

Sermon Topic: CULTURE OF SELF DENIAL AND PRAYER by Ps Lorna Khoo, 5 Mar 2017

1. Three pictures of where we are in church as individuals
 - Playing in water- enjoying blessings even when serving
 - Swimming WITH the current- eg SHAPE (discovering and serving with our giftings and in areas that suit our personalities) Romans 12:6-8, I Corinthians 12:8,10,28 , I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4:11 and I Peter 4:11
 - Swimming AGAINST the current- outside comfort zone- building habits and culture of self denial and prayer

2. Why do we need to BUILD A CULTURE OF SELF DENIAL
 - a. We are called to be different from others cf Matthew 5:13, I John 2:15-17, Romans 12:2, James 4:4. We need to build our identity in Christ
 - b. Our natural self is not pro- God. I Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:2 There are some things we cannot do if we are God's. cf Deut 18:9-13. Eg in areas of money Matthew 6:24, Hebrews 13:5, hungering for people's approval Luke 6:26, Gal 1:10; embracing the world's values I John 2:16, Hebrews 10:24-25. Need to take a harder road Matt 7:13, I Thess 5:22.

3. WHAT?
 - a. Starve the bad wolf, feed the good wolf cf Romans 8:13, Gal 2:20
Agere contra: to act against- deliberately choose to go against our natural tendencies
Fasting from "Weight" (anything that holds us back from following Christ wholeheartedly) and sin cf Hebrews 12:1. Feed in prayer, scripture, service, giving- see LENT 101 notes in bulletin for ideas
 - b. Embrace the self that we are running away from and receive from Him what we need.
It's a Gethsemane experience- 'choose to die to self' – painful. But building self-denial habits in self will build a culture of that in church

B. WHY BUILD A CULTURE OF PRAYER : all can pray- prayer as talking and listening to God our Father cf Matthew 6:5-6 and hymn Prayer is the Soul's sincere desire (definition of prayer).
Culture of prayer: WALK IN THE ATMOSPHERE OF HIS PRESENCE, seek to be aware of Him, Listen, Talk. Focus on intimacy and not intercession, listening and not talking and worship.
Do it for these 40 days of Lent

An example from the movie *SILENCE*

Questions we tend to ask: 1. Why does God keep silent in the midst of His people's sufferings? 2. Can I stand for Christ in such a setting? 3. Is it ok to say or do something to renounce Christ publicly (under duress) but not mean it in your heart?

Cell Discussion Questions:

1. **How can I build myself to be more faithful?**
2. **How can I hear Him and be guided by Him even in the midst of suffering and trauma, in seeming silence?**
Answer: By Starting NOW in developing a culture of self denial and prayer. Learning to be faithful. One yes/no makes the next yes/no easier.
3. **How do I know it's Him (discernment)?** In the story, we have to remember: a. From Scripture: Only Christ is the Saviour, not I. b. From Scripture: God's ways are not necessarily our ways re suffering cf Isa 55:8 c. God looks from the perspective of eternity, not just from our timeline. Scripture/Community (tradition and support) important.