

Lengthen the Cords

I mentioned in the first ministry on the *'lengthen the cords'* phrase in Isaiah 54:2 - that for cords to be effective there needs to be a certain amount of Tension.

This Tension is there naturally because 'we are all different' - difference is wired into the very DNA and structure of the Church. Let me elaborate for a moment: -

Isaiah 41:15 – 20 ... God's type of forest!

This passage from Isaiah was shared at one of our Cell groups as a Word for the Church. There are a number of great thoughts in it.

God making us sharp and giving us a cutting edge; dry places becoming full of water and streams; wilderness places becoming planted with trees; and so on.

Toward the end of this text there is a wonderful description of 'difference and togetherness' in the mention of the trees, God's type of forest. (Isa 41:19)

- Cedar (Large & strong)
- Acacia (Hard & durable)
- Myrtle (Evergreen & fragrant)
- Olive (Oily & useful)
- Cypress (Tall & straight)
- Pine (Fast growing & general purpose)
- Plane or Box. (Very hard & specialised)

This text describes these different trees with their different qualities and uses being planted Together and being the Witnesses together of the workings of God. (vs. 20)

This is just an illustration of how God loves the idea of the Church as His 'box of smarties' - different people (Cultures, Personalities, Gifts) being planted together in His Church.

While this is a marvelous idea and principle - it does lead in many situations to a natural state of Tension. For this Tension to be harnessed and used constructively there have to be some common principles and practices.

The 1 Chronicles 12:32 - 38 principles

Many of you will know that I have shared these values before in different ways. They are in my estimation key building blocks for church relationships.

- The Principle of doing (vs 32)
- The Principle of formation (vs 33. 35. 38)

- The Principle of gifting (vs 33 & 37)
- The Principle of common purpose (vs 38)

These are principles that help us to be different and yet work together and strengthen the cords of relationship.

The Colossians 3:12 - 15 practises

Any community and set of relationships has to operate on the basis of a code of practise, a set of Biblical ideals. This text presents some great ones ...

- Mercy
- Kindness
- Humility
- Patience
- Forgiveness
- Love

These qualities are mentioned in a number of other NT passages. They are not great ideas; they are essential practises. Relationships don't work without them!

These are the practises that will help us to be that mixed forest of trees, that happy 'box of smarties' - that community that is diverse and yet 'one in God'.

These are the things that will be crucial as we seek to 'lengthen the cords' of relationship in our lives and god Deeper in the purpose of God.