

Sermon Series: Church Strategy 2018

Sermon title: *'Lengthen & Strengthen'*

Scripture: Isaiah 54:2-3

Clearwater Bay International Baptist Church

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Well, back in the September I preached a series of messages on our church vision. Who do we want to be as a people called Clearwater Bay Church?

We want to be people who:

- **BEHOLD** God. We want to be people who know him, people who worship him daily, people who love his word and long to see his magnificence.
- **BELONG** to one another. We want to be people who are so connected that we are continually building up one another with our gifts, living life together in tight community and meeting together in small groups.
- Are **BEING SENT** out locally and globally. We want to be people who proclaim his greatness in the spheres of influence that God has put us in...our family, neighbors, co-workers and friends. And..we want to be taking the message of Jesus to those who have little or no access around the world.

BEHOLD. BELONG. BE SENT.

That's our goal. That's who we want to be.
That's our worship, our fellowship and our discipleship.

So, whether it's our ministry to kids, our ministry to ladies, our mission efforts, how we worship together...it all should be done....with the goal to lead people to:

Behold God,
Belong to one another...and
Be Sent out as witnesses.

Well, back in September 2016, in my yearly Bible reading I came to **Isaiah 54**. As I read these verse that morning, they jumped off the page at me and a *church strategy* started to form in my heart and mind.

Turn to **Isaiah 54** and we will read **verses 2-3**.

**2 “Enlarge the place of your tent,
and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched
out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and
strengthen your stakes.**

**3 For you will spread abroad to the right and to the
left, and your offspring will possess the nations
and will people the desolate cities.**

Let's pray.

Our church has a certain habitation.
A place where our tent is pitched!
We've been right here at CWBS, beside HKUST for 25
years now.

But our church's influence extends far beyond this location.

On Sundays we are the church ***gathered*** and the rest of the time we are the church ***scattered***.

Our influence includes 4 areas:

- **HKUST** (w/ people from 70 nations there)
- **Tseung Kwan O** area (down that side of the hill) and including Clearwater Bay/ 400,000 people.
- **Sai Kung town** (down the other side of the hill)
- Your own '**OIKOS**', your personal sphere of influence encompassing your family, neighbors, co-workers and friends all over HK.

We are one of only a few English Speaking churches in the whole Sai Kung district of about 470,000 people.

So, there's room for growth.

There is one question we need to ask ourselves!

One question...and depending on how we answer this question....it will change everything.

The question is this:

Does God want CBIBC to TRY to grow?

Notice that I said, “Try” to grow. We can’t make people come to Christ or come to our church.

But we can **try!**

Does God want us to try?

Well, the great commission tells us ‘As we are going, we are to make disciples’.

Do we want to try? Will we do whatever it takes?

If so, what do we need to focus on doing?

Notice in Isaiah 54 some key words:

Enlarge the place of your tent!

Let the curtains of your habitation be **stretched** out!

Do not hold back!

Lengthen your cords!

Strengthen your stakes!

Spread abroad to the right and to the left!

So, CBIBC...let’s try.

Let’s do whatever it takes!

Let’s **enlarge**.

Let’s **stretch out**.

Let’s not ‘**hold back**’.

Let’s **lengthen** some cords.

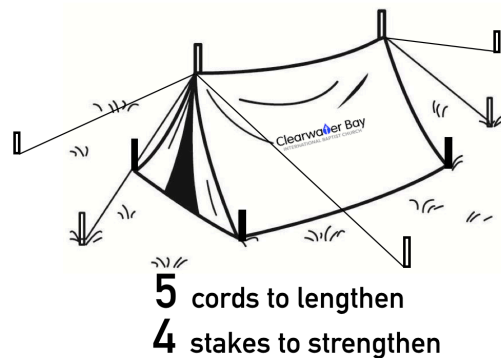
Let’s **strengthen** some stakes. Drive them deep.

Let’s **spread** out.

Over the next 5 weeks, we will go over the following:

5 cords to lengthen.

And in the summer we will do the **4 stakes to strengthen.**



5 cords to lengthen.

4 stakes to strengthen.

Here are the **5 cords** of the tent that we need to **lengthen**...things we need to specifically grow in... things we need to stretch out, ministry areas we need to focus on.

Now, there could be other things, but these are the areas, through much prayer, that we want to emphasize.

- **Prayer**
- **Proclamation of the gospel**
- **Parents and children**
- **Plant *multiplying* small groups**
- **Panta ta ethne (all the nations)**

So, today we start with PRAYER and we will take one of these each Sunday.

Let me get a little personal as we begin with **prayer**.

I started out my first sermon here at CBIBC, saying that I wanted to resign from being the Pastor....because the church already has a Chief Shepherd, who is Jesus Christ.

I said that I wanted to be the Associate Pastor instead.

Well, I started out strong and with a lot of energy and somewhere along the way I stopped resting in him, started trying to work harder and prayed less.

I've felt discouraged and frustrated this winter. I had a back ache here, a cold there, a sinus infection and kind of one thing after another.

But, by God's grace, I believe this has been God's plan....to wake me up to some things and slow me down.

I've been trying to grow this church! I've been trying to do it in my own energy and strength.

And I can't.

I don't have the energy.

I don't have the man power.

I don't have the skills.

In our own ability and strength we can't grow this church.

So, what do we need to do?

We need to pray.

This is crucial for us. Prayer!

Listen to what Jesus says in **John 15:4-5** says,
4 “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. 5 I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

I believe that God is leading us as a church to:
**Enlarge the place of our tent,
to stretch out; to not hold back; to lengthen our
cords and strengthen our stakes.
To spread abroad to the right and to the left.**

And if we are going to do this we need to **PRAY**.

Now, our church does a very good job at praying for one another's requests that we send out. Thank you, thank you for being constant in prayer for one another's needs. And we need to keep doing that.

But there are other things we need to pray for.

So, let me give you some things right now that you can pray for— some things you can pray about all the time, every day...and others are pressing needs at the moment.

PRAY OUR CHURCH VISION FOR YOURSELF AND OTHERS.

- Pray that you will **BEHOLD** God. “God I want to know you deeper. I want to marinate in your word more. I want to worship you daily.” Pray that for yourself and others.

- Pray that you will **BELONG** to the body more closely. “God, I want to be more connected and build up others with my gifts, but I am tired and busy. But, I know that I can’t live without others. Help me go deeper with people.” Pray that for yourself and for others.

- Pray that you will have a willing heart and daily live with the mindset... that you are **BEING SENT** by the Lord...to the sphere of influence that God has put you in...our family, neighbors, co-workers and friends. “God, help me to be awake today to the people around me...to actually be looking for opportunities to love people and share with them and not just be grinding at the wheel today.” “God, help me to *engage* my neighbors, *engage* my friends, *engage* my colleagues.”

So, firstly, let our church vision be a framework in which you pray for yourself and others.

Behold. Belong. Be Sent.

There are other things to pray for.

If God wants us to grow...if God wants us to **LENGTHEN** our cords and stretch out..we have needs.

- Our meeting **space**- pray for our meeting **space** here at CWBS. We have FREE parking. We have lots of classrooms. The location is great, right here beside HKUST and on top of the mountain....right off the road. You may be thinking, *“What wrong with it? Seems ok for what we have.”*

But we have some challenges. The school hall above us is much larger and is a better fit for us. But it is newly renovated and the school won't let us use it now....after 25 years. Pray about that. You see, it's not just about having space to meet NOW. **It's about having space to grow.** We need to reach families and families have kids and kids need things..resources...and we have to store those things somewhere. Things for babies, things for toddlers, toys, diapers, wipes, pack n plays, etc. The grassy field at HKUST is full on Sunday afternoons with parents and kids. And they aren't coming here on Sunday for church. Should be. Can't. We can't handle them. So, we need to get things in place to handle them. So, we need to pray for some **space** to store things and we need space to stretch out.

- We need **workers**. We need 'all hands on deck'. In order to grow, we need everyone doing something

and we still have a few people doing everything. In fact, we have people serving in areas they aren't even gifted in out of necessity. That's not wise. We need people serving in areas of their giftedness. But just think what we could do if we all worked together!

We need workers. Workers in kid's ministry. We need worship leaders. We need people to stand downstairs at the ground level to welcome people. We need people to help us set up on Sunday morning. We need **workers**.

If we want to grow, we need to pray continually to the Lord to meet the needs that we have and not rest in our own strength to handle it.

So, would you pray for our church Vision? Would you pray that we would all **Behold** God, **Belong** to one another and **Be Sent** out as witnesses? Would you pray for the first part of our Strategy.....for the 5 Cords that God wants us to lengthen?

- **Prayer**- that we will go deeper in prayer and pray about everything.
- **Proclamation of the gospel**- that we will be people who share the good news with those around us.
- **Parents and children**- that we will be in a place to reach the many parents with kids at HKUST, Tseung Kwan O, Clearwater Bay and Sai Kung.
- **Plant *multiplying* small groups**- that we will spread out and start many groups meeting throughout the week in various locations.

- **Panta ta ethne (all the nations)**- that we intentionally and strategically, engage the least reached around the world.