

CELL NOTES
For Neil Edbrooke's talk on 15 July 2007

THINGS CAN BE DIFFERENT

Introduction

In one sense the entire Bible is a collection of books that describe God's love for the world and his intention to change it for the better. It's a book about renewal, redemption, re-creation on the cosmic scale – see Romans 8: 19-21 – and on a personal level. Jesus said: Come to me all you who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Matt. 11.28. In the book of Revelation, Jesus says: the old order of things has passed away... I am making all things new. 21:4,5. Story after story in the Scriptures tells of God beginning the process of changing the world by changing people – often individual people. They often journeyed literally, from home and settled state to new territory and new challenges, but they always journeyed inwardly as well. Their lives were transformed, not simply changed on the outside.

Discussion

Can you identify people who illustrate this same process today? What about your own story? How has God led you over the years? Do you feel the journey is continuing?

This picture that life is not inevitable, whatever the circumstances, however trapped someone may feel in the present circumstances, things can be different, is a message of HOPE! This is the essence of the gospel. It is not necessary to wrap it in theological language. For many people the Christian message they want to hear is simply this: the world doesn't have to be like this; there is hope.

Do you know anyone who feels trapped by present circumstances? The church is not a haven from the world; it is hope for the world. This is why we can be involved in global issues – like climate change – and personal stories of salvation.

Read Acts 9 The story of Paul's conversion

What different things contributed to the radical transformation of Paul?

These things also apply to our lives:

- Openness
- Encounter with God personally
- Trust - involving action (he was led by the hand)
- Other people – who are always involved in the process
- The Holy Spirit at work in us
- Struggle! Paul spends time in the wilderness

Discuss these different factors. How have we experienced them? How can we play a part in helping others? What do you need to continue this journey?