

*RELATIONSHIPS*  
**GOD CREATES**  
*RELATIONSHIPS*  
**HUMAN**  
*RELATIONSHIPS*  
**RELATIONSHIPS**



*RELATIONSHIPS*  
**BAND**  
*RELATIONSHIPS*  
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*RELATIONSHIPS*  
**PLANNING GUIDE**  
*RELATIONSHIPS*



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*God creates human relationships* is one of twelve concepts covered by LIFE curriculum. This BAND D planning guide contains model units for two middle years of secondary 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 D STUDENTS

<b>DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>		<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING</b>
<p>Family is the most important influence in the development of students.</p> <p>Students come from a range of family settings.</p> <p>Discussing family issues will be confronting for some students.</p> <p>This is a time when students are increasingly rebellious towards authority, namely their parents and school.</p>		<p>Encourage students not to disclose sensitive and confidential information about their family. Direct students to the counsellor or chaplain, if appropriate and necessary.</p> <p>Be inclusive of different family situations.</p> <p>Help students recognise that family is a gift from God. Stress the positive nature of families even in imperfect situations. Help students to view a situation from various perspectives apart from their own.</p>
<p>Friendships play an important role in the life of students. Students look to their friends for affirmation, acceptance, support, a sense of belonging and direction.</p> <p>Although some boy-girl relationships are being formed, most students draw support from members of their own gender.</p>		<p>Give students the opportunity to choose their own groups.</p> <p>Create a classroom atmosphere where students can interact with one another in a positive and healthy manner.</p> <p>Help students celebrate friendship as a gift from God.</p>
<p>Mood swings, insecurity about self-worth and identity, changing attitudes and values can create instability in friendships.</p> <p>In grasping for their own sense of security, it is easy for students to exclude others who do not meet peer group expectations.</p>		<p>The teacher/students relationship can serve as a model of how to treat friends and deal with conflicts.</p> <p>Give students the opportunity to be heard and stress the importance of listening. Build communication skills into lessons. Encourage respectful language.</p> <p>Examine the biblical instructions on how to develop healthy relationships.</p>
<p>Both teachers and students experience conflict in the classroom. In reality, teachers have little control over the way interpersonal conflict is played out, since students keep much of it hidden.</p>		<p>The main objectives for teachers in dealing with conflict in the classroom are to create a supportive environment where each student can feel safe, to help students speak openly about conflict situations and to model and introduce students to useful strategies in dealing with conflict.</p> <p>Some students may need time out.</p> <p>The message of forgiveness is important both for those who have been wronged and for those who repent of wronging others.</p>

A percentage of students have been in abusive situations: they may have witnessed domestic violence, they may be victims of abuse in the family or targets of bullies. Some may be abusers themselves.



Students' stories and experiences need to be treated sensitively, seriously and confidentially. Where appropriate, invite speakers on the issue of abuse, revisit any school policy on such matters as bullying, inform students about where help and a safe place is available for those in need of it.

Examine Bible stories which present a realistic picture of relationships that have not gone as God intended. Students need to hear the message of God's love for them, God's call to repentance and offer of forgiveness to penitent perpetrators, and the call to forgive those who wrong and abuse others.

Students display conflicting attitudes. In their idealism they support projects such as the Forty-Hour Famine but show little concern for people who are marginalised within their own community. It is easier to have compassion from afar.



Help students to identify the marginalised in their own school community and family.

Develop activities which encourage empathy with others. Give students scenarios which relate to them and then ask them to think about how others would feel.