

## INTRO

- We live in a highly connected, always-on world. So why do you think our loneliness is only increasing?
- Did you have a best friend growing up? What did/does that relationship mean to you?

This week, we close out our focus on mental health by looking at the importance of relational connection.

## READ &amp; REFLECT

As God's image bearers, we are made for relationship with God and others. **Whatever undermines relational connection is what undermines our mental health.**

## Read Col 1:19-22

*Qu: why is reconciliation necessary? How has God made provision for us to be relationally reconciled?*

**Healthy relationship is the ability to freely give and receive love.** And yet, if we're honest, it is hard if not near impossible for us to give or receive love without any strings attached.

*Qu: Do you find it easier to give or receive love? Why?*

*What does it mean for God to love you freely? How does God's love define how we ought to love one another?*

Oftentimes, mental health issues undermine our relationships. Depression and anxiety can affect our ability to actively move towards those that love us. For some, the pain of failed relationships drives them to isolate themselves. Whilst it is human nature for us to seek to avoid pain, oftentimes God speaks to us through our pain.

Exercise: If you struggle with anxiety (although you can substitute with anything you struggle

with like depression, loneliness, worry, etc.), consider asking yourself the following:

- How does my anxiety undermine my relationships?
- Where does my anxiety drive me?
- What does my anxiety drive me to do?

When we look at our mental health challenges through these questions, they can actually be helpful struggles in our lives if they drive us to God and others for greater connection.

*Qu: do you find it easy/hard to accept that God may not want to remove your pain or struggle, but instead use it in a helpful way in your life? Discuss.*

The point of life is not pain avoidance, but to allow those things to help us move toward God and others in deeper trust and relationship.

It takes faith to pursue connection.

## Read Rom 8:38-39

*Qu: in light of these verses, how does it make you feel to know you cannot be separated from God's love and relationship that is in Jesus?*

## RESPOND &amp; PRAY

- What was most challenging/encouraging from this discussion that we can pray for?
- Pray for one another for:
  - a deepening of relationship with Jesus and others,
  - A renewed ability to both receive and give love freely.