

# Being family in Christ's Church

## Week 2: Relationships

### **WELCOME**

*Spend time relaxing and sharing together.*

Try and estimate how many people you have a relationship with in all parts of your life. Share what number you decided on – its not a competition! Ask the person with the biggest number to justify it! Who did they include? The person they say good morning to on the train each day? The annoying person from HR at work? The latest sibling of a distant second cousin? All your followers on twitter and friends on FaceBook? Did you include the person in the newsagent' shop? What constitutes a relationship? Is it enough to say hello once a week or do you need to know the name of their best friend, when their birthday is and where they went on holiday?

### **WORSHIP**

A couple of ideas:

1. Set up a bunch of tea-lights on a table. You could each light a tea-light to say thank you to the Lord for someone you have or had a really close relationship with or someone who has been really significant in leading you to Christ or helping you to grow as a disciple.
2. Read Psalm 139.1-18. Prayerfully reflect on how the Lord knows us and give thanks for what he has done in our lives.

### **WORD**

We are the best-connected generation ever and yet possibly the most isolated. Andy Jones (a journalist for The Times) wrote:

*“Whatever I am doing, wherever I am, my phone or my laptop are within constant touching distance... I have a constant drip-drip of information from hundreds of online friends and followers, and yet I've never felt lonelier... and I am not alone in feeling this way. In a survey of young*

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*people, 60% said they found it difficult to make friends with people in real life compared with online."*

Clearly there are both positive and negative aspects to social media. The ability to connect with people around the world is quite astounding, but at the same time something must have gone wrong with relationships in our society when loneliness is one of the biggest social problems today.

Read Genesis 1.26-28; 2.7 and 2.18-25

1. What insight do these verses give us into human relationships?

Read John 1.14-18; 14.10-11; 14.16-17 and 17.20-21

2. How would you describe the relationship between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit?
3. We are made in God's image, so how should that shape human relationships?
4. Notice God is not singular, but plural. God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness" (Gen 1:26). We have one God in the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So, God is community. How should that shape our fellowship in the church and relationships in the community?

God exists in a relationship of perfect self-giving love. That is why Adam gets so excited when he meets Eve. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." (2.23) Adam is made complete when he meets Eve.

Read Romans 12.1-8. (This week we will focus on verses 3-5).

5. What is Paul asking us to do in verses 3-5?
6. What do verses 3-5 have to say about how we relate to each other?
7. What can we do as a church to grow in relationship with each other and become more effective in valuing each other and modelling the close fellowship that we see in the three persons of God?

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## **Summary**

Our identity is based on God's identity and we are made to exist in relationship with others. We cannot exist in isolation. A person finds completeness in loving relationships. We are made to relate to God and to relate to each other. But to be clear, the bible doesn't say that marriage is the only meaningful relationship. If that were the case Jesus, John the Baptist and Paul, all single men, would be incomplete. But they weren't. Jesus is the most complete and perfect human that has lived on this earth. Paul said it is good to be married and it is also good to be single (1 Cor 7). It is good to be in self-giving loving relationships that mirror the love of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is good to have loving friendships.

We are created in the image of God, and we grow in likeness to God through our relationship with God and our relationship with faithful Christians. A loving relationship is a growing relationship. Relationships work when we focus on what we can give rather than on what we can get.

Of course, it is not possible to have deep relationships with everyone. Jesus focused on the twelve disciples. He gave even more time to his relationship with the three: Peter, James and John. And yet he also invested in other individuals and still found time to have compassion on the crowds.

As living sacrifices, not only do we need to know Jesus' love but we also need to be part of a fellowship that loves him. This is part of our training to be effective witnesses in the world.

## ***WHAT NEXT?***

Is there anything to follow-up from last week?

Could any of the ideas from question 7 be shaped into actions that you can do as a GG or as individuals? For example, could you arrange to have a social with another GG to build closer relationships with people you don't know so well in Christ Church?

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Pray for any plans you and have made and any needs in the group. If time allows pray through the notice sheet.