is 15 Oct (Sunday)
3. **RTF Module 1B for Leaders – Growing in Wholeness Issue-Focused Activation Seminar**
Oct 5 to 7, (Thur : 7.30pm to 10pm, Fri: 8.30am to 7pm, Sat: 8.30am to 7pm)
Sign-up at Info Counter on Sun.
Any queries, please email Anita at anitacheok@riverlife.org.sg or tel. 65114111.