

RELATIONSHIPS  
**GOD CREATES  
HUMAN  
RELATIONSHIPS**



**BAND  
B**  
**PLANNING GUIDE**



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This planning guide is a part of LIFE, a Christian Studies curriculum developed for Lutheran schools.

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*God creates human relationships* is one of twelve concepts covered by LIFE curriculum. This BAND B planning guide contains model units for three middle years of primary school.

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# **GOD CREATES HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS**

## **AIMS**

The ultimate aim of LIFE curriculum is that

- students will come to know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- students will have faith in God as their Father, Saviour, and Helper.

We understand that faith is entirely a gift of the Holy Spirit.

We teach in obedience to Jesus' command to go and teach.

*How can people have faith in the Lord  
and ask him to save them,  
if they have never heard about him?  
And how can they hear,  
unless someone tells them?  
Romans 10:14 (CEV)*

## **GOD CREATES HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS**

As Christians we believe this and are compelled to tell others.

Our aim in teaching this concept is that students

- hear,
- explore and
- reflect on

these faith statements:

1. God creates people to live in loving relationship with each other
2. God provides social structures for the welfare of all people
3. God wants people to love and respect all peoples of the world

# BACKGROUND NOTES FOR TEACHERS

## GOD CREATES HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

The basic meaning of 'relationship' is 'connection'. There are various relationships or connections between human beings, such as physical, emotional, spiritual, sexual or social. Other parts of school curricula (eg Health, Society) deal with aspects of human relationships. Taking this up in Christian Studies gives the opportunity to stress that human relationships are God's design and gift.

The Bible tells the story of human relationships — at their best and their worst. Read, for example, the stories of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob) and their families.

**FOR HUMAN HAPPINESS** God created human beings to live in happy and harmonious relationships with each other (Genesis 2:18–25). Human relationships were meant to flow out of, and to be blessed by, a perfect

relationship with the Creator. God intended that relationships at various levels should be of mutual benefit to human beings. For example, marriage is intended to give the opportunity for a man and a woman to commit themselves to one another, to love and care for and trust one another. Family relationships are meant to give children a safe and healthy environment in which they can grow and mature and develop their own identity. Social structures are part of God's providence for the welfare of all members of society, including agencies for law and order (government, police, courts etc), various occupations, each of which contributes to the wellbeing of society (eg doctors, farmers, teachers, cleaners etc).

The Bible recognises considerable diversity in human relationships. For example, various social, political and economic systems are depicted, with no one system being held up as a divinely ordained model.

Human beings relate to each other at various levels of closeness. Each of us is related to every other member of the human family, but God has placed us in closer relationship to some people than to others. Our relationships change, eg parent-child relationships, friendships. The closer the relationship is

between people, the greater are the mutual benefits, but also the responsibilities.

**RELATIONSHIPS PROTECTED** God's will for human relationships is expressed in the second table of the Ten Commandments, which God has given to preserve and protect human relationships in a fallen world. Jesus summarised these commandments in the law of love: 'Love your neighbour as yourself' (Matthew 22:39). The commandments spell out what love means in various relationships: for example, in the family, community and workplace (fourth commandment), in marriage and sexual relationships (sixth commandment), in every relationship with the neighbour (fifth, seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth commandments).

**BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS** Because we human beings are sinful, none of us are capable of living in perfect and truly healthy relationships. The natural self-centredness of fallen human beings leads to disharmony, conflict and the breakdown of

relationships at various levels and in various ways, eg marriage breakdown and divorce (Matthew 19:3–9; Mark 10:2–12), wars (James 4:1,2), family strife (eg Joseph and his brothers, David and Absalom), prejudice and bigotry (James 2:1–9; Galatians 2:11–14), sexual abuse (Amnon and Tamar, 2 Samuel 13), and other 'acts of the sinful nature' (Galatians 5:19–21).

### RESTORED RELATIONSHIPS

Jesus came to restore the broken relationship between human beings and God and at the same time to redeem all human relationships. God calls all people to recognise and repent of their sins against other human beings. God has forgiven these sins for Jesus' sake and gives new life as his children to all who trust in Christ. This means that for Christ's sake God offers forgiveness and healing to all of us when we fail in our relationships — to husbands and wives, parents and children, teachers and students. The restored relationship between us and God makes it possible to begin to live in harmonious and loving relationship with other people.

God created humans as social beings to live in harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships.

Theological Foundations of LIFE Curriculum

**JESUS MAKES A DIFFERENCE** The New Testament is full of examples of the difference Jesus makes to human relationships, eg Jesus' acceptance of social outcasts, little children, women; Jesus' teaching of God's will for human relationships (Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5); the coming together of people of various national backgrounds at Pentecost; the removal of Jew-Gentile barriers in the early church (Acts 10, 15). Note that Jesus did not overthrow the political or social systems of his day. He and his apostles taught that authority in society and nations comes from God for the welfare and protection of citizens. The people of God have the duty to 'give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's' (Matthew 22:21; see also Romans 13:1–7; 1 Peter 2:13–17).

St Paul did not advocate the abolition of slavery or the dismantling of other social structures, but reminded his readers that their relationship 'in Christ' transcends and transforms every other relationship (Galatians 3:26–28).

**GOD FIRST** While as Christians we are to value relationships, preserve useful structures, and respect and obey lawful authority, we must not 'idolise' them, that is, put them before our relationship with God.

Jesus said that we must not allow any human relationship to stop us from following him (Matthew 10:34–37; Luke 9:59–62; 14:26). If

any human authority tries to make us go against God's will, 'we must obey God rather than any human authority' (Acts 5:29). Christians sometimes have to wrestle with the question: When do we have the right — even the responsibility — to refuse obedience to human authority?

The so-called 'Table of Duties' in Luther's Small Catechism (called 'Christian Responsibilities' in the Openbook edition, page 39) gives examples of the New Testament teaching concerning various relationships, eg church leaders and church members, government and citizens, husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees. Note how in passages such as Ephesians 5:22 – 6:9 and Colossians 3:12 – 4:1 relationships between Christians flow out of their relationship with the Lord.

The inability of human beings to live in healthy, God-pleasing relationships does not mean that we should stop striving for or advocating such relationships. For example, the fact that so many marriages fail and end in divorce does not mean that we should no longer point people to what God's intention for marriage is. But it does mean that as Christians we should not be judgmental towards those who fail even as we do (Matthew 7:1–5). Rather, as people entrusted with the gospel of God's grace, we are to be agents for forgiveness, healing and restoration of human relationships.

### FOR REFLECTION AND/OR DISCUSSION

1. What questions do the *Background Notes* raise for you? What questions do you think your students will have on this topic?
2. Why is this an important topic to teach to your students? What implications might the topic have for the life of your school?
3. How does teaching about relationships in Christian Studies relate to teaching on this subject in other curriculum areas? What are the distinctively Christian aspects of this subject?
4. How should Christian teachers speak about marriage and family relationships when some (many) students come from broken marriages and homes?
5. To what extent should Christians be involved in efforts to change social, political and economic structures?

### FOR FURTHER READING

Augsburg Confession and Apology, Articles XVI and XXIII;

Explanations of the Ten Commandments (especially the fourth) in Luther's Small and Large Catechisms

*Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the LCA* : Marriage and Divorce; Involvement of the Church in Social and Political Problems; Marriage and De Facto relationships

*Good Question*: Church and society; Social justice; Civil disobedience.

# BAND B STUDENTS

Relationships at school and at home are of the utmost importance to Band B students. It is vital that the teacher models love and respect for each student to help students learn to value and respect one another. Implementing strategies in the classroom to encourage students to value and respect each other is also essential.

The family structures within your class will vary considerably; some students will come from traditional family units, others may come from single-parent homes, blended or extended families. Avoid using stereotypical images of the family. There are likely to be students in your class who have experienced pain in family relationships as a result of a variety of factors, such as separation of parents or divorce or the combining of family units. This may lead to inappropriate behaviour, such as withdrawal or anger. Take time to understand the causes of such behaviour and to provide reassurance through listening, acceptance and a secure classroom environment.

Before discussing difficulties or conflicts which arise in families, it is important to encourage your students not to disclose sensitive or confidential information about their family to the whole class. Suggest that they talk about situations which could happen in families in general ('in a family' rather than 'in **my** family'). Make it clear, however, that you are available to talk to students privately about family-related issues, and familiarise yourself with the requirements of mandatory reporting.

<b>DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>		<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING</b>
Students are developing a sense of personal responsibility.	⇒	Provide opportunities to discuss and role-play situations which involve personal responsibility for choices. Examine the consequences of choices, particularly for relationships.
Students feel the need to be part of a peer group.	⇒	Assist students to become aware of the effects of excluding individuals from their group. Help students to realise that their worth as individuals does not depend on their acceptance by a peer group. Stress the gospel assurance that in God's eyes every individual is acceptable and important for Jesus sake.
Students are becoming more aware of their feelings.	⇒	Help students to identify feelings associated with joys and problems in relationships. Provide opportunities for students to explore strategies for restoring broken relationships, including the importance of forgiveness.
Students observe laws mainly to avoid punishment and earn reward.	⇒	When researching laws or rules related to authority or relationships, explore the purpose of the rules and the benefits of observing them.
Students can become fiercely competitive.	⇒	Facilitate group activities and teach collaborative working skills. Explore Jesus' message that greatness lies in service.

Students are developing their capacity for informed and sensitive evaluation and judgment.



Provide students with the opportunity to participate in conflict resolution situations which relate to class or school matters.