

WELCOME (15minutes)

Choose one of the following icebreakers:

(If you have first-time guests, begin with a round of introduction and warmly welcome the new visitors.)

1. STRING-STRANG-STRUNG

Tools needed: 2-3 small and short ropes/strings of different colours

- Get everyone to sit in a circle. Pass the ropes/strings to different people in the circle.
- When the game starts, the person who has a rope/string is supposed to tie 2 knots, and untie them quickly.
- If they are the first person to finish that action, they will have to shout "STRING" and pass the rope/string to the next person.
- At the other end of the circle, another rope/string is being tied and untied by another person, and if they are the second person, they will have to shout "STRUNG" and pass the rope/string to the next person
- For e.g. In a group of 5 (A-B-C-D-E), if Person A has ROPE1, and Person D has ROPE2, both persons A and D have to tie 2 knots on their rope and untie it.
- If Person A completed the action first, he will have to shout "STRING" and pass ROPE1 to person B
- If Person D complete the action next, he will have to shout "STRUNG" and pass ROPE2 to person E
- The cycle continues

2. Mr and Mrs Wright

Get everyone to stand or to sit in a circle. A story will be read out, if the word "right" is mentioned, everyone to turn their heads to the right. If the word "left" is mentioned, everyone to turn their heads to the left. (Note: Wright is not right)

Story:

This is the story about Mr and Mrs Wright

One evening Mrs Wright exclaimed, oh no there is no more flour LEFT!"

She shouted "Wright! There is no flour LEFT! I will need you to head RIGHT out to get some!"

Mr Wright went RIGHT down to the store and when he reached, he asked the clerk where he could find some flour. The clerk replied him, "Go straight, make one RIGHT turn, walk ahead two rows and make another RIGHT turn, the flour will be on the floor on your LEFT just RIGHT beside the sugar.

Mr Wright quickly bought the flour and returned to the car, only to realize he LEFT the flour at the store. He rushed RIGHT back to the store and then RIGHT back to the car and back home.

When he finally got home Mr Wright sighed in exhaustion, "I have no energy LEFT, and I am going RIGHT to bed."

Transition to Worship:

The cell group is a place where we learn how to love one another and we can be sure that this is the RIGHT community that God has placed us in. Because we have a God that first pursued us in His great love, we too can learn how to love each other and love God together. Let us put aside our worries and let's focus our hearts and minds on worshipping Him and let's declare God's awesome presence in this place!

WORSHIP (20 minutes)

You may use the following suggested worship songs:

- 1) Awesome In This Place – Hillsong (D)
- 2) Forever Reign (D)
- 3) Worthy Is the Lamb (G)
- 4) Living Hope (A)

Do give some time to wait upon the Lord for the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Encourage the release of the gifts of the Holy Spirit - words, visions, tongues and interpretation of tongues - to minister to the people who are present.

Transition to Word:

Heavenly Father, we thank You that we can always rely on you whenever we feel that all hope is lost. May our hearts always be open and sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and may we obey and apply Your Word in our daily lives. Help us grow to be more and more like you. In Jesus name! Amen.

WORD (45minutes)

Memory verse of the week: Psalm 119:1

Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD.

Sermon Title: The God Who Pursues

By Rev. Daniel Khong

on 7 - 8 Sept 2019

Scripture Passage: Jonah 1:1-17 (NIVUK)

¹ The LORD gave this message to Jonah son of Amittai: ² “Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh. Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are.”

³ But Jonah got up and went in the opposite direction to get away from the LORD. He went down to the port of Joppa, where he found a ship leaving for Tarshish. He bought a ticket and went on board, hoping to escape from the LORD by sailing to Tarshish.

⁴ But the LORD hurled a powerful wind over the sea, causing a violent storm that threatened to break the ship apart. ⁵ Fearing for their lives, the desperate sailors shouted to their gods for help and threw the cargo overboard to lighten the ship.

But all this time Jonah was sound asleep down in the hold. ⁶ So the captain went down after him. “How can you sleep at a time like this?” he shouted. “Get up and pray to your god! Maybe he will pay attention to us and spare our lives.”

⁷ Then the crew cast lots to see which of them had offended the gods and caused the terrible storm. When they did this, the lots identified Jonah as the culprit. ⁸ “Why has this awful storm come down on us?” they demanded. “Who are you? What is your line of work? What country are you from? What is your nationality?”

⁹ Jonah answered, “I am a Hebrew, and I worship the LORD, the God of heaven, who made the sea and the land.”

¹⁰ The sailors were terrified when they heard this, for he had already told them he was running away from the LORD. “Oh, why did you do it?” they groaned. ¹¹ And since the storm was getting worse all the time, they asked him, “What should we do to you to stop this storm?”

¹² “Throw me into the sea,” Jonah said, “and it will become calm again. I know that this terrible storm is all my fault.”

¹³ Instead, the sailors rowed even harder to get the ship to the land. But the stormy sea was too violent for them, and they couldn't make it. ¹⁴ Then they cried out to the LORD, Jonah's God. "O LORD," they pleaded, "don't make us die for this man's sin. And don't hold us responsible for his death. O LORD, you have sent this storm upon him for your own good reasons."
¹⁵ Then the sailors picked Jonah up and threw him into the raging sea, and the storm stopped at once! ¹⁶ The sailors were awestruck by the LORD's great power, and they offered him a sacrifice and vowed to serve him.
¹⁷ ^[a] Now the LORD had arranged for a great fish to swallow Jonah. And Jonah was inside the fish for three days and three nights.

Introduction

This is the start of a 3-week sermon series where we will explore the book of Jonah. The book of Jonah is more than just an interesting story about a big fish that is taught at Sunday school.

The book of Jonah is a historical account where God gave a specific instruction to the prophet to go to the city of Nineveh. However, Jonah did not obey and tried to "get away from the Lord". Despite that, God continued to pursue after Jonah relentlessly.

Why would God, the almighty creator of the Heavens and the Earth, the almighty and powerful God and all of His splendor, choose to pursue us?

- 1. God is Patient with us**
- 2. God is Yearning for us**

Discovery and Understanding Questions:

Q1. What did God want Jonah to do? And how did he respond?

A1. God wanted Jonah to go to the city of Nineveh and announce his judgement against it. Nineveh however, was a terrible place and was filled with godlessness and idolatry and it was probably a place that Jonah did not want to have to step into. Needless to say, to proclaim God's judgement to the people there, he probably wouldn't be treated very kindly.

Instead of heeding God's call, Jonah chose to run away from God.

Jonah 1:3 (NKJV)

³ But Jonah arose to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. He went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish; so he paid the fare, and went down into it, to go with them to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord.

Jonah did not have the love and the patience for the people of Nineveh. He wasn't interested in doing something where his efforts aren't reciprocated. Perhaps he even wanted the city of Nineveh to be destroyed.

Jonah 4:1-2 (NKJV)

¹ But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he became angry. ² So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You *are* a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm.

Jonah knew about the character and nature of God. Part of the reason why he did not wish to go to Nineveh was because he did not think that Nineveh deserved this mercy.

Q2. If the City of Nineveh was so sinful, why would God show mercy to it?

A2. We need to first understand that, that's just the very nature and character of God! God is the Heavenly Father that is immensely patient.

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

The city of Nineveh is a city that is extremely far from God. Jonah could not accept this and couldn't understand why God would go through such a great extent for such a godless place.

Isaiah 55:9 (NKJV)

⁹ "For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

It baffles us, it is something we cannot understand. But the word of God reminds us that God's ways are higher than our understanding and what we seek out to do.

John 3:1 (NKJV)

¹ "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!.

The heart and love of God is one that is that of a Father. As a Father, God deeply loves the city of Nineveh and pursues them – even though He knew the state that they were in. He is the Heavenly Father that longs for us to turn from our wicked ways and return to Him.

Application Questions:

Break into smaller groups, share, pray and minister to one another.

Q1. Is there a "Nineveh" that the Lord is asking you to go to? After receiving instruction from God, do we obey or do we run away?

Q2. How much are you able to accept and receive this phrase "God is the perfect Heavenly Father who deeply loves and pursues you"? Is there something that is preventing you from fully accepting and loving yourself, knowing that God is in constant pursuit of you?

Transition to Works:

²² "But prove yourselves **doers** of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. ²³ For if anyone is a hearer of the word and **not a doer**, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; ²⁴ for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. ²⁵ But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an **effectual doer**, this man **will be blessed** in what he does." – James 1:22-25

WORKS (15minutes)

1. Happiness Group (幸福小组)

Wave 1 Happiness Group (Pilot Launch) – Press on with the consolidation of your BESTs. Continue to build relationship and encourage them to attend our weekend Services. Challenge them to get baptized and sign them up for the next baptism. To download baptism forms, click on this URL link: www.fcbc.org.sg/pastoral-care/baptism.

Wave 2 Happiness Group (19 Aug to 24 Nov) – Press on with the rest of the 8 sessions as you step up prayers and believe God. Pray that your BESTs will return for the remaining sessions. Set aside time to de-brief after each XFXZ session to do better. Continue to connect with other BESTs to invite them even in the midst of those 8 sessions.

2. 3x3 Prayer

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the strongholds that bind the people. Ask Him to set up divine appointments for us to minister His power over them (words of knowledge, healing, helps, etc.). Pray for one another to have boldness, courage and obedience to follow through.

3. Inviting Friends to our Services

Continue to encourage one another to invite pre-believing friends to our weekend Services. Make time to listen to ‘The Voice of God’ for prophetic utterances that speak to our pre-believing friends’ circumstances as a prelude to inviting them. In addition, take some time to discuss, plan an activity and pray toward achieving the goal you have set as a cell.

4. Consolidation of New Converts

Assimilate them! Let them have a sense of belonging with our faith community! Connect with them via phone calls; meet up with them over a meal; make home visits; introduce them to cell members and invite them to fellowship with our faith community in cell and in church.

Disciple them! Introduce them to **LifeClass! LifeClass** is an exciting package of equipping that guides new believers through the foundations of their faith and leads them into a life-transforming encounter with Jesus. It does this through nine weeks of personal study, combined with fun and interactive classroom sessions of Bible teaching and an Encounter Weekend. Please check out the Equipping page at our website or Mobile App.

Visit <https://fcbc.org.sg/equipping/event-listing> for more details.

Announcements:

Please visit <https://www.fcbc.org.sg/bulletin/> or our FCBC App for more details.