

Verse: Jeremiah 12:5

### Background

The prophet, Jeremiah, was called by the Lord to condemn Judah of her sins and to predict her downfall. He had to contend with idolatries and wicked priests. In the process, he became very discouraged and asked the Lord, "Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why are they happy?" Jeremiah 12:1. The Lord replied him in Jeremiah 12:5.

### *Jeremiah 12:5*

*If you have run with the footmen, and they have wearied you, then how can you contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, in which you trusted, they wearied you, then how will you do in the floodplain of the Jordan? (NKJV)*

What does it mean to be running with footmen and horses? It is about being faithful in little and then in much. (Luke 16:10.)

It is about momentum. We cannot stop growing. We may backslide but we ought to keep going. It is about the core value of 'no condemnation, comparison but encouragement.' It is about not looking at someone on the left and right. Our church's vision is: "To share Christ as we mature in Him." This message is about maturing. Romans 8:29 tells us to conform to the image of His Son. Ephesians 2:10 says we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works. They are two sides of the same coin. We are to influence, impact and bless those who come across our pathways.

What does running with footmen mean? It is doing something well within our capacity and ability and yet feeling wearied, tired and worn out! We serve but are offended and we grumble about leaders; we criticise pulpit messages or we have constant quarrels with our spouse. Otherwise, we have frequent relational conflicts with others.

What happens if a situation arises and we are not able to congregate and worship? How will we organise ourselves? What happens if a tsunami hits Singapore? What we have learnt cannot remain in theory anymore. Recently a team on mission trip hit a storm. They rebuked the rain clouds and the rain gradually subsided. Over here, we are comfortable, we hear the word but scriptures are of no value if not applied.

Although there will be times when there is no choice, how we run is mostly a personal choice. We exercise a choice to arise when something happens in the office. A pastor shared about his previous experience with the IT industry. He joined a company where the computers and systems used were breaking down. He was the boss of the IT department and he asked his staff to call on their gods and then gathering them back, he told them he would round up with a prayer in Jesus' name. After that, the systems functioned without problems for the next two and half years. One of his staff who left the company and joined another encountered similar problems and he did what his ex-boss did. The systems went on fine as well! God does hear the prayers of the unbelievers. See Acts 17. We need to be led by the Spirit and be priests and kings.

A quick review about suffering as this question pops up again.

All suffering by a believer is a trial of his faith.

1. We suffer because we live in a fallen world. Regarding this, we have no choice.
2. We suffer due to our own faults. This happens when we make wrong choices.
3. We suffer for righteousness sake. This is the right choice with regards to suffering.

God is not glorified in all our sufferings. If we are to suffer, it is only for Christ and for sake of righteousness.

### **Running with Horses**

We must grow and develop the whole person. How? 1 Thessalonians talks about the body, soul and spirit.

*1 Thessalonians 5:23*

*Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

God wants all our capacities to be whole and blameless.

1. Physical capacity
2. Mental capacity
3. Emotional capacity
4. Volitional capacity
5. Spiritual capacity

We need to protect them from leakages. We need to strengthen and enlarge them in order to run with horses.

#### **1. Physical capacity**

1. We need to desire to intentionally walk in divine healing, health and life.
2. We need to pay attention to our diet, having rest and sleep and doing exercise.

We need to pray the Word to walk in divine healing, health and life. This will greatly help us run with horses. We also need to pay attention to our relationships. Being godly does not exempt us from making efforts to develop good and healthy relationships. We need to be in a healthy relationship in our roles as a son, a father, a colleague, a friend, a sister, a CG leader, daughter, employee, etc. That we are in a ministry serving God doesn't excuse us from taking care of our home and loved ones. We start with home and then with the household of God.

#### **2. Mental capacity**

1. This is our thinking and our cognitivity.
2. This is our world of thoughts, ideas, propositions, suggestions, etc. When someone has a dream, it is good to ask the Holy Spirit to unpack it and to have the wisdom to apply it.
3. This is the faculty that must move from knowledge (facts) to understanding (clarity) to wisdom (to know how to respond and decide).
4. Our mind, i.e. thought life must be centred in God. It must be renewed. Is 26:3
5. Our thought life must be surrendered to God, i.e. our minds must be renewed.

We need to ask questions that have been asked before, e.g.

- Can what happened to Job happens to you?
- Why is XYZ still sick?
- Why is the physical manifestation of the Holy Spirit so messy?

We are not to follow blindly and that calls for a renewed mind. See Romans 8:5 and Romans 12:1.

### **3. Emotional Capacity**

1. We need to know our emotional make-up
2. We must strive to be emotionally healthy.
3. To run with horses, our natural response must be surrendered to the Holy Spirit.

If we are prone to outbursts of wrath, bad language, etc, we need to do something about it. When it comes to our emotional make-up, we have mood swings. Sometimes, we felt God was there in the church because we were warmly welcome and besides the worship was good. Otherwise, if it happened on a day that we were not well greeted or that the songs didn't quite match our preference, we felt God was far away. The reality is God has always been there. We need to bring feelings under the authority of the Holy Spirit and allow Him to tamper and mould us. The emotional response is the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We must be surrendered to the Holy Spirit. We will then not be easily stressed out. We can then handle stress, anxiety and fear. This will greatly help us to run with horses.

Question: What can you be working on so that you will not be easily offended and hurt.

### **4. Our Will – Volitional Capacity**

1. This will be the culmination of our mind (How we think and process information) and our emotions (how we feel about them)

Many people make foolish decisions arising from hurts and biasness and from wisdom that is not from God. We make decisions not according to the word, will and ways of God.

2. We need to seek the wisdom from God to respond and make an enlightened decision.

*Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

*James 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.*

Our will must be aligned with God. We then have the knowledge, spiritual wisdom and spiritual understanding to make correct enlightened decision and choices.

## 5. Our Spiritual Capacity

1. To grow spiritually is to grow in our spirit-man.

*Ephesians 3:16*

*that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man ...*

2. There are 3 main functions of our spirit-man:

- a. Our relationship with God
- b. Our conscience
- c. Our discernment

When our spirit-man is strong, we will be overcomers in life! We overcome the evil one who is a liar and condemner. We need to wield the sword against him. We need to overcome the pull of the world and not going after labels, banded stuff. If we are obsessed by possessions, we are no different from the world. By strengthening our inner life, we can run with horses.

### **How to strengthen our spiritual capacities? How to build relationship with God?**

We must develop disciplines in the following 3 areas:

1. Build our altar of thanksgiving, praise and worship.

- a. The essence of thanksgiving is a grateful heart.

*Romans 1:21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.*

Gratefulness is the beginning of wisdom. We are grateful there is always forgiveness. We can always come to God while we are still alive and before the Lord returns.

- b. The essence of praise is to know God.

*Hebrews 13:15 Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. (NIV)*

This year, let's resolve to increase our praise vocabulary, sing and praise, praise and sing. Senior Pastor shared how he has been compiling the names of Jesus.

- c. The essence of worship is surrender.

*Romans 12:1*

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*

## 2. Intake of the Word

Like the 5 fingers, we do five things:

- Hear
- Read
- Study
- Memorize
- Meditate

- a. We must intentionally partake the Word regularly
- b. We pay attention whenever we hear God speaks to us personally (rhema)
- c. Keep a journal

*Proverbs 4:20*

*My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. 21 Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; 22 for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.*

When you partake the word, it is health to your body. It is of no use if we don't believe. We need to take God at His word. Always hear the word from a posture of how you would teach and pass it on. Always listen and partake from the posture to explain it and pass it on. See Ezra 7:10

*Ezra 7:10*

*For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.*

## 3. Develop your prayer-communion

*2 Corinthians 4:13 And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak ...*

Whenever in pain, trials and struggles, look to the Word from God and no allow your situation to choke the seed of the Word.

*2 Corinthians 1:20*

*For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*

'Amen' mans 'so let it be.' God is not a man that he should lie. Declare what the scriptures declare. Declare, "I'm deeply loved."; "I'm completely forgiven."; "I am always protected in Christ." Say what the bible says. Pray the Word.

A church pastor got his church to read a book, 'Radical' and thereafter as goals for 2012, he challenged them to do a few things, listed as below:

1. Increase your giving.

Perhaps you can consider increasing giving by 1%.

2. Serve and give yourself to a cause.

What is one area that you can serve this year?

3. Pray for the nations/world – Joshua Project.

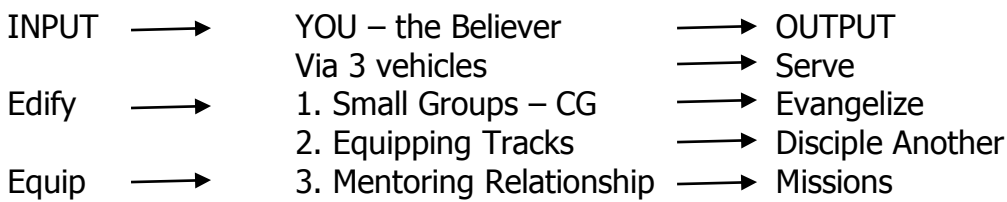
We don't always have to be focusing on praying about our needs. We can be praying for a nation. We can google and get a guide to pray for the nations. Otherwise, we can pray for the nations where our missionaries are located.

4. Read the Bible in a year.

We can cover the Bible by just spending 10-15mins to read 4-5 chapters a day.

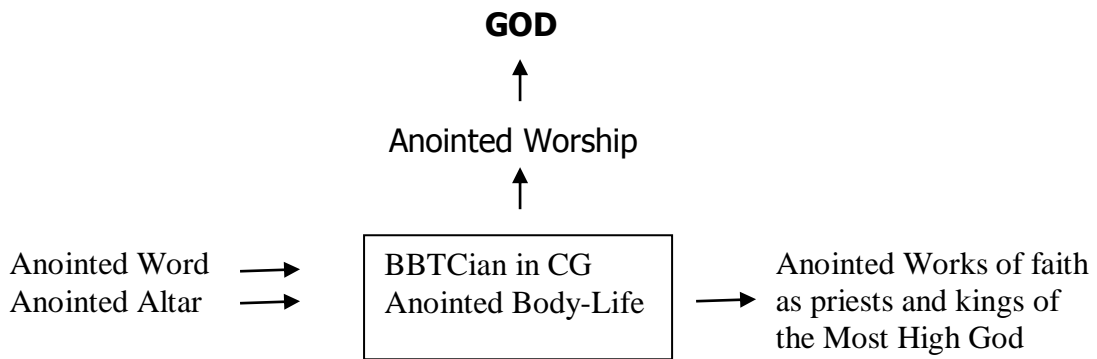
5. Go on a mission trip.

**Application – running with horses (BBTC IDMC template)**



Be equipped so that you can disciple others. We need more mentors for those newly married. Why are you sitting in your comfort zone?

**BBTC Direction & Priorities**



In the show 'Courageous' the men came up with a resolution as below:

**Courageous Movie – The Resolution**

I Do solemnly resolve before God to take full responsibility for myself, my wife, my children. I WILL, love them, protect them, serve them and teach them the Word of God as the spiritual leader of my home.

I WILL, be faithful to my wife, to love and honor her, and be willing to lay down my life for her as Jesus Christ did for me.

I WILL, bless my children and teach them to love God with all of their hearts, all of their minds, and all of their strength.

I WILL, train them to honor authority and live responsibly.

I WILL, confront evil, pursue justice, and love mercy.  
I WILL, pray for others and treat them with kindness, respect, and compassion.  
I WILL, work diligently to provide for the needs of my family.  
I WILL, forgive those who have wronged me and reconcile with those I have wronged.  
I WILL, learn from my mistakes, repent of my sins and walk with integrity as a man answerable to God.  
I WILL, seek to honor God, be faithful to His Church, obey His Word, and do His will.  
I WILL, courageously work with the strength God provides to fulfill this resolution for the rest of my life and for His glory.

In 2012, would you do something about your hunger and thirst for God? Be provoked to move from lukewarmness.

*Philippians 3:10*

*that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.*

Christ has saved, forgiven and redeemed us. Now the ball is in our court to lay hold of Christ. The devil will remind us of our failings. We need to deal with it and bring it under the Blood of Christ and move on. What was permissible in 2011 is no longer permissible in 2012. Running with horses is not impossible. It means we will be stretched and challenged. But unless we are faithful in little, we cannot be faithful in much.

Let's re-consecrate our lives to God. What's it we need to do regarding family, cell group, finances? Give ourselves to a cause and serve God. What are the things to do; what are the things to go. Begin the process in the coming days as we focus to run with horses. Our lives must change. There is more. We can only give of what we have.

End.

## Questions for discussion

1. Leaders can be running with footmen and due to the constant challenges from the ground, they can be wearied. (Question 1 is optional – for relationships that are matured, take this as an opportunity to understand expectations better and to strengthen the relations further.)

a) On a personally level, are you wearied? How so?

b) Consider from the standpoint as a member – what could be some possible areas you might have played a role in wearying down your leader. How have you been supportive or otherwise?

c) For the cell leader, as members might not have realized how they might have wearied you, you may want to share candidly the issues that have wearied you, if any. Otherwise, you may want to share the way they have been an encouragement to you.

2. Are you intentionally developing your capacity? Share one capacity you are developing and how you go about doing it. What is one other capacity you would want to focus on this year?

3. For us to strengthen our spiritual capacities, three disciplines are needed, i.e.  
a) Build our altar of thanksgiving, praise and worship, b) Word intake and c) Prayer communion.

i) What do you understand by the altar of thanksgiving, praise and worship?

ii) How would you rate your word intake and do you have any plans to get into more of the word?

iii) What are some things you have learned lately about prayer?

4. What would you consider as 'horses' and what are some of such horses you would hope to be running with someday?

5. Share other take-homes that you might have picked up from the message.