

Cell Material – Week beginning 22.9.08

Welcome

(If you are able, ask cell members to bring along their most treasured possession to show at the meeting) What is your most treasured possession? Why is it precious to you? (Don't let this part take over the whole evening!!) How many of the things shared are precious in monetary terms and how many because of sentimental or emotional value?

Word

The following is what a typical Western family would have to do to adopt the lifestyle of a family living at the level of 60% of the world's population. Ask one cell member to read this out while the rest of you close your eyes to listen.

We begin by invading the house of the imaginary family to strip it of its furniture. Everything goes: beds, chairs, tables, TV, DVD, computer, lights. We will leave the family with a few old blankets, a kitchen table, a wooden chair. Along with the drawers go the clothes. Each member of the family may keep his oldest suit or dress, a shirt or blouse. We will permit a pair of shoes for the man of the family but none for the wife or children.

We move to the kitchen. The appliances have already been removed so we turn to the cupboards. The box of matches may stay, a small bag of flour, some sugar and salt. A few mouldy potatoes already in the rubbish bin must be hastily rescued for they will provide the basis of tonight's meal. We will leave a handful of onions and a dish of dried beans. All the rest we take away – the meat, the fresh vegetables, the tinned goods and stuff that was in the fridge and freezer.

Now we have stripped the house – the bathroom has been dismantled, the running water shut off, the electric wires taken out. Next we take away the whole house. The family can move to the garden shed. Communication must go next – no more telephones or internet in the house. There is an internet café in the next town but you can't afford to use it. No more newspapers, magazines, books – not that they are missed since we must take away our family's literacy as well. Instead in our town we will allow one radio.

Now government services must go. No more postal or fire service; no refuse collection. No hospitals, dentists or doctors nearby. The nearest clinic is 10 miles away and is tended by a midwife. It can be reached by bicycle, provided the household has a bicycle, which is unlikely.

Finally money. No bank accounts, no savings, no credit cards, no insurance policies. We will allow our family a cash hoard of £5.

Try to imagine yourself as a member of this imaginary family trying to survive – how do you think you would feel? If you could see a typical family from the UK living beside you, how would you react to their comparative affluence and wasteful lifestyle? What would you say to them when they complained about their health service/traffic system/government/food bills/inability to lose weight/not having a holiday/child's school?

Read **Romans 12 vs 1-2**. How much influence does Christianity have on contemporary values in the UK? Are your values different from the 'pattern of this world'? In what ways?

1 Timothy 6 vs 3-10 and 17-19 In verse 6 Paul writes that 'Godliness with contentment is great gain.' What do you need to be content? Are you already content with what you have or do you seek more? (a bigger/newer car; bigger or better house; more clothes; new furniture or gadgets?) What would it take to make you content?

In verse 10 we read the often misquoted verse – often quoted as 'money is the root of all evil' but read what it actually says. What kinds of evil can the 'love of money' lead to?

Micah 6 vs 6 – 8 What can you do practically as an individual or as a group to 'act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God'? (some ideas in the witness section below)

Psalm 113; Luke 6 vs 37,38 How do you like to be treated when you make mistakes or are feeling weak? How should we be treating others in need of mercy?

Read Amos 6 vs 21-24 What does this passage say to us about our worship? What is true worship as far as Amos is concerned?

Worship

Pray for people in the developing world who struggle to survive. Sing one of the following songs or listen to it on CD. Listen to what God might be saying to you about how your own lifestyle or attitudes in the light of what you have discussed. Pray that God will show us all how we can help those in need in our world.

SF 483 Restore O Lord; SF 664 Beauty for brokenness; SF 429 O Lord the clouds are gathering; HP 776 Make me a channel of your peace.

Witness

What practical steps could you take as an individual or as a cell to help people who are treated unjustly or who suffer under the burden of poverty?

Here are some ideas:

- ✓ Count how many pairs of shoes you have – include old, new, slippers, gardening, wellies etc. Why not promise to donate £1 for each pair to a third world charity such as Tearfund or Christian Aid. Are you shocked by how many you have? What does the amount of shoes say about your relative wealth?
- ✓ Buy fairly traded goods whenever possible and shop ethically for clothes.
- ✓ Sponsor a child in the developing world through a legitimate Christian charity such as Compassion or World Vision.
- ✓ Get on Tearfund's mailing list to receive their newsletter and keep informed about third world issues.
- ✓ Support the projects that NMC support such as Ian and Simea in Brazil, Good News Ministry in India and the churches in Busia, Kenya.
- ✓ Watch or read the news carefully and remember to pray for the issues that you hear about in the developing world.
- ✓ Fast from treats (eg. sweets, cappuccinos, alcohol, magazines, ready made sandwiches, meals out) for a week or a month and give the money saved to a third world Christian charity such as Tearfund.
- ✓ Buy the book 'Operation World' and pray about the issues faced by one of the countries each week at your cell meetings or at home on your own.
- ✓ Accumulate spare change to give away.
- ✓ Tithe your income to support God's work.

If appropriate go around the room and ask each person to complete this sentence:

'As a result of what God has shown me today, this week I will try to.....'

Next week share what you have done differently. You may all like to bring your shoes to cell next week so you can see how many you have collectively!