

Series - Be Wise

Date/s - 2 June 2019

Topic - How Can We Stop The Spirit Of Division In The Church
(1 Corinthians 3:1-17)

Speaker - 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 "Here I Bow", "What A Beautiful Name", "Overcome" or "All Hail King Jesus".

Spiritual Objectives

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

1. Understand what causes the spirit of division in the Church;
2. Commit to stop the spirit of division in the Church; and
3. Commit to preserve the bond of unity in the Church.

Word [45 min]

Pastor Lionel opened his sermon by sharing from John 17:21, which exhorts the importance of unity between Christ-followers.

The Corinthian Church had a serious problem of division, among its members. This division was largely caused by:

- Exalting human wisdom (1:20-21)
- Exalting human leaders (1:12, 3:4)

Because of their divisiveness, Paul considered the Corinthian believers to be childish, worldly and carnal – see 1 Cor 3:1-4. Paul understood the serious damage that division could inflict upon the Church. So he urged them to stop this spirit of division from festering.

Pastor Lionel then shared three ways we can stop the spirit of division in the Church:

- First, by recognising that our church leaders are mere servants of God (3:5-9). Pastor Lionel shared further that the Church must never divide over human leaders! They are simply God's servants, working together and fulfilling His purpose - it is God whom we should focus on.
 - a. God assigns each leader to perform a specific task (3:5-6)
 - b. All of God's servants work together to serve His purpose (3:8-9)
 - c. God's sovereignty decides on how each ministry will grow (3:6-7)
- Second, by focusing on building God's Church (3:10-15).
 - a. Every believer is called to build God's Church (3:10-11, Eph 4:11-12)
 - b. Each builder has to decide how he will build (3:12-13). There is the wise builder, and the foolish builder. We build with quality material by serving with a pure motive (1 Cor 4:5) and the right conduct (2 Cor 5:10).
 - c. We will receive God's rewards for all eternity according to the quality of our work

(3:14-15).

- Third, by refusing to engage in destructive behaviour (3:16-17), lest the Lord disciplines us. We must remember that we are God's temple- God's Holy Spirit lives in us, making His Temple holy.
 - a. There are destructive people who seek to harm the Church (Rom 16:17-18, Rev 2:20)
 - b. Jesus loves His Church deeply (Eph 5:25-27). He will never allow anyone to harm His Bride, without coming to her defence and punishing her assailant.
 - c. Paul warned the Corinthians not to follow divisive people and harm the Church, because God will destroy those who seek to destroy His Church (3:17, Rev 2:20-23).

Pastor Lionel concluded his sermon with a call for us to seek God on our gifts and talents, and use them to serve God's church in RiverLife.

Discussion Questions

1. **What are some controversial issues in the Church today, which tends to stir up a divisiveness amongst its members?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: *This is a ice-breaking question. Members can spend some time discussing how factions can form along fault-lines amongst any group of believers in today's culture, resulting in in-fighting, confusion and divisiveness. Some ideological and doctrinal fault-lines include our stance against gay marriages, whether Christians can drink alcohol, if the charismatic gifts are biblical, "super-star" pastors, if women are permitted to preach, if pastors should politicize in their pulpit messages, etc. Quoting from a German Lutheran theologian from the seventeenth century, "In Essentials Unity, In Non-Essentials Liberty, In All Things Charity." It calls for unity on the essential things, the core of truth in our union with Christ. In non-essentials (not the unimportant, but those things that if lacking do not prevent our union with Christ), it calls for liberty so that all might follow their consciences under the Word and Spirit. In all things, however, there must be love ("charity" from the Latin caritas, or "love"), "which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col 3:14). Please see the following article for further discussion on this: <https://bit.ly/2Wbc1nj>*

The take-away here is to recognise that in our increasingly complex culture where discourse is becoming highly polarized, discernment is necessary. We should be compelled to pray for God's wisdom on how to maintain unity within our own churches and across denominations.

2. **Read through 1 Corinthians 3:5-9. What truths can we learn from this passage, about God and about human leadership, that will result in humility and boasting in the Lord Jesus, and not in man?** [10 min]

Leader's Notes: *A relate question. We learn from Pastor Lionel's sermon that the Corinth church had unwittingly given in to a partisan spirit, and starting splintering off into factions ordered around their preferred preacher. While the Apostle Paul founded the Corinth church and was credited with bringing many to the faith, and though he was strong in teaching doctrines and God's revealed truths, he was recorded in Scriptures to be weak and unimpressive in person and speech (2 Cor 10:10). The preacher Apollos, however, ministered in Corinth after Paul's departure, and was an eloquent and powerful preacher. He was known to be a great defender of the Christian faith, and was appreciated by many for his boldness and charisma.*

From verses 5 to 9, we find Paul repeatedly highlighting, that Paul and Apollos are not saviours. They are not the source of power. They are not God. They are merely servants- stewards of God's grace, to build up His church, and each of them belong to God. It is God who is supreme in planting and watering, in causing

faith and giving the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:21–23 provides a fitting response: “So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

3. **In the ways you spend your time and resources, have you been more like the wise builder, or the foolish builder? What are some struggles preventing you from building with quality materials and serving with the right conduct?** [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: *A reflect question. Pastor Lionel shared that there are two kinds of builders- wise, and foolish. The wise builder builds with quality materials: Gold, silver, jewels. His or her work survives God’s testing and has eternal value. He or she will receive God’s reward and commendation for all eternity. On the other hand, the foolish builder builds with inferior materials: wood, hay and straw. His or her work does not survive God’s testing, but gets burnt up. He or she remains saved, but misses out on God’s rewards for all eternity.*

Members can break into small groups to share about where they are at in their ministry journey, and examine their hearts for any wrong attitudes. Some barriers to ministry may be the lack of conviction, or wrong mind-sets or priorities. It is also all too easy to serve with the wrong conduct and motivations e.g. out of vainglory, or striving. We may also be guilty of comparing ourselves to, and judging fellow believers who are in ministry, when the truth of the matter is that only God can judge and reward all of us accordingly.

We should remember that we are merely stewards of the gifts which God has blessed us with, and fellow-workers in the harvest field - let’s run this race with focus, and live for the “well-done, good and faithful servant” when we see Him again.

4. **Read 1 Cor 3:10-11 and Eph 4:11-12. God has called every believer to build His Church! What are some steps you can personally take to build the Church, both in RiverLife and beyond?**

Leader’s Notes: *A response question. Ps Lionel Goh exhorted that we repent of ways that may have caused a spirit of division in the Church. Members can commit on practical ways to stop a spirit of division to grow in the Church.*

Ps Lionel also encouraged those among us who have yet to step up to serve in a Ministry to start serving. Knowing the biblical motivation for serving, we can now think of ministry in terms of stewardship. The body of Christ has different parts with different gifts (1 Cor 12:4-8). It may be helpful for leaders to get members who have been serving long-term ministry in church ministry, to share with the group how they made their decision to first start serving, as well as the ups and down in the journey thus far - these stories may encourage younger believers, and also those who are hesitant to commit.

If time allows, members can also pray corporately for wisdom for our leadership, as they seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit in preserving the spirit of unity both within Riverlife and with the local Church body, and working together to order the Church as God leads through the Holy Spirit.

Works [10 min]

Let’s pray:

1. We will always seek to maintain peace and unity in RiverLife.

Announcements

1. Filipino Combined Service

**Reflecting His Glory (Speaker: Pastor Tony Lee)
Sun, 9 Jun | 2pm | Victory Chapel**

Great opportunity to invite your Filipino colleagues and their families, as well as domestic helper to come experience the love of Christ and gather in community with others from their hometown. There will be a time of fellowship over tea reception after service

2. SPYCES

Suns, 30 Jun – 28 Jul | 1:45 – 5.00pm | Faith Chapel

Spiritual Parenting Of Young Couples. Register at the Information Counter by 16 June 2019. For enquiries, please contact Christine Tan at 65114141 or email her at christinetan@riverlife.org.sg.

3. Forum on Sexuality

Sun, 23 Jun | 2-4.30pm | Worship Centre

Register online via bit.ly/rlc-23jun-forum or at the Information Counter (Level 1). You may purchase lunch coupons at \$5 each at the Information Counter.

Church Vision:

“A radiant disciple-making church catalysing Kingdom transformation in our communities and the nations.”

Mission:

We exist to make disciples who behold Christ and reveal Him.