

# CELL NOTES 16/6/08

## ICE BREAKER

EITHER

Who is the most surprising person ever to show up at your door?

OR

What is the most astonishing thing you have ever seen God do?

## THEME

A look at some tough questions we face at the moment.

Reading Acts 12 : 1-19

## SERMON OUTLINE

- 1) The reading presents a real mixture of what God apparently does and does not do, and how the church reacted. James is executed, yet Peter is miraculously freed. The church is praying for his freeing, and does not believe it when he is on the doorstep.
- 2) The wider picture in Acts is also a mixture of remarkable direct activity by the Lord, and the people in the church struggling to relate properly to each other, and live as God wants them to ( see Acts 6 : 1 etc.) All this underlines three areas I believe God is speaking to us about at the moment.
- 3) *What about prayer for healing, when it does not happen?*  
Various examples from the Bible when that was the case  
John Wimber and David Watson  
Experience has always been mixed.
- 4) Sickness as a punishment for sin, as a sign of spiritual inferiority, as a sign of God's inability to heal, or something He sends "for our good" are all false ways of understanding this mystery. We may not be able to understand things, but these approaches are not the answer.
- 5) More to the point is realising that the kingdom is now (ushered in by the cross and resurrection) but not yet in its fullness (which will be when Jesus returns.) In the in between time in which we live, things are partial and incomplete.
- 6) The decision of a family to withdraw from All Saints is an immensely sad and painful matter both for them, and the wider church family. They have given me permission to share that their reason for this is that as responsibilities and involvement have increased, so a sense of being cared for and cherished in the midst of that has waned. Whatever may or may not have happened, they arrived at a point where they felt being part of the church was draining and not nurturing them.

7) I believe God is speaking to us through these events about *the human, and godly stuff, about how we relate to, and care for each other*. This is utterly vital – more so than matters concerning the direct activity of the Spirit, and something for which we equally need His activity in our lives for, because

8) *The church is made up of sinful and broken people*. We are on a journey to becoming like Jesus, but we start with sin and brokenness inside – and we can't fix ourselves. As the leader, I count myself at the forefront of this, as I know that churches reflect their leaders.

9) When people feel inadequately cared for, this will not be a deliberate matter but often a consequence of us being too concerned with our own matters. Love, as fruit of the Spirit, needs to blossom more.

10) A thread at the Harrogate conference was the need to honour each other – affirm what is good, what God is doing in each others lives, rather than complain about what we wish was different, or what God appears not to be doing at present. We so easily use our mouths to bring down, rather than bring honour – as has been brought home to me twice in the last week.

11) I believe God is saying

***Keep on pressing in to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, especially in the area of healing.***

***Hear what I am saying concerning the life of the body. Work at honouring and loving each other very seriously – especially in the small things.***

It's not either/or, but both/and.

12) John 13 : 34-35 - Jesus' new commandment  
Acts 1 : 5 – Jesus' final promise.

## QUESTIONS OF APPLICATION

How did God speak to you through the reading, or the message on Sunday?

1) How do you react to the three points in italics, and point no 11 in the sermon outline?

2) What practical situations does this message relate to for you as a cell? How can you respond?

3) How would you like the Holy Spirit to touch your life in the areas touched on in this message?