

CELL NOTES
For Neil Edbrooke's talk on 25 November 2007

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

We are studying the book of Ruth in BCF. It is a remarkable book that had a very formative influence on the church 30 years ago – in fact, we turned it into a drama/musical presentation. Singing and acting Scripture certainly helps absorb the message. It was written by Iain MacDonald and first performed at Iain and Cora MacDonald's wedding. (He later wrote another musical based on the story of Isaac and Rebecca that was performed at Zoe's and my wedding!)

There were several themes that emerged – one was the way that simple but daring acts of dedication, love and loyalty can have remarkable effects. The underlying message here was one of commitment – the desire to express covenant in relationships and share life in all arenas – possessions, (houses, cars, money) as well as personal skills and talents. We found it highlighted the need for church to move toward a far greater honesty, openness and reality in our relationships. The metaphor, the Body of Christ, expressed a unity and “complementarity” where every member of the church played a part. The idea of a clergy/laity divide was challenged and one example of the impact of this would be the emergence of church leadership who had not been through a formal ordination or theological training. The recognition of the priesthood of all believers also moved from a nice theory to active exploration. In short, commitment to one another carried a lot of implications for the *way* we lived, *where* we lived, and *how* we expressed church life as a community rather just as a Sunday event that we attended.

The overarching theme that emerged from our study of the book of Ruth was movement of the purpose of God. It seemed a very prophetic story – ordinary people, one of whom was a complete outsider – became caught up in God's far greater story, the revealing of the Kingdom of God through David in OT times, and the line that led ultimately to Jesus. It was like a tiny stone thrown into still waters, producing waves of astonishing significance. The book of Ruth moves from the chaos of Judges, the absence of government, physical and spiritual famine, to the arrival of a new Kingdom and a new way of living.

Read the Book of Ruth

Discussion

1 Ruth's commitment and courage began to unlock more than she ever imagined. God's purpose in the world. How does this translate into our lives today? What do you see as God's purpose for us, for the church we are a part of, for our world?

2 To take this step into her destiny involved commitment to Naomi, and then later led to Boaz's commitment to her. Do we have a strong sense of commitment in our lives – to God and to friends in the church?

3 Ruth trusted Naomi with her life – a big risk. Trust is what holds human relationships together. The risk is we will be let down, but the result of not trusting is worse – we will never grow relationships with depth and intimacy. How does this strike you in relation to your own experience with people and in your relationship with God?

4 After making her decision (probably after the Sunday morning meeting worship time) Ruth woke up on Monday morning and probably wondered what she had done.... Maybe... Doubt is a part of our life because without it there would be no faith either. The worst thing to do it to deny or squash it. But nor do we want them to paralyse us. How do you handle your doubts? What helps you overcome them? What do you make of the idea that God is far more concerned that we prove faithful to what we do know than do nothing until we have absolute certainty. Read Matthew 28 – The Great Commission.

5 Can you describe *a ripple effect* in your life?