

- Introduction to Shalom as part of CCC service

## The Good Life?

- Remember Richard Briers & Felicity Kendal, Paul Eddington & Penelope Keith?
  - leaving behind the rat race and trying to go self-sufficient?
- We do have this abiding concern about what makes for a good life...
  - is it **wealth**, and the luxury and ease that often follows?
  - is it **success**, doing well in a particular field of endeavour?
  - is it **love**, the one true love around whom our whole life can revolve?
  - is it **friendship**, a richness of relationship, companionship and comraderie?
- Those are actually fairly Western, late 20th century concerns.
- For many people, in history and in other parts of the world, would probably think about the good life in terms of:
  - **food, justice and freedom from oppression, safety from violence**, etc

## Shalom!

- A full exploration of what the Bible has to say about what constitutes the good life would take a while!
  - longer than we've got!
  - for it would take in the whole sweep from the Creation, how God meant us to be
  - through the restored life here on earth that comes in relationship with Christ
  - and the hints of heaven scattered throughout the Scriptures
- I just want us to touch on one key word that sheds light, and is reflected in the thought behind the passages from Isaiah we read earlier on.
- **Hebrew: Shalom**
  - commonly translated **peace**
  - but meaning much **more than the absence of war or conflict!**
  - Western Europe has enjoyed nearly 60 years of peace, since WW2, but not of shalom
  - rather than being **passive**, the absence of...., it is an **active** word:
  - it means **wholeness, well-being**, and has a particular emphasis towards **right relationships**
  - relationships with God, and also with other people
- As we read those passages from Isaiah, what elements do you see?
  - **knowledge of and obedience to God:** 2:3
  - **peace:** 2:4
  - **justice:** 11:4
  - **harmony within creation:** 11:6ff
  - (And referring to another Isaiah passage, 9:1-7)
  - **mercy:** 9:1
  - **joy:** 9:1,3
  - **freedom:** 9:2
- This is a taste of what God made us to enjoy
  - this is what sin destroys
  - and it is God's mission, ultimately through the work of Christ (**11:1ff**) to bring that **Shalom into people's lives**
  - and he chooses to do do **through us!**

## Agnes Story

- Tony Campolo; Hawaii; jet-lag; up early (3am) looking for food; finds an all-night cafe; prostitutes; over-hears one of them, Agnes, mentioning that its her birthday ("**No one has ever given me a party...**").
  - Tony asks cafe owner (Harry) whether she is in every night... **decides to throw**

- her a party - gets decorations, and cafe owner arranges cake;
- next night, word has got round - wall to wall prostitutes, decorations, and a cake!
- Agnes comes in - is overwhelmed - takes cake to show her mum...
- while away, folk turn to Tony for a lead - he leads in prayer for Agnes, for her salvation, that God would be good to her...!!
- cafe owner says, "Hey, you never told me you were a preacher! What kind of church do you belong to?"
- inspired moment, words just came, "The kind of church that throws parties for prostitutes at 3am!"
- Harry: "No you don't. There's no church like that! If there was, I'd join it. I'd join a church like that!"
  
- That was certainly a one-off!
  - but it was shalom, for Agnes and for those around her
  - a touch of wholeness into a broken life
  - a whiff of God's intention for that life, a breath of heaven

- Notes on introducing the more CCC specific parts of the service

## Sharing the Peace

- There is an ancient tradition in some branches of the church worldwide that we have largely lost in the CofS
  - often called "Sharing the Peace"
  - generally means greeting those around you!!
  - we are not isolated individuals, but part of a community of faith
- I'd like us to share the peace with one another now!
  - turn to just a few of the people near to you, and say to them "the peace of Christ...."
  - you may want to shake their hand, or greet them in some other appropriate way...
  - and you might have to move to be able to speak to them!
  - but at its core we are expressing our prayer for them that they would know shalom - expressing it by saying it to them!

## Personal Graphic Equaliser

- Explain what a graphic equaliser is, for the technologically illiterate!!
- Working individually to start with:
  - will need a biro each, and a Graphic Equaliser sheet
  - invite you to fill out this about yourself; where would you rate yourself in terms of these different well-being factors?
  - the CCC Co-ordinating Team did this themselves, and some found it quite hard;
  - some found it hard to know where they were on the scales...
  - and some found it uncomfortable to realise where they stood
- Don't give yourself a hard time - I often find this kind of exercise quite difficult!
  - but it can be rewarding and insightful
  - feel free to just think about where you would place yourself, if you don't feel able to actually write it down
- Also, it is a snapshot:
  - some of these things change with time, even time of day!!
  - you might feel part of a group of caring friends here in the service, but at other times of the week find that less evident...
  - just put down how you feel now!
- Afterwards...
- That may have thrown up things you hadn't thought about, which you may want to chat through with someone... perhaps me, or another Christian who you trust to give good counsel...

## Group Graphic Equaliser

- Now we are going to move on and work in our **groups**
  - and begin to engage with the case studies that were distributed two weeks ago
  - **try and fill in the graphic equaliser from the point of view of the person in the case study**
  - each group start with a different case study
  - concentrate on that one
  - if you finish it, move on to the next one
  - but don't do more than two - and one is fine!!
  - fill in your answer(s) on the large sheets
- Either as you go through, or probably after you've done one full case study, **discuss the questions which you also have in your groups:**
  - how did each of these case studies make you feel?
  - what is life like for these people?
  - is material need the only factor involved in well-being?
  - what other factors contribute to loss of well-being?
  - how can the church be more involved in meeting people's need for shalom?

## Summary

- Need is more than just material poverty:
  - someone may have a very strong sense of well-being and yet be living in poor housing
  - another person may have all their material needs met, and yet have a very low sense of well-being
  - outward appearances of material wealth can also be misleading
  - often poor housing estates have a higher proportion of satellite dishes than the wealthier suburbs, but this reflects more the desperate need for cheap entertainment to absorb the large amounts of unwanted leisure time and the inaccessibility of more affluent leisure pursuits (e.g. holidays, cinema, etc.)
- People's sense of well-being is, however, affected by their environment:
  - and one factor (e.g. unemployment) may negatively affect many other aspects of their life (e.g. self-esteem, relationships, purpose)
- The church needs to be actively working towards promoting all the aspects of shalom:
  - both for those within the church and for those outside it
  - meaningful and valued relationships with others must be based on shalom rather than some narrower agenda of meeting solely spiritual or physical need.