

Riverlife Vision 2022



Our vision at RiverLife is based on Mark 12.30 "Love the Lord with all your heart and soul and mind and strength".

Our logo helps us remember how this affects us at Riverlife. So we see the mountains representing Switzerland; the beautiful river coming down from them representing the turquoise Aare River that winds through Bern. Note the four strands which represent loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. Also the slight lightening of the sky as we look forward to the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Then there is our name " Riverlife" which reminds us that Jesus promised¹ that rivers of living water would flow out of those who believed in Him.

This ties in with the strap line "Loving Jesus | Touching Nations" which reminds us that as we love Him we seek to reach the nations as so many pass through our doors.

Our first priority in this verse is to love the Lord. The Greek word is "agape" – He looks to us to love Him with that same self-giving, self-sacrificing love that Jesus showed us when He died on the Cross for us.

It starts with us individually when we answer that question that Jesus asked Peter in John 21: "..do you love me?" Until we can answer yes to that ourselves we cannot work together as a church to do all He wants us to.

So how can we know we love Him?

Firstly, Jesus says² *"By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

Peter says we should *"Love the family of believers"*³ and John makes it clear that it is nonsense to say we love God if we do not actually love our brothers and sisters in the Lord⁴.

So we need a mechanism where we can do more than just say hello to each other on a Sunday. That mechanism is to be part of a **Life Group** that meets regularly. Through this we can get to know each other properly, "do life together" – enjoy meals together, have fun, share one another's burdens, pray for each other and learn how to apply the Scriptures to our daily lives. They can also provide an excellent opportunity to invite others to some of our activities so they see what being a Christian is really like.

The second evidence that we love God is expressed by Jesus like this: *"Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching"*⁵ and so we know we love Him if we live in obedience to the things he told us to do.

So, let's think of the 4 ways that Jesus says we should love the Lord and see how they affect our church.

¹ John 7.38

² John 13.35

³ 1 Pet.2.17

⁴ 1 John 4.20

⁵ John 14.23

1. Love the Lord with all your HEART

Mark 12.30 Love the Lord your God with all your....

The Greek word sounds like kar-dee'-ah from which we get Cardiac. In other words, it is the operations centre – the Throne – and everything springs from it. So, to love him like this we have to love him with all we have.



This will lead to **Worship**

In the narrowest sense this will affect the earnestness & passion in our sung and spoken praise & worship. Individually, we will need to develop routines of praise & thankfulness in our own daily lives.

Corporately, we need to commit to come together weekly to worship our great God. This is a challenge to us if we are only in Switzerland a short time – with all the sights of this country and Europe on our doorstep, can we still commit to coming together each Sunday to worship?

Such love will also make us want to worship in the broader sense. Rom.12.1 (Msg) *"So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering".... We will want to "offer your bodies as a living sacrifice,this is your true and proper worship" i.e. holy living.*

Worship will involve **service**

We are the "household of faith".⁶ Any household has some fairly mundane jobs - such as washing up, cleaning, cooking etc. - have to be done. Our household is no different and so there are always things people can do to serve....

Cleaning the building, hospitality, teaching in Sunday School (K4G), helping in the Youth Group (Wildfire), Nursery, Worship team, serving on the Board, being a Life Group Leader, accounting, administration, beamer, sound system, live streaming, Mission support etc.

Worship will also involve **using our gifts**...

We are the body of Christ – that Body only works properly when all the parts are working properly – using our natural and spiritual gifts to build one another up

Worship will involve **financial giving** – our church runs on the donations of its members to pay the staff, the room rentals, our missionaries and all other costs. Financial giving is part of our worship to God & we need to work out our commitment in this area.

2. Love the Lord with all your SOUL

It's hard in the Bible to differentiate this from the heart – it seems to be the essence of the person in a similar way to the heart but incorporates mind and will and emotions.

In Genesis 2.7 God formed Man out of dirt from the ground and blew into his nostrils the breath of life. The Man came alive—a living soul!

Mark 12.30 Love the Lord your God with all your....

In other words, Dust + The Spirit of God = a living soul. This is an amazing **Wonder!** There is a principle here....



We can consecrate our hearts in every way and give every area of our lives to God in worship but our efforts for him will remain dust unless the breath of God comes upon us.

⁶ Gal.6.10

Jesus said to the disciples, ⁷ "Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" – the Holy Spirit.

When he came at Pentecost everything changed – from the timid bunch of followers of a man who had once been alive they became bold apostles of the Lord who had risen from the dead.

You may be thinking: "this is getting a bit risky – can't we just keep everything within our understanding and control?" Yes, we could BUT not if we want to allow God to do all He wants to through us. The only way to do that is allow Him to blow on us by His Spirit and for us to respond.

There are two things that will change this from being a lovely theory into a wonder-full reality. One is **faith**. That means we trust in Him and are prepared to go out on a limb for Him. People say you spell faith R.I.S.K.

The other is **prayer**. Throughout the Bible and church history God has done amazing wonders where His people have prayed. So, we put a very high priority on prayer.

3. Love the Lord with all your MIND

Mark 12.30 Love the Lord your God with all your....

The Greek word has the idea of "deep thought". We want to be those who think deeply about what we believe and how to understand life in the light of God's **Word**.



The western world has been trying to live by reason alone for the last 300 years, without God (a-theistic world-view). This has led to where we are now - that truth is regarded as totally relative. "If it's true for you that's ok but something else is true for me!" At such a time, we need to be thinking hard in the light of Scripture so we can provide true answers to lost people.

Listen to the apostle Paul's urgent exhortation to use our minds!⁸ *"To be perfectly frank, I'm getting exasperated with your infantile thinking. How long before you grow up and use your head—your adult head? It's all right to have a childlike unfamiliarity with evil; a simple no is all that's needed there. But there's far more to saying yes to something. Only mature and well-exercised intelligence can save you from falling into gullibility".*

If we are to rise to this challenge then we need to really know the Word of God and think Biblically – that is why we will continue to have a major emphasis on preaching and teaching the Bible.

In practise, let's ...

- commit (again) to a renewed effort to read the word of God? There are many Bible plans and apps that can help and we encourage everyone to be reading the Bible on a daily basis.
- pay attention to the Word that is preached here week after week. (Maybe take notes?!!)
- help others in K4G understand the Bible stories? (we'll find it often helps *us* also).
- teach our Youth in Wildfire so that they know how to answer their peers who want to experiment with sex and drugs.

These are urgent things and we need to love God with our minds to respond to these challenges.

⁷ Luke 24.49

⁸ 1 Corinthians 14:20-25 Msg; see also Peter says in 2 Pet.3.1 This is my second letter to you, dear friends, and in both of them I have tried to stimulate your wholesome thinking and refresh your memory [of Bible teaching]

4. Love the Lord with all your **STRENGTH**

Mark 12.30 Love the Lord your God with all your....

Ps.90.12 Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.... i.e. – we have limited time & strength – show us how to use both to do what we must do - to share the Gospel with the world



William Carey, who lived at the end of the eighteenth century, was a cobbler, a not-very-good Methodist preacher and in his own words was “a plodder”. Yet he used his strength to start the first modern mission society from which today’s mission societies got their inspiration. He went to India where he translated the Bible into Bengali, Oriya, Assamese, Marathi, Hindi and Sanskrit. He also founded the Serampore College to train indigenous ministers for the growing church and to provide education in the arts and sciences to anyone regardless of caste or country. This is not bad for someone who was just “a plodder”. His motto was *“Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God”*

What are the **Works** that we as a church can/should be doing?

1. Mercy – there are always people who need kindness – whether it is meals for new mums/ or visits to those who are sick; / making space for someone who is lonely /or giving welcome to the stranger – we are in a great position to do those things and we need to look for those opportunities.
2. Evangelism – it is often said - “The church is the only institution that exists for the benefit of its non-members” and it’s true – we want to share our faith with those who do not know Jesus. So we will seek opportunities to do that at Christian festivals – e.g. at the Christmas carol service, Easter Day, Baptisms and Taster services , making them user friendly to those who do not normally come to church.

It is easy to think we are English speaking so do not have an ability to reach people in this city. Turn it on its head – we are English speaking so we have a unique opportunity to reach other English speakers that maybe would never be reached by the German or French speaking churches. So let us use those opportunities.

3. Mission – our aim and practise for many years has been to give 20% of offerings to mission. We already have 5 wonderful missionaries/missionary couples that we are supporting as they seek to do amazing things in different parts of the globe with truly ambitious projects. We want to continue to support them and maybe send more. Our hope is to send teams to help them in their work. So, let’s love the Lord with all our strength!

