

*How to flourish when Christianity seems so restrictive*

13/14 February 2024

(Half-Term)

First week of Lent

Discuss:

If we asked our friends and colleagues (or we ourselves) whether they find Christianity 'freeing' or 'restrictive', what would they say?

On that same question: do you ever feel a disconnect between the 'right' answer and how you really feel?

Read John 10:7-10

1. In verse 10b we read a great promise. In the context, it's stressing the uniqueness of Jesus to offer eternal life. In what ways do we tend to look for 'life' apart from Jesus? What's our experience been of that?

2. In what ways do we know something of the fullness of life in Jesus at the moment? Where in your life would you like to experience more of that? (Perhaps discuss in 2s or 3s)

3. On Sunday, David Bennett talked about the Way of the Cross as the true means to human flourishing - even when culture says it's foolish. In what ways does the way of the Cross seem foolish to our culture? Are there any buds of flourishing that you see in your own context that you can share with the group for their encouragement?

(You could read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 if you wanted to explore first how Jesus' own death looks foolish yet in fact was for the flourishing of the world).

4. David quoted Augustine who wrote, "*Descend that you may ascend, and ascend to God.*" He shared about the cost of his descent (in celibacy) in following Jesus, yet knowing true joy and intimacy with Jesus in that.

i) What do you make of that combination of laying down your life and yet that being the path to true life?

ii) How does that kick against our culture?

Read Mark 8:34-38

5. Where in your life - small or big - is there a call to truly take up your cross?

6. What would it look like to support one another as a CG in this invitation that Jesus gives us?

Pray

Lent is a season to reflect again on the call to take up our cross.

Spend some time praying for one another

Some suggested Lent resources:

- [An Invitation to Solitude](#) - to pass on to your whole CG if they'd be interested

- For CG Leaders: Let Sarah know by 22 February if you'd like an e-copy of Tim Chesters "The Beauty of the Cross" to work through this Lent