

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

3 February 2015: Susanne Irving, Life Church Petersfield

Daring to be real

I have recently read about the Japanese art of Kintsugi (“golden joinery”) or Kintsukuroi (“golden repair”), which is employed when a valuable ceramic or china breaks. When the pieces are put back together, lacquer, bonding glue or epoxy is mixed with powdered metals like gold, silver, bronze or platinum. Everybody who looks at the restored object will therefore notice the repairs - there is no pretence of perfect wholeness. The ceramic’s history is not only accepted, but celebrated, creating a remodelled piece of pottery or china with a new kind of beauty and strength.

In contrast, those of us being who have been brought up in the West will often struggle to let the cracks show. After all, our culture is striving for perfection, so we commonly aim for an invisible repair of a broken item, wanting to make things look as good as new – or just get rid of it and buy something new. However, trying to hold our broken pieces together and concealing the damage, scars and disappointment in our lives comes at an emotional cost. It often prevents intimacy and true connection and can lead to anxiety and depression.

The truth is that none of us goes through life unscathed – we may have been broken in different places, but we are all broken. Community can flourish when we dare to be real with each other and share not only our victories, but also our burdens.

One thing that stands out about the stories in the Bible is that even the heroes are shown with all their cracks and flaws - maybe we do not become heroes despite our weaknesses, but because of our weaknesses... When we tell the truth about our lives with all their ups and downs it can encourage and inspire others.