

Building Community *This is how they will know you are my disciples...*

3. Challenges to Community - Inclusiveness

To start with:

In the Roman Empire people were divided into clear categories - Roman citizen or not, Patrician or Plebian, Slave or Freedman. In the early church the clearest category that divided people was ethnicity; whether they were a Jew or Gentile.

- What sorts of categories do you think people use to define 'groups' in our society today?
- Which of those categories do you commonly use to define yourself and why?

Most of us have had the experience of visiting a church and having no one speak to us. Clearly we try hard at Kings to make sure that doesn't happen but there is a difference between being superficially friendly to newcomers and people being genuinely included and welcomed into the church community. This study reflects on how we might be as genuinely inclusive as possible.

1.
 - a. Why do you think human beings are often instinctively drawn to people like themselves?
 - b. What effects (both positive and negative) can that have on a church community?
2. Jesus picked a diverse group as his 12 apostles.
 - a. How is it that Simon the Zealot, an anti-Roman activist, and Matthew, a tax collector and Roman collaborator, could possibly have been in a positive relationship with each other?

- b. What might that mean for how we relate to those who are different from us in some way?
3. The early church was even more diverse; people were called to be in 'fellowship' with God and one another (e.g. 1 John 1.3).
 - a. How is that different to being friends?
 - b. What does that mean about what a church community is for? (e.g. How far should it be a social club?)
4. What do you think are the challenges for us at Kings with regards to being inclusive? (e.g. Who do you think finds it easy to fit in and who might find our community difficult or inaccessible?) How might we address that?
5. Paul addressed the issue of unity and inclusiveness constantly in his letters. Read Colossians 3.1-17. How might it help us to understand:
 - a. Who and what all actually Christians are?
 - b. How we should view each other?
 - c. How we should behave towards one another?

How might this help us avoid being cliquy or exclusive in our church community?
6. Much of this is to do with ethos and the whole church taking responsibility to be inclusive, but what might you do personally to help build an inclusive community of believers at Kings?