

Based on the Livability Bible Studies ‘Together for Good’ which aim to increase well-being for individuals and communities.

Richer Relationships

Research has shown conclusively that healthy relationships are the most important factor by far in bringing about happiness and life satisfaction.

The evidence is now indisputable: good quality relationships do not only give our lives meaning; they are also critical to our wellbeing and impact on a vast array of outcomes, including parenting, educational attainment, child and adult mental health and wellbeing, quality of life for people in later life, and even preventing crime and anti-social behaviour. Our capacity for forming and maintaining relationships directly impacts on our ability to achieve things we value – being healthy, being happy, having self-respect, having a good job, being safe. (www.relate.org.uk “Altogether now”)

Bible Study: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 (the way of love)

Remember, Paul was writing to a Christian community that was wrestling with major problems, including immorality. Corinth was a port city, with all the moral and cultural issues found in such a place. But his greatest concern was for their relationships, as rival groups competed with each other, provoking pain and fragmentation. To such a troubled extended family, Paul presents an impressive vision of how people could live in community harmony.

- What strikes you most as you read the words?
- In v 4-6, Paul lists seven things that love is not (envious, boastful, arrogant, rude, insisting on its own way, irritable, resentful). What is so destructive about these attitudes, and how might we guard against them?
- In the same verses he also lists seven things that love is (patient, kind, rejoicing at the truth, bearing, believing, hoping, enduring). Do you know anyone who exemplifies such positive ways? What is attractive about that? Think perhaps about how New Zealand Prime Minister, Jacinda Ardern has spoken and acted following the attack on mosques there.

Why are relationships so crucial to our wellbeing?

- What do the research findings on relationships invite us to do in our church community?
- How do they help us to decide our approach as Christians to our neighbours, both Christian and non-Christian?

To think about – key points to keep in mind

- We all bring our past experiences into our present relationships
- We are all different
- Living and being with others is always a mixed bag of joy and sorrow, highs and lows
- Success in relationships depends on our willingness to take responsibility for our attitudes and actions
- There is a challenge in being vulnerable to other people – the more open and vulnerable we are willing to be, the more people are likely to trust and respond, yet it comes with risks attached
- There is no substitute for healthy relationships – they are the basis for fruitful living

Challenges:

Individual: Spend some time reflecting on your past experiences, especially of relationships. How have they moulded you into the person you are now? What well-worn pathways do you follow in relationships – and is there scope to change?

Community:

- What marks our church out as different in the way people treat each other?
- How might we grow as a church community in a way that both honours and respects one other, yet also maintains a high level of reality about pains and struggles?

