



WELLSPRING FELLOWSHIP BANGALORE



RELATIONSHIPS

**BIBLE-BASED
DISCUSSIONS FOR
SMALL GROUPS**

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GUIDELINES

- **Only say as much or as little as you feel comfortable with**
- **Play your part in making your group a safe place for honest and helpful discussion**
- **So please keep any sensitive details within the group only (no gossiping)**

Where a section is marked “think”, you can either let everybody think quietly for themselves or let those who want to share their thoughts with the group - but nobody should have to share their thoughts if they don't want to.



Discussion 1

RELATIONSHIPS

Round 1

THINK

1. What example can you think of, of a “good” relationship? (Any kind of relationship e.g. mahout and elephant; John Lennon and Paul McCartney; my best friend etc.)
2. We most often use the English word “love” to mean a romantic relationship; but the word can have a much wider and deeper meaning. As we read from 1 John, think through: How would you describe and explain what “love” means in this passage?

READ

1 John 4:7-13, 19-21

DISCUSS

question 2 (above). (Note: If explaining is hard, examples and stories might help ...)

Sadly, a lot of relationships are messy (unhealthy, broken, hostile etc.). Hosea 2 talks about the messy relationship between God and the people of Israel, as though this was a messy marriage.

Round 2

READ

Hosea 2:7-8, 13-14, 16, 23

DISCUSS

1. What can we learn from the way God handled that relationship? (in this passage)
2. In your relationships, what help do you need from God?

Discussion 2

PARENTS RELATING TO THEIR CHILDREN

Round 1

THINK

1. Can you think of an example of somebody “parenting” badly? (Or, perhaps, of somebody with no children who would have parented badly?)
2. Can you think of an example of somebody parenting well? (Or, perhaps, of somebody with no children who would have parented well?)

There is a lot of social pressure on a couple to have children. Here is a question to think through during the reading:

3. Why have children? Is having children simply a duty that must be performed to please the wider family (and to stop them putting on the pressure)?

READ

Psalm 127:3-5

Note: “heritage/inheritance”, like a Jewish family’s plot in the Promised Land, may imply something that passes down between generations – so that you do not exactly “own” it.

DISCUSS

Discuss question 3 (above).

Round 2

READ

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

DISCUSS

1. We all have some ideas (but not necessarily the same ideas) about what “good parenting” should look like. Can this passage help?
2. What is your “takeaway” from these discussions?

Discussion 3

RELATIONSHIP WITH FRIENDS

Round 1

THINK

1. Think of your friendships over the years:
 - o What was one particularly good experience/relationship?

OR

- o What was one particularly bad experience/relationship?

Paul had a friend called Philemon. Philemon must have been rich, because the local church met in his house. One of Philemon's slaves, called Onesimus (which means "useful"), seems to have stolen from him and run away. Somehow, Onesimus met Paul and became a believer. Paul sent him back home with a letter.

During the reading, notice how the relationship between Paul and Philemon shows through:

READ

Philemon 1, 7-21

DISCUSS

1. Looking at the relationship between Paul and Philemon: What can we learn about friendship?

Round 2

To the disciples, Jesus was their teacher and master; yet Jesus called them his friends

READ

John 15:12-15

DISCUSS

1. Looking at the relationship between Jesus and the disciples: What can we learn about friendship?
2. Would you call yourself a friend of God, or a friend of Jesus? Why or why not?
3. So, what can help you in your relationships?
(Jesus' example? Ideas from this study? Your relationship with Jesus? ...)

Discussion 4

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THOSE WHO ARE DIFFERENT FROM YOU

Activity:

“Getting to know you”

Preparation:

Prepare, for each person, pens and pieces of paper (all identical), folded in half.

Rules:

One person will be the Questioner (ideally, an enthusiastic volunteer).

The Questioner’s task is to try to identify somebody just from their answers to three questions.

You are not allowed to ask their name or their age.

You have to include your own answers

e.g. “My favourite colour is red. What is your favourite colour?”

Running the activity:

Give everybody a pen and a piece of paper.

Choose the Questioner. The Questioner has 1 minute (no more) to think of their first question and ask it.

Everybody opens their paper and takes 1 minute to write their answer (*while the Questioner thinks about their next question*).

The Questioner asks their second question; everybody writes their answer to that also.

The Questioner asks their final question; everybody writes their answer.

Everybody folds their paper again (writing hidden inside).
All the papers are collected, shuffled, and the Questioner chooses one.

The Questioner reads the three answers out loud.

The Questioner has to guess whose answer it is (without help).

If they guess wrong, they guess again, up to three guesses.

After that, the person identifies themselves.

Either stop there; or, if you are happy to take more time, guess other papers too.

Conclusion after the activity:

Jesus said, “The shepherd ... calls his own sheep by name and leads them out ... But they will never follow a stranger.” (John 10:2-5).

There is a big difference between a stranger and a known person.

Jesus also said, “Love your neighbour” – even if they are different from you (like the good Samaritan). If you are going to show love to somebody, you probably have to start by getting to know them.

READ

Read John 3:1-16

DISCUSS

Nicodemus was a member of the Jewish Council (Sanhedrin) – a powerful leader who seemed to “have it all.” He was probably used to people with problems coming and asking him for help.

1. But Jesus treats Nicodemus as somebody in need. What need?
2. Jesus points to the answer to Nicodemus’ need. What answer?
3. v. 16 says “whoever” believes; this message is intended for ALL kinds of people. Realistically, how can people around us get to hear the good news and encounter Jesus?
4. What part can we play in this? [together? personally? over the years? this month?]

Discussion 5

RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

Activity

- A. Take turns to answer: If you could be somebody else:
- i) Who would you most want to be? and
 - ii) Who would you most want NOT to be?
- B. Take turns to answer: If you could change one thing about yourself:
- i) What would you change? and
 - ii) What would you most want NOT to change?

Conclusion after the activity:

We all have things we like about ourselves and things we don't like about ourselves. Sometimes those things make sense, but sometimes they don't. For example, a survey showed that 88% of Americans think they are safer-than-average drivers. So, a lot of them are just wrong. Maybe they need to be better educated? But actually ... I'm not sure that will help: More than 90% of college professors think they are better-than-average teachers!

Some people suffer from “delusional superiority.” In contrast, there are others, who are actually good at stuff, who suffer from “impostor syndrome” (feeling like a fraud; worrying they will be found out).

Greek philosophy suggests a solution: “Know thyself.” But somebody responded: A caterpillar who concentrates on that will never turn into a butterfly! In this discussion, we will consider how we relate to ourselves.

Round 1

READ

Romans 7:15-25

DISCUSS

Paul describes his internal struggle (maybe past? maybe present?).

1. What does Paul like about himself? And what does he not like?
2. About this, do you feel the same as Paul, or different?

Round 2

READ

Romans 5:8

DISCUSS

1. About Paul (and us), does God feel the same (as Paul in ch. 7), or different?
2. How can that make sense? (Does 5:10 help?)
3. “Love your neighbour as [you love] yourself” (Lev. 19:18) suggests that it is not wrong to love yourself. We always think of 1 Cor. 13 as being about “love” for others, but can it also be about our love for ourselves?

With that idea in mind, end by listening quietly to: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

Discussion 6

WHETHER AND HOW TO GET MARRIED

Activity

Spotted in matrimonial ads: “I expect more than three kids from my partner.” “Bride must not be addicted in social media.” “I like pets.” “Software engineers kindly do not call.” “She should be a non-smoker, non-feminist, good cook...” “We are eager for our grandchildren as soon as possible after marriage.” An old one, from Russia: “Knowledge of music and a fine voice. A mother in law is undesirable.” A poster in Delhi: “Lonely, fair and handsome, three-year-old Golden Labrador seeks homely female of the same community. Must be blonde, slim, beautiful, well behaved, well-groomed.”

Take turns to answer:

IF you had to publish a matrimonial ad about what you were looking for, what would be your two or three main points?

OR what might you put, that other people would find weird or funny?

Paul was single. But that didn't stop him giving advice on marriage...[1]

[1] For more detail, see Technical Notes in the Appendix.

Round 1

READ

1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 7-8

DISCUSS

Verse 7 suggests that, for some people, singleness is a “gift” from God – just as, for other people, marriage is a “gift” from God.

1. Most Indian communities teach that marriage is better than singleness. What does Paul teach? (vv. 7-8; compare also vv. 28b, 32-33)
2. Do you accept what Paul says about this?
[CAN singleness be a “gift”? What about single people who didn't choose or want to be single?]

Round 2

READ

2 Corinthians 6:14-16

DISCUSS

1. Verse 14 seems to mean, “Don't marry non-Christians” [as also 1 Cor. 7:39]. Do you see this as:
 - a) a command?
 - b) wise advice? (if so, why?)
 - c) out of date?
 - d) or ...?
2. In your list of priorities for a possible marriage partner, how high up the list would you put their relationship with Christ? Why? How can you know about their relationship with Christ?

Final thought: If you are trying to develop yourself into a suitable marriage partner, don't concentrate only on your looks, education, employment etc.; build your relationship with Christ!

Discussion 7

CHILDREN RELATING TO THEIR PARENTS

Activity

(Don't take too long on this – make sure there is time for Qu 4 below...)

Think of a situation – a story from your own life/a friend's/a movie etc. – where a daughter or son wanted to do something different from what their parent(s) wanted.

- a) Briefly, describe the situation
- b) Which did the son/daughter end up doing – what they personally wanted, or what their parent(s) wanted?
- c) What was the result/outcome? (Any lessons learned?)

READ

Ephesians 6:1-3 [2]

DISCUSS

1. Most cultures teach children to honour and obey their parents. But, in the Bible, this comes with a promise (Paul quotes Deuteronomy 5:16). What does that mean for us?...

a) If we honour our parents, things will naturally go well – that is just the way life is?

OR

b) If we honour our parents, we can claim verse 3 as God's promise to us?

[2] For more detail, see Technical Notes in the Appendix.

OR

c) Paul simply means that, among the 10 commandments, this commandment is particularly important? (because it is the one that comes with a promise for each Israelite – he left out the end of the verse: “on the earth” originally meant “in the land” of Canaan. See notes below.)

OR

d) Parents are really hard to honour – God was particularly worried that we wouldn’t want to honour them, so he had to give us an extra incentive for this commandment?

OR ... ?

2. Jesus said, “Anyone who loves his father and mother more than me is not worthy of me. ... anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:37-38) So what limits might there be, if any, to honouring and obeying your parents? (e.g. can it be right for evangelists encourage people to change their religion, even if their parents do not approve?)

3. God has commanded us to honour our parents. So what, specifically and personally, does that mean YOU are going to have to do?

Discussion 8

RELATIONSHIPS IN A COMMUNITY THAT IS A MIXED BUNCH OF PEOPLE

Activity

A. Each person: think of a career/group/club/activity (which people choose to join in with) that tends to gather people who are similar to each other.

Then: everybody votes for which is the best answer.

B. Each person: think of a career/group/club/activity that allows all kinds of people to mix together.

Then: everybody votes for which is the best answer.

C. Think of the people who gathered around Jesus. What sorts of people were there? (e.g. Joanna, whose husband Chuza was the manager of Herod's household, Luke 8:3) How mixed was the group?

Conclusion to activity: Some groups naturally gather similar people (e.g. a football team for girls under 15). There are not so many groups where all kinds of people are equally invited and equally welcome to join – but the Church (the Jesus movement today) is supposed to be that...

READ

1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 21-27

DISCUSS

1. A body has lots of different parts (Paul mentions eye, hand, head, feet). Similarly, in the Church, what different sorts of people should be included? [v. 13 starts the list, but more can be added... e.g. Jess mentioned single/married]
2. Paul says our “unpresentable” parts get special treatment, with special modesty; he seems to be thinking of our clothes. What point is Paul making, here, about the way different kinds of people get treated in Church? **[3]**
3. When somebody from church is having a difficult time, we don't always notice. But Paul says (v. 26), “If one part suffers, every part suffers with it...” That is true for a body (unless there is something badly wrong). From this idea, what should we learn about our relationships within the church community?
4. Who can you think of, among us at the moment, who is suffering or needs “special treatment”? What will you/we do, in response to this?

[3] For more detail, see Technical Notes in the Appendix.

Discussion 9

RELATIONSHIPS RESTORED

Activity

Consider the following list of pairs of people. Once you have heard the list, everybody vote on:

- 1) Which pair do you think would be MOST likely to end up with a good relationship?
- 2) Which pair do you think would be LEAST likely to end up with a good relationship?
 - a) An extreme extrovert and an extreme introvert.
 - b) A Russian who just emigrated to Canada and a Ukrainian who just emigrated to Canada.
 - c) A Brahmin who recently became a Christian and a Dalit who recently became a Christian.
 - d) Two classmates who meet again after 10 years at a PU College reunion, but one of them used to bully the other.
 - e) A mother and her 18-year-old daughter, who stole some of her jewellery and ran away from home.
 - f) A couple who have been married a year had an argument, and have now been separated for a week.
 - g) A couple who have been married for five years, have kept on arguing, and have now been separated for a month.
 - h) A father whose innocent son was killed, and one of the gang who were responsible for his death.

Conclusion to activity: *Wherever relationships are difficult, it can be really hard to overcome that. Even so, God's plan is for heaven to be a place where, for God's people, "every tear" will be wiped away (Rev 21:4). That kind of restoration needs a miracle!*

READ

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

DISCUSS

When we think of what Christ has achieved for us, we often use the word "saved" – that is, rescued from danger (e.g. John 10:9).

1. But what word does Paul use here, which focusses more on our relationship with God?
2. So what difference does being "in Christ" (v. 17) make, to your relationships?

Your relationships with other people are only partly under your control – every relationship depends on both people! Even so, somebody who is good at empathy is more likely to build good relationships (because they are able to show love, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness etc. Gal 5:22-23).

3. Paul would certainly encourage us to be like that. But, here, he explains that God has given him a further responsibility.
 - a) What other responsibility did Paul have?
 - b) Who has that responsibility now?
4. From our series on relationships, what has been one particular "takeaway" for you? i.e. what difference has it made (or will it make)?

APPENDIX

TECHNICAL NOTES

DISCUSSION 6: WHETHER AND HOW TO GET MARRIED

In 2 Corinthians, Paul defends his own ministry (6:1-13; also 10:1-18; 11:16-12:19; 13:3), because the Corinthian believers are being led astray by “super-apostles” (11:5) – who “peddle the word of God for profit” (2:17), pretending to be apostles of Christ, when they are actually false teachers and servants of Satan (11:13-15). “Belial” (6:15, Hebrew for “wicked”) is another name for Satan.

Paul tells believers: “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers” (6:14). A “yoke” could involve any kind of commitment – perhaps a business partnership, or a marriage, or a decision to follow a false “super-apostle.” (Another possible translation is: “Do not be yoked together with those who are untrustworthy” – such as false teachers.) So, here, Paul likely had marriage in mind, but probably not only marriage.

DISCUSSION 7: CHILDREN RELATING TO THEIR PARENTS

In Ephesians 6:3, “on the earth” can equally be translated as “in the land”. In Deut 5:16, this phrase certainly means the land of Canaan, because the verse ends, “... in the land the Lord your God is giving you.” Paul leaves out that last bit – perhaps because he sees this as a promise for us too? Also in 6:3, “you” is singular – in fact, the whole of the 10 commandments (Exod 20:1-17; Deut 5:6-21) is addressed to each individual, rather than to the community as a whole. So, this is not something you can leave for other people to do!

DISCUSSION 8: RELATIONSHIPS IN A COMMUNITY THAT IS A MIXED BUNCH OF PEOPLE

Question 2: If you take time every day to do your make-up, you may feel that it is your most “presentable” part, your face, that gets special treatment; but Paul is not thinking of that. Make-up was probably not his thing!

Paul is suggesting that the people who are most “presentable” (i.e. respected, confident, up-front – the sorts of people who tend to get “special treatment”) do not need any “special treatment”. But rather, some less visible people should get special attention and care. This is not necessarily a kind of discrimination: he also says we should have “equal concern” (p. 25) for each one. That “equal” concern may mean we have to pay more careful attention to some (those normally marginalised?) than to others, just to make sure they are included and treated fairly.

Other possible topics, if you want to continue your discussions:

- **Relationships with neighbours**
- **Relationships within your church community**
- **Relationship between spouses**
- **Relationships at college/school**
- **Relationships at work**



Wellspring Fellowship is a community of christian believers in the north side of Bangalore. We are made up of diverse individuals united in our commitment to try and live out God's will on earth as we become more like Jesus, together. At Wellspring, our decisions are guided by three main values: gospel-centered, inclusive, and outward-facing. We recognize that we will pursue these with imperfect attainment yet remain accountable and committed to live by them as best as we can.

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