

Robert Waldinger is the fourth researcher overseeing a long scientific study. In fact, it is probably the longest study of humans ever conducted.

Harvard longitudinal study on men. It started in 1938 and has tracked 724 for 83 years. (as of 2021)

Two groups: impoverished inner-city youth from Boston's poorest neighborhoods and later, sophomore boys at Harvard college were added.

They study them every two years with interviews, questionnaires, medical records, physicals, video-recorded conversations with spouses, etc.

Good relationships keep us happy and healthier.

Good, close relationships are those in which individuals are confident in counting on the other in rough times.

Three lessons:

1. Social connections are really good for us and that loneliness kills. Those who have relationships with family, friends, community, -- happier, healthier, and live longer. Loneliness kills – less happy, health declines earlier in midlife, brain functioning declines sooner, and live shorter lives.
2. The quality of close relationships matter. Conflict is really bad for our healthy. Living in good, warm relationships are protective. Predictive: The people who were the most satisfied in their relationships at age 50 were the healthiest at age 80. In fact, satisfaction in relationships was a stronger predictor of health than cholesterol numbers. Good, close relationships buffer us from difficulty—when in pain, relationships keep us in a good mood.
3. Being in good relationships in your 80s keep our brains healthy and active.

Pretty cool, right? But why am I talking about this?

The church has for a long time tried to deal with our experiences of God—collectively, and those recorded in scripture.

And over time developed the idea of the Trinity to talk about who God is and how God shows up in our lives.

The strange thing though is that God in three persons prevents God from being because God is always relating to Godself. Not like anyone or anything else.

GOD is relationship. Instead of being—God is always and essentially relating—to Godself, yes, but also to all of humanity.

This is a pretty big deal. It means

So how do we live into being disciples of a Trinitarian God? How can we be a church of relationships?

We cannot be a group of individuals. We must be a congregation. We must be the Body of Christ, relating, relying upon, and dependent upon one another.

And so I want you to meet with two other people this week—over the phone, at the park, over coffee—but have two conversations with others in the congregation that you don't talk with often. And the conversations don't need to be long—but you need to get past the niceties and check in with them.

Because we make a better reflection of the God we follow when we are being the Body of Christ, when we are relating and in relationship with one another—and others know they can count on us.

This is the blessing of God the three in one and one in three.