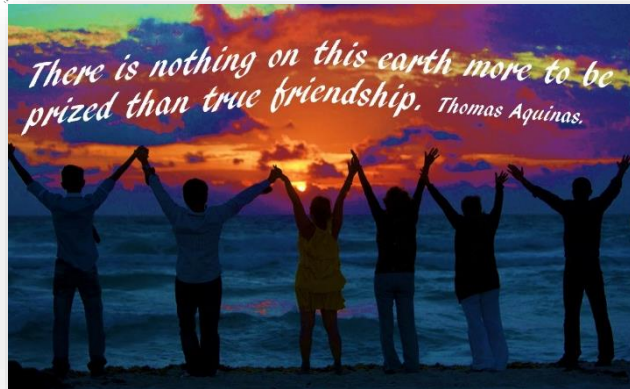


Faith In THE WORLD- 3

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 on line)** 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.



In the worship song, "I am a friend of God", the writers wanted to explore the friendship God has made with us. Friendship usually begins through some sort of casual interaction, or perhaps through sharing a common interest, but God's relationship is rooted in something so much deeper.

The Psalmist wrote, "what are human beings, that you think of them; mere mortals, that you care for them? Yet you made them inferior only to yourself; you crowned them with glory and honour."

In the coming of Jesus, God indicated His deep desire to have a close relationship with us. Jesus demonstrated and taught us how to live; he even called us friends. John 15 v 15 says this "no longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends.."

You can hear the worship song by clicking this link.

<https://youtu.be/3IDleeaEt4A>



LOOK OUT FOR SOME FRIENDSHIP SYMBOLS FROM AROUND THE WORLD



Ecclesiastes 4 compares the person who is alone in the world, to someone who has a friend and speaks about how important the bonds of friendships are and how they are a source of strength, like a cord that is made of three strands.

"7 Then I looked again at what is of no use under the sun. 8 There was a certain man who lived alone. He did not have a son or a brother. Yet he worked all the time. His eyes were never happy with the riches he had, and he never asked, "For whom am I working and why am I keeping myself from happiness?" This also is for nothing. It is work that brings sorrow.

9 Two are better than one, because they have good pay for their work. 10 For if one of them falls, the other can help him up. But it is hard for the one who falls when there is no one to lift him up. 11 And if two lie down together, they keep warm. But how can one be warm alone? 12 One man is able to have power over him who is alone, but two can stand against him. It is not easy to break a rope made of three strings."

DEEP FRIENDSHIPS

According to a 2019 YouGov poll 30 % of young adults said they felt lonely and Covid this year, has not helped.

Whilst people may have plenty of “friendships” through Instagram and other platforms, what they said they needed were stronger friendships, friends they could turn to in a crisis, friends that encouraged them or friends to simply spend time with.

So what makes a strong friendship?

JRR Tolkien and CS Lewis creators of the “Lord of the Rings” and “The Chronicles of Narnia”, (pictured below) had a long and mutually beneficial friendship, through their shared interests in myths, poetry and story-telling. They also shared the scars of painful childhoods, and the terrors of trench warfare during World War I, but were truly invigorated by each other’s company, finding a richer, deeper meaning to life through their friendship. Lewis encouraged Tolkein in his writing, and it was Tolkein’s faith that influenced Lewis’s beliefs and his own personal commitment to Christ.

Sadly their friendship dwindled when Lewis moved to Cambridge, but when he died Tolkein wrote, “it feels like an axe- blow near the roots.” That deep connection had remained.

Perhaps we need more friendships like Tolkien and Lewis that nurture our bodies, minds, and souls – that inspire us to become better versions of ourselves. But we can also learn from Tolkien and Lewis about what **not** to do. We must not let disagreements, differing tastes, distance or the busyness of life cause our friendships to drift away, because these friendships, rare as they are, are as precious as any relationship we will ever have.

- How do you define true friendship?
- How do you maintain friendships, when you or your friends have moved away?

Looking at the verses from Ecclesiastes

- What do these verses have to say about friendships?
- Do your own friendships resemble the picture in the text?
- How have you “lifted up” or encouraged your friends, when they have “fallen” or have had difficulties?
- Why does the writer describe the relationship between two people as “a cord of three strands”?



Of course, not all friendships are built upon shared interests or similarities- sometimes they are built entirely upon TRUST!
HERE SOME UNUSUAL AND TRUSTING FRIENDSHIPS!

<https://youtu.be/MAIbCVUPTzw>

LUKE 19- JESUS BEFRIENDS THE UNPOPLAR

Jesus entered Jericho and made his way through the town.

2 There was a man there named Zacchaeus. He was the chief tax collector in the region, and he had become very rich. 3 He tried to get a look at Jesus, but he was too short to see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree beside the road, for Jesus was going to pass that way. 5 When Jesus came by, he looked up at Zacchaeus and called him by name. “Zacchaeus!” he said. “Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” 6 Zacchaeus quickly climbed down and took Jesus to his house in great excitement and joy. 7 But the people were displeased. “He has gone to be the guest of a notorious sinner,” they grumbled.



Jesus’ own approach to those who were unpopular, can inform us about how we should react to those who we may find difficult to love or be friends with. Take three strands of wool/ string. Tie them together at the top and then braid them. One strand represents you, the second represents a person who you may find difficult, and the third represents God. As you weave them together, pray for that relationship to be strengthened by God.