



CELL GUIDE 2015

Theme	Connect with God Always
Topic	The Prayer in the Belly of the Fish
Speaker	Cell Supervisor (CS) Edric Sng
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Message Summary

With God's Grace to a Place of Purpose

As he fled from Nineveh, Jonah asked to be thrown into the sea during a storm, counting himself as good as dead. However, God's grace came upon Jonah in the form of a fish which swallowed him whole and hauled him back to Nineveh instead of letting him die (a fitting consequence of his disobedience).

This week, CS Edric brings us through Jonah's transformation as he sat in the belly of the fish, showing us that God can lift us from a place of despair to a place of purpose.

From Resistance to Relevance

The three days and three nights spent in the belly of the fish, though seemingly short, was enough to bring Jonah from a place of rebellion against God's will to a place of obedience. To help us apply these lessons gleaned from Jonah in our lives, CS Edric breaks down this transformation into four stages, beginning with Resistance.

Resistance

When God commanded Jonah to preach against the wickedness in Nineveh, Jonah resisted the Lord and fled. To put it in today's context, CS Edric likens Jonah's task to us being told to preach to ISIS terrorists. Whilst most of us do not have that calling, we have resisted God's call for obedience to Him in various other ways in our lives. It may have been in the grand things like taking up a cell group or stepping up in a ministry. Most often, though, the call is not so grand. It could even be something constant like tithing, relying on Him for strength, loving the unlovable etc.

The bad news, CS Edric tells us, is that until we physically die, this struggle to obey will always be present because of our propensity to sin [*Rom 7:18b-19, 23-24*]. However, there's also good news: no matter how far down in the pits we are, God can bring us back to relevance.

After Jonah was thrown overboard, God could have let Jonah drown. In fact, it would've made complete sense that Jonah should meet his demise after disobeying God's command. But that's precisely what grace is. Grace doesn't make sense. We don't deserve grace. And when we remember the grace that has been poured out for us, saving us from eternal death by the sacrificial blood of Christ, our only appropriate response then, is gratitude.

Remembrance

It was through the remembrance of God's grace towards him that Jonah began to change his mind in the belly of the fish [*Jon 2:2, 7*]. Similarly, if we stopped to remember that we have been given eternal life instead of the damnation we deserved, we would approach God's tasks for us very differently. In fact, our remembrance of God's grace to us should, ultimately, translate into true repentance.



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Repentance

When we repent, we focus not on the feelings of guilt and shame. Instead, we turn our eyes to our Christ on the cross. As CS Edric puts it, "Instead of turning away from God's love, we turn to the God of love. Instead of forfeiting grace, we embrace grace. We stop resisting the love of God, and start remembering the goodness of God. Repentance allows us to embrace the heavenly inheritance which has already been given to us."

True repentance is not just about recognising sin in our lives but making the resolve by the grace of God to stop sinning. Jonah confessed his repentance both in word [Jon 2:8-9] and in action, choosing to obey and answered the God's call to go to Nineveh in the end.

Relevance

In his choosing to align his will with God's, Jonah arrived at a place of relevance. CS Edric explains that when we have arrived at a place of relevance, we fulfill the purpose the Lord intends for us and He becomes the focus [John 3:30, 1 Cor 19:10].

When 46 members of the Mawar Sharon Church died in the AirAsia crash last year, the church did not fall apart in grief. Instead, they stood united in faith. They increased their dependence on the Lord and did all they could to walk alongside those in mourning. In that trying time, the church became a channel of God's comfort to others, they were in their place of relevance.

Christ, Our Ultimate Redeemer

In the belly of the fish, as he hit rock-bottom, Jonah prayed to God. He remembered the Lord for His goodness, he repented of his sin. In the end, God brought him back to Nineveh where he found his relevance in turning the hearts of the Ninevites to the Lord.

CS Edric reminds us that God wants to take us to answer His call in a place of relevance. But the key to getting there is three-fold – firstly, to stop our resistance, then to move from remembrance into repentance. And all of this, only through the amazing God of grace.

Questions

1.) Why was the fish considered an act of grace by God?



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2a.) Which 'R' are you at right now in your life?

2b.) If you are at a place of relevance now, share your testimony of how God's grace brought you there.

Share with the group what a place of relevance in your life looks like to you.