

Based on the Livability Bible Studies 'Together for Good' which aim to increase well-being for individuals and communities. You can use them for your own personal Lent reflections, or as the basis for group discussions in House Groups.

### Keys to success

More often than not, our culture describes success in material terms. What do successful people look like? Well, surely, they must be wealthy high-achievers – professionally, commercially or academically – with plenty of fame, status and reputation thrown in. But is that what true success is really all about?

What does the Bible say about success? To help us, we will look at the life of one Bible character, Joseph. He experienced both success and disaster.

### Bible Study: Genesis 45:1-15 The life of Joseph

- What does 45:1-2 tell us about Joseph's attitudes to his brothers, after all the pain and suffering?
- What had Joseph learnt about God (45:5-8)?
- What does all this teach us about what true success looks like – and how we can embrace it?

We are surrounded every day with messages about "the good life" and what is necessary to achieve it. Most of these "necessities" are material. But there are consequences of materialism, especially for our relationships and our sense of meaning and purpose in life. As Christians we think we have a different perspective on things; but this materialistic narrative is so pervasive – can we really say that we are immune from its impact?

Much research has been carried out into how materialistic attitudes and values influence our thinking and behaviour. There seems to be a see-saw relationship between materialistic values on the one hand and people-orientated attitudes on the other. When people focus on image, status and "stuff", their concern for other people and for the environment around them falls away.

WHY?

That is the story our culture tells us – that success = happiness. And, on a deeper level, when we feel insecure and anxious about our lives, society or the world at large, we tend to seek comfort and solace in material things.



An interesting current study of status and 'success' is the BBC2 drama **MotherFatherSon**. (warning if you haven't seen it – mixed reviews and it does not make for happy/relaxed viewing)

Who seems happier – the media mogul father?

The disturbed son?

The recovering alcoholic, homeless man?

### To think about / discuss:

- As an individual, think about what feels most challenging to you in maintaining a healthy sense of security and value.

### As a community:

- What are the measures of success for St John's? Is the emphasis on quantity - numbers of people, financial reserves, breadth of facilities - and/or on quality - of relationships, community and connection with others?
- If you were to pick one area to develop in your life together, what would it be?