

Faith In THE WORLD- 4

Welcome to this resource for reflection and discussion. You can share this with your friends, (bearing in mind the current restrictions, this might need to be online) or you can share it with your family or you may choose to reflect alone. Every fortnight, there will be an opportunity to explore different aspects of our world and to consider how the Christian faith can inform and challenge us as we live in the world. There will be some links to click on for videos and worship songs, and some prayer or meditation resources.

Both the **United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child**, and **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, promote the concept of dignity, peace and well-being for all people.

You can read them here:

<https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

and here:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>

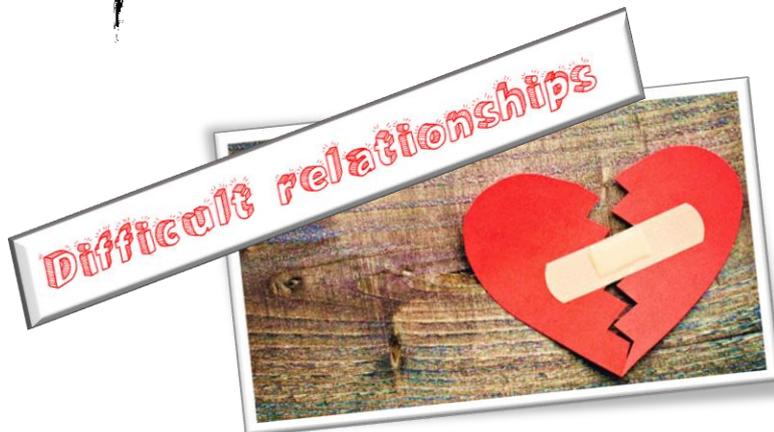


Jamie Grace is a young Christian song writer and performer who has overcome many difficulties thanks to the friendship of her sister and the deep love of her family. She is now a Grammy winning performer. Listen to her story here:

https://youtu.be/Uhg3pR_n7BE

finish this session by listening to one of Jamie's songs:

<https://youtu.be/JFmSzL2ppvq>



People were made to be in relationship with one another, but sometimes, relationships of all kinds can become difficult and occasionally even feel toxic, and cause harm.

The prophet Jeremiah speaks about God's desire for us; ***"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."*** This does not mean that everything will be easy, simply because we are people of faith, but rather that we are called to "lean into God," to always seek to hear His voice and to put our trust in Him, that with His help, all will be well in the end.

Jesus spoke about coming to give us **"fullness of life,"** and wanted us to know His deep peace. His teaching and example show, us what it is to be fully loved, in order that we may come to be the people we were made to be.

The song writer, **Laura Story** reflected upon how the hard times in life, have the possibility of becoming real blessings to us as we look back and see that God has not abandoned us, but has been there all along, supporting, encouraging and teaching us, and Laura asks the question,

"What if trials of this life
The rain, the storms, the hardest nights
Are Your mercies in disguise?"

Here is Laura's song **"Blessings"**
<https://youtu.be/Cd6J6Wgnv4M>



A WISDOM STORY

One day a wise man was walking through a village. A very angry and rude young man came up and began insulting him, saying all kind of rude words. The man was not upset by these insults. Instead he asked the young man, "Tell me, if you buy a gift for someone, and that person does not take it, to whom does the gift belong?" The young man was surprised to be asked such a strange question and answered, "It would belong to me, because I bought the gift." The man smiled and said, "That is correct. And it is exactly the same with your anger. If you become angry with me and I do not get insulted, then the anger falls back on you. You are then the only one who becomes unhappy, not me. All you have done is hurt yourself."

Friendships / relationships can have their ups and downs- here is an account of a difficult friendship.

Amelia and Sarah became friends when they started at secondary school together. They had many things in common, and were in most of the same classes, but as they got used to their new environment, their friendship circles began to widen, Sarah's in particular, because she was a kind, and loving sort of person and that made her popular. But there was just one problem for Sarah, and that was Amelia! Amelia was not keen on Sarah's popularity and her wide group of friends. At first, she began to join Sarah with her group of friends, but then she began to blank her at school and say things about Sarah behind her back, that were not true.

Over time, Sarah became isolated from her other friends, but she was confused too, as Amelia would call round for her at the weekends to go into town and be very kind to her. Because of Sarah's increasing loneliness, she always did what Amelia wanted, fearing she would lose the one friendship she still had. The worry and isolation began to build up over time, and have a negative impact on Sarah making her feel very fragile; she started to not want to go to school, and even when she was there, she couldn't concentrate on her work and her grades began to slip.

One day one of the group of friends asked Sarah for the truth about what Amelia had been saying about her, and Sarah began to realise what had happened. Amelia it turned out, was jealous of Sarah's popularity and had wanted her friendship all to herself. Sarah shared her worries with a teacher at school, who had noticed that something wasn't quite right, and her confidence began to build again. Amelia was also spoken to, and it turned out that she had been experiencing some very serious difficulties at home that she needed help with. Thankfully both girls received the help they needed.

While it was a really horrible time for Sarah and her family, she learnt from her experience to always look beyond the negative behaviour of others and to see where others might need help, and remarkably, she took up a role in school as a mentor, feeling she had something valuable to offer through her experience.



St Paul, when he wrote to the Corinthian Christians, reminded them of what Christian love is about; he wrote this

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."

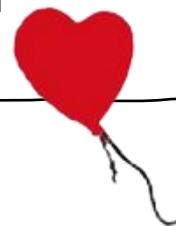
- ⇒ how far is Sarah's response in line with Paul's writing about love?
- ⇒ based on the reading, what might a healthy friendship/relationship look like?
- ⇒ if you have experienced a friendship/relationship that has been difficult, who have you talked to about it?
- ⇒ have there been any difficult experiences in your life, which you feel you have grown stronger through? If so what helped you?
- ⇒ with regard to the wisdom story, how far do you agree with the principle of not holding on to other people's "baggage?"
- ⇒ when is it that you feel most at peace and know God's fullness of life?
- ⇒ Try the prayer labyrinth and hang up other people's baggage that you travel with on the hooks and hand it over to God in prayer (you will need to enable flash player)

<http://www.lostinwonder.org.uk/labyrinth.htm>

There are times when we need to "check in" to contemplate our friendships and relationships and consider if they are preventing us from living with "fullness of life." Below is a check list that you can use:

1. you never know if it's going to be a good day or a bad day for your friendship
2. the other person always seems to be in control and you feel you must always do what they want
3. your friend behaves differently when other people are around
4. your friend doesn't like it when you spend time with anyone else
5. you feel you have to change who you are to be their friend
6. your friend is over critical of you.
7. your friend needs constant praise and never praises you back
8. when you explain how they make you feel, your friend laughs and doesn't seem to understand
9. your friend asks you to do something that makes you uncomfortable and you feel you have to do it
10. you have to work really hard to gain your friend's respect
11. You know they behave badly but you think you can change them

If this list sounds familiar to you, go and talk to someone you trust or someone in your family.



REFLECTIVE PRAYER

Even though they tell me I'm being ridiculous, I sometimes feel that my friends don't always appreciate me, or like me for who I am. Lord Jesus, the closest friend I could ever have, I pray that you would make me wise, so that when I face difficulties in my friendships, I would only ever respond by seeking help, and showing others your love. AMEN

(Martin Saunders 500 prayers for young people)

