



The Jesus shaped life

Willesborough Baptist Church
Small group study notes 1-5
May to June 2011

*Our new series, **THE JESUS SHAPED LIFE** endeavours to take a further look at the challenge of discipleship as we live in today's world with all its pressures and challenges.*

What does it really mean to be a follower of Jesus?

What are the challenges that are presented to us to be those who have a radical cutting edge to their faith and trust in God?

There are many occasions when we think to ourselves - perhaps I won't pitch up to the small group meeting this week! We make the excuse that life has been just a tad busy recently but the real reason is that we don't get much out of it! It's not the leader of the small group, or necessarily the study series that puts us off, and the people in the group are really not so bad - it's just that at the present time our spiritual life is on hold. There is something that we cannot always explain but we know it is a very present hindrance to being serious with God.

Where is the sense of passion that we once had? ...the embrace of adventure that characterised our life?the boldness that caused us to step out perhaps where even angels feared to tread?

Such exciting days have perhaps been lost....it's not that we don't pray anymore or have no desire to be faithful followers of Jesus. All this is still there in our lives, but somehow it's not connecting with where we find ourselves within the life of the church.

We want in this series to face the dynamic of the Jesus shaped life - and find that in our wrestling with 'faith', that faith is expressed in the ongoing desire to know God and be known by God.

Jesus said that He had come that 'you might have life and have it abundantly.' It is this abundant life that we need to enter into and live in the good of in the here and now of life with all its pressures and demands. May we be renewed in our vision of being faithful followers of Jesus and may our lives have that distinctive Jesus shape about them.

The result would be a reshaped church with a vibrant people living life to the full in making God's vision for a people a powerful reality.

*Let us desire to be increasingly more **Jesus shaped** in our lives.*

Alan ~ April 2011

1: A KINGDOM ORIENTATED LIFE

The overall title to this series is **the Jesus shaped life**. One of the observations that was made of the first believers is that it was clearly evident that they had been with Jesus. For instance - there was the occasion in Acts 4 when Peter and John were arrested and put in jail. Hauled before the Sanhedrin they expressed remarkable wisdom in speaking out with strong conviction to the religious leaders as they quoted and applied scripture. Acts 4:13 *'When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.'*

- Can you think of some other occasions when Jesus shone through the actions and responses of the first believers?

I have been a Christian for over four decades - and as I write these notes I wonder how much of Jesus is seen by others? My personal prayer and especially for this series is that more of Jesus would be seen in my life.

WATCH THE DVD NOW

The word **Kingdom** seems a strange word for us today to use, yet it is an important word that lies right at the heart of Jesus' ministry.

- Take a few moments to talk about this word 'kingdom'. Does this word have any meaning for us today?
- Why do you think Jesus used it so much?

Remember that the Kingdom of Heaven and the Kingdom of God refer to the same thing.

The message of Jesus is summed up in Mark 1:15 ***'The time has come, he said. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news.'***

The word Kingdom is all about the rule and reign of God in the

world. The simplest definition I have seen is ‘the realm where God has his way’.

Jesus, as he called disciples to be his followers, not only taught about the Kingdom but he lived out the Kingdom. Jesus was 100% orientated to the Kingdom. Jesus lived and breathed the Kingdom. It was a powerful message that was amply illustrated in the lives that were changed as a result of experiencing a new found faith, a significant healing, a liberating release from demonic power and even the dead being raised. There were plenty of critics but the evidence was before the eyes of even the most hard hearted opponent. The Kingdom of God was a transforming power released into the lives of ordinary men and women and the result was that God’s reign and rule were being extended. The territory over which God ruled was growing significantly.

Let’s take the first word REPENT.

- How would you explain to someone what this word really means?
- Do you think that Alan is right when he said in the DVD that repent is a word that is reserved too often for the beginning of the Christian life rather than the continuation of the Christian life?
- Why do we not hear and speak more about repentance?

There were a number of statements that Alan mentioned about repentance and you are encouraged to add your own.

- ◇ **Repentance honestly faces up to failure before God.**
- ◇ **Repentance faces the battle with sin.**
- ◇ **Repentance embraces the grace of forgiveness.**
- ◇ **Repentance is the ongoing joy filled life of being real with God.**
- ◇ **Repentance is an essential attitude expressed to one another.**

Why not add some other statements about repentance.

- ◇
- ◇
- ◇
- ◇

The community of the Evangelical Lutheran 'Sisterhood of Mary' in Darmstadt, Germany was established on the powerful liberating principle of repentance.

Basilea Schlink the founder writes 'Life without daily repentance is spiritually poor, lacking in joy or power. This emptiness accounts for inner distress and lack of victory in the struggle against sin. It is this that causes spiritual death in the midst of life. On the other hand, the joy resulting from repentance permeates all of life.'

Jesus is passionately interested in us developing a repentant heart and spirit, one that longs to be shaped by Jesus' words '*the time has come repent...*'

There are Seven letters to the Church of Asia Minor in Revelation chapters 3 & 4.

The call to repentance is clearly sounded in each letter.

- Why do you think Jesus underlined this call to repentance in the letters?
- Take one of the letters and unpack this call to repent. How much do you believe that it is more a call to a community response rather than an individual response?

Repentance is about re-orientating our hearts towards God.

If there is time take the second word BELIEVE.

To believe is to put our full trust in the radical message of life and hope for the world. Believe is more than mental assent - it is about faith that is living and active in the God of the Kingdom that we have entered into and live in through the increasing expression of repentance.

- How do you see this active word 'believe' being expressed in the life of the disciples?
- What is the impacting power of such active faith?

A prayer from **Basilea Schlink**:

O Holy Spirit,

I ask You in faith, grant me a repentant heart. Repentance is the only gift I want to strive for. Help me to ask for it continually. For it is a mighty driving power which will renew my whole life. It will impart to me divine life and increasing love for my Lord Jesus.

2: A HAPPINESS INSPIRED LIFE

Passage: Matthew Chapter 5

What does the word HAPPINESS convey to you? It's a word that is related to the words HAPPEN or PERHAPS. It's something that somehow HAPPENS, when not expected. Or even doesn't HAPPEN when it is expected.

Can you guarantee HAPPINESS?

The good fairy in the fairy stories waves her magic wand and the baby princess is guaranteed exceptional beauty, a pleasant disposition and a life of HAPPINESS. I wish I knew where she bought her magic wand!

But Jesus said that He had come that we might have life and have it to the full. He spoke of abundant life, and fully expected us to live it.

Is there a difference between what Jesus promised and what we usually describe as HAPPINESS? Discuss in your groups what you think is the difference, and what you think Jesus really meant by "abundant life"?

NOW READ Matthew chapter 5

NOW WATCH THE DVD

In the DVD Mavis said that the Kingdom Jesus preached was an inverted Kingdom; a Kingdom whose values are completely opposite to those of the world we live in. She also used the word "Shalom" instead of "Blessed", because "shalom" means "being in right standing with God, living in a way that is pleasing to Him and thereby receiving His love, mercy, peace and blessing".

The DVD also looked at the first few Beatitudes in a little more detail, but left the groups to discuss the last few.

Opposite is a chart showing Jesus' values and the counter-values.

Jesus' Values	Counter values
<p style="text-align: center;">BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO...</p> <p>v3. are poor in spirit. Who don't approach life with confidence in themselves.</p> <p>v4. mourn (for the world we live in?)</p> <p>v5. are meek. Gentle and honest</p> <p>v6. hunger for righteousness</p> <p>v7. are merciful</p> <p>v8. are pure in heart. (What do you think this means?)</p> <p>v9 are peacemakers. (How can we be peacemakers today?)</p> <p>v10. are persecuted because of righteousness. (In what ways are we persecuted today. Is it possible to be persecuted even in church circles?)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO ARE</p> <p>self-confident, competent, self-reliant</p> <p>pleasure-seeking, hedonistic, the "beautiful people"</p> <p>proud, powerful, important</p> <p>satisfied, "well adjusted", practical</p> <p>self-righteous, "able to take care of themselves"</p> <p>"adult", sophisticated, broad-minded</p> <p>competitive, aggressive</p> <p>adaptable, popular, "don't rock the boat"</p>

In your group add other “counter values” which stand in contrast to Jesus’ values, and then discuss more fully the last three of the “blesseds”.

You may very well disagree with the counter-values in the chart, that’s just fine.

Jesus’ Kingdom teaching focused first on values and then on the behaviours through which values are expressed. He then went on to give a number of illustrations. These “case histories” you will find in Matthew 5 v 17 – 42.

Jesus explained that His teaching is not contrary to the Old Testament (that the listening disciples and Jews were committed to) but that it is intended to “fulfil it”. That the Kingdom lifestyle that Jesus promoted fulfilled the Law’s requirements by producing a righteousness that “surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law” (v 20).

MURDER - Jesus located the root of murder in anger and hatred (v 21 – 26). As peacemakers we need to learn to take the initiative in being reconciled to anyone we have difficulty with. *“Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer”* (1 John 3:15).

- Is this a bit extreme, do you think?
- Can anyone in the group relate how reconciliation and forgiveness can destroy anger and hatred?

ADULTERY - Jesus suggests that the true meaning of Adultery is not simply in the act, for God is concerned with lust itself! (Matt. 5:27-30). Jesus sarcastically suggested to men quick to excuse themselves by claims that “I saw her, and couldn’t help myself,” that they try to rid themselves of their problem by plucking out the offending eye! Impossible? Surely. And so again the issue is focused on the place where the problem lies: “in the heart.” The list of the Fruit of the Spirit begins with Love and ends with Self-control!

- How can we learn to gain more self-control over our inner emotions?

DIVORCE - Moses permitted it, but Jesus called for lifetime commitment (v 31 – 32)

In today’s world Divorce is a contentious issue. It was also in Jesus’ day, but for different reasons. In the first century a man could divorce his wife and she could be left destitute, so Jesus was protecting those who had been rejected.

- How do you feel within your group about Divorce? What experiences, if any, have some of you had? Are there rights and wrongs on both sides?

Commitment means that a promise has been made, and we are to make our word binding. We need not use oaths; if our word is good and folk have recognised that we can keep our word, then “Yes” should be sufficient.

- Is your “Yes” sufficient? Talk this through not just about divorce but about the many other situations in which we find ourselves.

REVENGE – Romans 12 v 19 *“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: ‘It is Mine to avenge; I will repay’, says the Lord”*.

Matthew 5 v 38 - 48 teaches that God’s “shalom” rests on the merciful. In the Kingdom we are called on to be like the Father in heaven and to love even our enemies. This will not deny us justice, because as Paul has said, God will avenge us in ways that we can never do.

- How do you feel about “turning the other cheek”, or letting someone “take your cloak as well as your tunic”?
- What about “going the second mile”? In Jesus’ day it was legal for the hated Roman soldiers to demand that a Jewish citizen must carry his load for a mile, so “going the second mile” really meant something to the disciples that listened to Jesus.

DISCUSS – If we truly adopt Jesus’ values as expressed in the Beatitudes, what other kinds of changes can we expect to see in our lives?

Abandoning the values and the instincts which lie at the root of man’s society, as citizens of His Kingdom we are to build our lives on those peculiar values Jesus taught, values that seem all too shabby to the world around us.

Poverty of spirit? Mourning, meekness, hunger for righteousness? Mercy, purity, peacemaking, willingness to be persecuted on God’s account?

Yes. On these values Jesus invites us to build new and exciting lives.

PRAYER – Pray together that the Holy Spirit of Jesus will so penetrate our lives that we may sincerely learn to live out His Kingdom values.

3: A JESUS CREED LIFE

- What is a creed?
- Who recalls the Apostle's or the Nicene Creed? But what about the Jesus Creed?

I first heard the phrase 'The Jesus Creed' as one coined by a theological professor Scot McKnight. Scot was lecturing on spiritual formation and he came to believe that Jesus would have defined spiritual formation in the words of the Jesus Creed.

Listen to the DVD

The Pharisees in Jesus' day saw themselves as guardians of the commands of God - the Ten Commandments given to Moses and also the 613 additional bye-laws added by Moses.

Then further definitions were given to the commands. Multiple regulations were written down in order to help the people obey God.

It is in **Mark 12:28** that Jesus is approached with a typical debating question which was *'out of all the commandments which is the most important?'*

Jesus spoke with remarkable wisdom and cut through the strategy of his opponents who were out to trip him up and condemn him.

The Jesus Creed happens to be just two verses of scripture that were very important to all Jews, Mark 12:29-31.

The first verse of scripture was about a person's relationship with God captured in what was known as the *Shema* which is found in Deuteronomy 6:4-5 *"Hear, O Israel: the lord our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart with all your soul and with all your strength"*.

There would be no difficulty with Jesus' hearers accepting the commandment that was twice daily embraced by every Jew. Jesus took the opportunity to add a second and forging it into the one overall command and it was *'Love your neighbour as yourself'*.

This certainly characterised the life and ministry of Jesus - **love God**

and love one another. If we follow the same pattern of loving God and loving others, then we will become increasingly Jesus shaped in our own lives.

Alan indicated in the DVD that in our groups we will only concentrate on the second part of the command and the first part about loving God will be tackled in the Sunday morning preaching series.

And so to the second part of Jesus' command that expresses a Jesus shape.

Take the **Parable of the Good Samaritan [Luke 10:25-37]** and don't go into all the details of the parable but the principles that it expounds concerning how we are to engage with people around us, those whom Jesus calls 'neighbour'.

- How do you find the parable challenging you?
- Try to recall a couple of episodes where Jesus himself reaches out to the rejects of society with remarkable effectiveness.
- Imagine the story from the perspective of the Priest and Levite. In what way were they obeying the Law and therefore acting appropriately?
- How could you be the equivalent of the 'Samaritan' in your own community?
- Do you recall a time when you sought to be the 'Samaritan' but your help, support got refused? How did you feel on such an occasion?
- Why is it tough call sometimes to show compassion and go the extra miles like in the story Jesus told?

Scot McKnight 'There are only two commandments. Love God. Love others. If you love God and love others, you do all God wants of you. No wonder people flocked to Jesus: he found the relational core to the will of God when he reduced the laws to the Jesus Creed.'

Alan mentioned **Jesus' brother Judas** who initially was not a follower of Jesus but after the resurrection he did become a faithful follower and a key leader within the Early Church community.

Take the two sections from James and look at one of them within your group.

James 1:27 (NLT)

Pure and lasting religion in the sight of God our Father means that we must care for orphans and widows in their troubles, and refuse to let the world corrupt us.'

- How do you see James working out what it means to live the Jesus creed life?
- What is the cost involved in doing so?

James 2:2-4 (NLT)

For instance, suppose someone comes into your meeting dressed in fancy clothes and expensive jewellery, and another comes in who is poor and dressed in shabby clothes. If you give special attention and a good seat to the rich person, but you say to the poor one, "You can stand over there, or else sit on the floor" well, doesn't this discrimination show that you are guided by wrong motives?

- *How do we live out the call of Jesus to be shaped by kindness, generosity and care for one another?*

Challenge - all this week and there is no reason why you cannot make it a daily habit for the future - is to repeat the Jesus Creed at the beginning of the day and at the end of the day.

In fact, you can repeat it throughout the day - when you are in a traffic queue, when you are getting frustrated with someone in the office.

It is all about allowing the Jesus creed to become the Jesus shape to your life.

THE JESUS CREED

'Hear, O Israel,
The Lord our God, the Lord is one,
love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul,
with all your mind, and with all your strength.'
The second is this:
'love your neighbour as yourself.'
There is no commandment greater than these.

4: A GENEROUS SPIRITED LIFE

INDIFFERENCE

When Jesus came to Golgotha they hanged Him on a tree,
They drove great nails through hands and feet, and made a Calvary:
They crowned Him with a crown of thorns, red were His wounds, and deep,
For those were crude and cruel days, and human flesh was cheap.

When Jesus came to Willesborough they simply passed Him by.
They never hurt a hair of Him, they only let Him die:
For men had grown more tender, and they would not give Him pain,
They only just passed down the street, and left Him in the rain.

Still Jesus cried, "Forgive them, for they know not what they do".
And still it rained the wintry rain that drenched Him through and through.
The crowds went home and left the streets without a soul to see,
And Jesus crouched against a wall and cried for Calvary!

Studdert Kennedy.

NOW WATCH THE DVD

For your information. The Scriptures that Mavis used in her DVD presentation are:- 2 Corinthians chapter 8 v 9: John chapter 13 v 3: John chapter 3 v 1 ff.

NOW READ. Today we are looking at A Generous Spirited Life. There are so many ways to be generous without touching our pockets. Yes, Jesus does want us to be generous with the finances we possess, but that is only one small way in which we can show the world how generous our God is.

We will be looking, primarily, at **Luke chapter 6 v 24 – 38 and 46 – 49.**

Sociologists have labelled one kind of human behaviour "reciprocity." They have noted that in every culture this norm, or standard, seems to operate. It's expressed in our saying, "You scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours." This is

what reciprocity means: you do something for me, and I'll pay you back. And reciprocity also dictates, you do something bad to me, and I'll pay you back for that too!

Most of us are bound by this norm. The Jones family sent you a Christmas card last year? Somehow you feel you have to send one to them this year. The Carlsons invited you over to their house? You know it's now your turn to have them for dinner.

This norm of reciprocity operates even in the intimacy of family life. You bought me a present? I'll be warm and loving this evening. Your 19 year old son mowed the lawn without being asked? Well, of course, he can have the car tonight.

The simple norm that we ought to be nice to those who are nice to us, and are under no obligation to be nice to those who aren't, seems to permeate every human relationship. This norm of reciprocity helps to hold society together. If we couldn't depend on people responding in kind, there would be a terrible uncertainty in all our relationships.

Discuss this "norm of reciprocity". In what ways do you find it operating in your life?

But Jesus teaches that as Children of God our behaviour isn't to be governed by the norm of reciprocity! Another norm, another standard, is to replace it.

In God's upside down Kingdom He expects us to **initiate the loving action**, not simply to reciprocate.

Luke 6 v 27. "*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you!*" This is scary stuff! How can we love, knowing we may be hurt by an enemy who does not respond as we hope he will? How can we initiate a loving action towards someone who hates us, even though we could be violently rejected? Discuss how you would go about this.

v 29ff. "*Offer the other cheek, give your undergarment.*"

What do you think Jesus really means here?

This statement puts us in a very vulnerable position.

What is it that gives us the creeps about becoming vulnerable?

If we trust Christ, and become vulnerable, what (if any) protection do we have?

v 30. *“Give away....do not demand your goods back again!”*
The Amplified Bible qualifies this by adding that we should give to “who is in want of necessities”.

I once lent a book to someone who kept it for several years, when I – very politely – asked her for it back she quoted this verse and said I was very mean and in the wrong to ask for it back. How would you feel about this?

v 31 – 36. This passage of Scripture explains again the norm of reciprocity.

List the reasons why we, as Children of God, need to be different from the world.

v 37. *“Judge not....”* Elsewhere in Scripture it teaches that we will be judged by the judgement that we use for others. That, surely, should make us very careful how we judge. But there is more than judgement meant here; do not censure others. The Amplified Bible reads, *“acquit others and forgive and release them; give up resentment, let things drop!”*

How good are you at letting things drop? Do you find that you tend to go over and over hurt feelings in your mind until they take on vast proportions?

How can we curb these sorts of attitudes? Where does Jesus come in all this?

v 46 – 49. *“Why do you call Me, Lord....”*

This is surely the crunch! If Jesus is my Lord, then I really must learn to practice the things He teaches! If I want my life to be really secure, like the house on the rock, then I need to live the kind of life that Jesus wants me to. This brings us right back to where we started when listening to the DVD.

Do you know where you come from?

Do you know where you are going?

Have you be born of His Spirit, and are you prepared to obey the standards of the Kingdom of God, where you now belong?

Have you the courage to abandon the norm of reciprocity and adopt the norm of initiating love that reveals the true Kingdom of God?

CAN YOU PUT YOUR NAME IN HERE?

I,..... knowing and being fully aware that the Father has ordained that I should live a generous life, and that I have come from Christ and will return to Christ, am enabled to begin to live as God wants me to!”

PRAYER

Father God,

I live in a world that tells me to be single-minded, not like-minded.

To put myself first, not others.

To value my own individuality, self-expression and well-being above those of everyone else.

How can I be like-minded with my brothers and sisters in Jesus?

How can I stop doing things out of selfish ambition and vain conceit?

How can I value others above myself, and look

to their own interests and not my own?

It goes against the very DNA of my culture.

So, please show me Jesus again.

Show me the man who had everything, but made Himself nothing;

Who found true obedience in service and sacrifice;

Who became less than He was in order that we might become more.

If I can see the world like He did – if I can think like He thinks – perhaps I can serve as He served.

I want to be like-minded in unity of love, purpose and thought, with my brothers and sisters in Him.

So, please show me Jesus – humbled and exalted –

and help me to follow His way.

Amen

Richard England

5: A COMMUNITY IMPACTING LIFE

Introduction

It is one thing to consider how we are doing in our personal Christian growth, another to ponder how we fare among our Christian brothers and sisters, but perhaps the greatest challenge is what godly influence we have for Jesus among those who are outside the Kingdom of God among whom we live day by day.

Each can be very challenging and one sometimes may feel like applying to be a spiritual Ostrich; we can feel that we may never measure up to what we consider to be 'the standard' Often however this 'standard' is man-made and there is a great danger of replacing one set of rules (not under law) with another set of rules more damaging.

In thinking about having an impact on the community, it is important to realise that there is one basic invitation that comes from the Holy Spirit that affects our personal life, our church life and the community outside of Christ. It is simply this – He is inviting us, calling us and drawing us to be more like Jesus. Everything flows out of this. This is His work and the more we fall in love with Jesus the more our life is being changed and reflects something of Him.

A man once walked down the village of Stansted Abbots. Someone observed his demeanour and enquired who he was and what was special about this ordinary man. They heard he belonged to Jesus and they saw the answer to their spiritual need and came to trust in Jesus. There is something about the beauty of Jesus in a Christian life.

As we think about a life that impacts a community let us keep things simple, not create a set of rules but get back to the basics of allowing God by the Holy Spirit make us more like Jesus.

Read the following Scripture:

Matthew 5 v14-16 Phil 2 v12-16 1 John 4 v17 2 Corinthians 3 v12-18 Luke 9 v1-6

Now listen to the DVD

Questions for Discussion:

1. If being like Jesus is so important to our Heavenly Father, how can our 'Christ-likeness' be used to have an impact on the community - in the workplace, home, on the road, with the neighbour? e.g. love, peace, patience, kindness etc
2. How is it possible for us to sometimes hold back from allowing our relationship with Jesus to be seen? What can be done to help in such a situation?
3. An old saying says: 'Actions speak louder than words'. Is that sufficient in making Jesus known?
4. How can we develop our Christ-likeness? Do you think that one way may be to start using the little we feel we have?
5. Why do we find it difficult to express our faith even to one another sometimes?
6. The Apostle John wrote that we should walk in the 'truth' The Scripture records these TRUTHS: 'you have the mind of Christ'....'we are being changed into His likeness'...'you are the fragrance of Christ to God' 'your bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit Who is in you'. Is it possible that we do not always shine quite so brightly in the community because we find it difficult to accept these and other truths? What would happen if we really did?
7. Is it sufficient to seek a personal relationship with Jesus or does our Heavenly Father hope for more?
8. What were the 'greater works than these shall you do' (John 14 v 12) which Jesus spoke of. Were they just acts of kindness and mercy or more than that. Could we be 'missing a bit'?

Jesus take me as I am
I can come no other way
Take me deeper into You
Make my flesh life melt away
Make me like a precious stone
Crystal clear and finely honed
Life of Jesus shining through
Giving glory back to You.

'He Who calls you is faithful and He will do it'

The Jesus Shaped Life

The DVD introduction to the study series together with these study notes is brought to you by Mavis Gibbs, Alan Dinnie and Laurie Martin.

Study 1	A Kingdom Orientated Life	Alan
Study 2	A Happiness Inspired Life	Mavis
Study 3	A Jesus Creed life	Alan
Study 4	A Generous Spirited Life	Mavis
Study 5	A Community Impacting life	Laurie

The series is complemented by the Sunday Sermons that Alan will be preaching.

If you missed a particular Sunday you can always listen to the message or download the message from the Church website.

www.wbc-ashford.org.uk