

The Jesus Shaped Life

Part two

Willesborough Baptist Church
Small group study notes 6-10
June to July 2011

6 : A WHOLENESS ENJOYING LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Please start watching the DVD. Early on you will be asked to take some time to discuss what you believe to be the essence of Jesus' message. Please write down your answer below:

Now please continue to watch the DVD. In the talk I summarise the key of Jesus as being about _____

The words _____ and _____ can best be used to describe its meaning. The Jewish words that describes the *essence* of God's Kingdom is _____, which means _____

After watching the DVD there are several Bible passages you may want to read together. Consider reading Matthew 5:1-16, Mark 4:26-33, and Mark 10:17-29.

DISCUSSION AND SHARING

The Kingdom of God is about reconciliation and restoration.

Reconciliation means that by his death on the cross Jesus has put things right between us and God. In Jesus, God reconciled us to himself (see 2 Corinthians 5:18). Because we are reconciled there is also restoration.

Restoration means that bit by bit our lives get transformed 'the Jesus way'. The more we give of ourselves to Jesus, and the more we start following his example, the more of his shalom, his complete peace, we will experience in our lives.

Questions:

1. We often use the term 'to surrender ourselves to Jesus'. What does this mean and how do you do that?
2. How do you let God into the difficult parts of your life, i.e. the things we know are wrong but struggle to give up?
3. The wholeness enjoying life means God being Lord and Master over every aspect of our life. How can we help each other to make this a reality in our lives?

Most, if not all of us, experience times in our life where God seems far away. Particularly during such times we should examine our life to see if we've got our priorities right. Are we starting doing stuff in our own strength and are we forgetting about God? Or are we refusing to let God into parts of our life, even though we know they are wrong?

4. Can you relate to the above? If so, how did you get 'back on the right track' with God?
5. How do you deal with difficult situations when the 'wholeness enjoying life' seems too far from what we experience in reality?

Restoration also means sharing God's shalom (complete peace) with other people.

6. Discuss what opportunities you/we have to sharing God's love with other people in a very practical way.

We will never see perfection this side of the grave. We live in a broken world. But still we have the opportunity today to experience the beauty and wholeness of His Kingdom. God's promise is not 'just' for life after death, it is about becoming more and more like him, right here and right now. That is what the wholeness enjoying life is all about!

PRAYER

Prayer is an important aspect of the wholeness enjoying life as it connects us to God. Prayer is part of the process of surrendering ourselves to him.

Maybe there were issues that came out of today's discussion that you need to bring before God in prayer. In any case, please spend time praying for each other that more and more of the 'Jesus way' may show itself in our lives.

The Jesus Poem

A baby boy was born
In a manger he did lay
Wise men came to worship him
This child in the hay

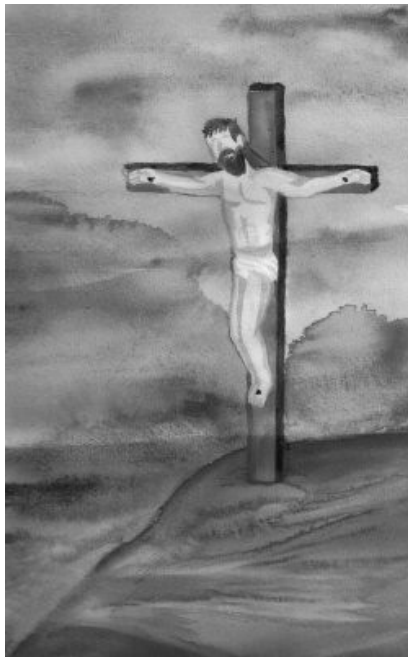
A carpenter from Nazareth
Claimed to be God's Son
Said he was the only way
To reach the holy one

A man up on a hill
Died between two thieves
Roman soldiers killed him
No crime had he conceived

A corpse lay in a grave
Outside Jerusalem's walls
Most thought he was dead for good
No decay he saw at all

Over five hundred people saw him
This man raised up to life
In forty days God lifted him
Back up into the sky

Two millennia later
This man is still alive
He stands and knocks at your
heart's door
Will you let him come inside?



*by Scott Ludbrook (1987)
Painting by Greg Walker*

7: A WORSHIP EXALTING LIFE

Worship is a central element in the Christian life. We were created and recreated in order to be worshippers. Certainly if we are going to be Jesus shaped, then worship has to be at the core of all that we are. Worship is the natural response of hearts that are stirred by the Holy Spirit. Worship is a result of tuning into God's wavelength. Worship is an integral part of our connectivity with God.

Worship though is much more than attending a church and sharing with others in 'Sunday worship'; it is to be an essential part of our daily living.

Consider the following statement that was made by the author **Gordon Dahl** *'Most middle-class Americans (and it can apply to Brits as well!) worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship. As a result, their meanings and values are distorted. Their relationships disintegrate faster than they can keep them in repair, and their lifestyles resemble a cast of characters in search of a plot.'*

- ◇ Hard hitting isn't it – worship our work...work at our play...playing at our worship. What should it be?

Play the DVD

Alan quoted the phrase of John Piper regarding **Christian Hedonism**.

- ◇ How do you understand this word *hedonism*?
- ◇ In what way is Christian Hedonism something to be pursued wholeheartedly?

In the beatitudes, there is the one that proclaims ***blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness***. Christian hedonism is all about the longing to enjoy the fullness of God. The stirring of the Spirit within is to hunger and thirst...and we can never be too hungry or too thirsty.

There are no laws to restrict our enjoyment of God – our passion for his holiness – our longing for faith and favour in the beloved. Those who do hunger and thirst ***will be filled***. God is in the business of constantly meeting us and blessing us with his all embracing presence.

Let's pray for a greater appetite for God! Let's be greater lovers of pleasure in God.

- ◇ In what way do you see Mary the mother of Jesus taking great delight in God?
- ◇ How do you see her pleasure in God being expressed especially in the great song '*The Magnificat*' that you will find in Luke 1:46-55?

Alan made several points about worship:

1. Worship is personal.

Think about some of the ways that you observe Jesus worshipping. Share them together. As Alan mentioned, it is in the Lord's prayer that there is the great accolade of praise filled worship that honours God in the words '*Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be your name...*' Whether it was personal prayer as he committed all things to the Father or joining in the corporate celebrations on the grand festive occasions that brought countless pilgrims to Jerusalem – worship was personally expressed.

What we do learn from Jesus is a rich intimacy that existed in his worship to the Father that is declared in the wonderful Aramaic word *Abba*. The disciples observed this *Abba* relationship that the son enjoyed with the Father and how it was expressed in worship.

- ◇ What are the implications of knowing *Abba Father*? Take Rom 8:15 to help you: '*For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba Father'.*

2. Worship is plural.

There is worship that we offer to God as an outworking of our own personal response to the overtures of God's love and grace in our lives. But, we also recognise that he has put us in community and we are to be worshippers together.

There is the digital world of '**virtual church**' as people engage together on the internet – but even if common vision is to be shared it is surely not the answer, for worship to be real has to be expressed together. There is no biblical concept of living the Christian life in isolation - we learn, grow and glorify God together as the Body of Christ. Without Christian community we will never effectively grow.

Jesus had a zeal for God's house – the place of corporate worship and the place of prayer for all nations.

- ◇ What lessons can we learn from Jesus' action in the temple? Take a look at the account in John 2:13-17.
- ◇ What would you say to someone who said that they don't need to come to church in order to worship?
- ◇ How can we encourage a priority for worshipping together? The classic verse that summarises the Early Church is Acts 2:46-47 and here there are indications of worship being the primary characteristic of the first believers.

Charles Swindoll 'Worship is significant because it turns our full attention to the only One worthy of it. Worship underscores our celebration of everything that brings honour to our God. In giving Him honour – when we have truly worshipped - there is something so deeply satisfying and gratifying that words cannot describe it. It's importance eclipses all things urgent.'

3. Worship is powerful.

In John 4 there is the account of Jesus meeting a Samaritan woman at the well and talking about living water. Jesus was talking about water that wells up to eternal life – he was talking about how this woman could have a dynamic relationship with God that was an all satisfying relationship.

- ◇ Jesus speaks about worshipping in spirit and truth, John 4:24. What do you think Jesus is looking for from us?

There is the comment that Paul makes about worship and the exercise of spiritual gifts within the worshipping congregation and how an outsider can come in and be spiritually convicted through the powerful worship of the gathered congregation. 1 Cor 14:25 '*...he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you."*

4. Worship is promise filled

There are many amazing promises within scripture but one that Jesus gave to his disciples is all about gathering in his name – and it is the promise about the assurance of his living presence among them.

If you have time in your group meeting take the experience of Jesus when he was anointed with perfume - the account is in John 12:1-8. The cost of this perfume is estimated to be in the region of several thousand pounds! Mary poured not a few drops but the whole amount, not on Jesus' head (that was usual), but on his feet wiping those feet with her hair that she unbound.

- ◇ In what way do we see Mary surrendering her whole life to Jesus in an expression of worship?
- ◇ Observe the reaction by others to this expression of worship. Why does worship so often create mixed responses among God's people?

Jim Graham 'True worship will not only affect God, but it will affect us and others to whom we go.'

8: A GRACE OVERFLOWING LIFE

These words were written many years ago and are probably familiar to most:

*His love has no limit
His grace has no measure
His power has no boundary known unto men
For out of the infinite riches in Jesus
He giveth and giveth and giveth again.*

His GRACE has no measure!! We can never come to the end of it, nor can it be stopped!

This revelation of God's grace and the outflow of graciousness were shown to Moses on the mountain. God was not content just to let the servant of God soak in his presence for many, many days, but he then revealed this aspect of his glory showing that Moses had barely started to know anything of the wonder of God's great heart.

He is gracious because he is full of Grace.

He had not known the Lord in this way before, one of ongoing grace.

Isaiah spoke by revelation of the grace of God also, in yet more amazing terms, when he said to God's people "the Lord waits to be gracious to you" (He is leaning forward in longing for the opportunity to be gracious to you!!!)

Does he really mean that?..YES!

How slow or reluctant we can be sometimes to take him at his word!!- but it does not change the Lord. He is still the same and returns again and again to bless us.

John wrote of the Grace in Jesus' life writing that he was 'FULL of Grace' (not surprising I suppose as he is God!)

It came as a wonderful revelation to the disciples, seeing Jesus' compassion, kindness, forgiveness, acceptance. When they saw Jesus they saw in action what grace was like - it was not a law to follow, it flowed from the heart of the Son of God and expressed itself in daily life encounters with all sections of the community.

The Grace overflowing life is a Jesus shaped life.

This evening we are looking at the Grace Overflowing Life (in case you hadn't noticed(!))

May we be encouraged as we consider this calling and God's full provision for it.

We will be looking at various Scriptures which you will find with the questions after the DVD.

DVD

1. Colossians 4 v5-6. What do you feel is the cause of our words sometimes lacking in the grace that Paul writes about?
2. This passage highlights the conducting of ourselves before 'outsiders'. What do you think needs to change to become 'always with grace people' to all both inside and outside the Church?
3. 1 Peter 4 v8-11. Stewards of God's grace. We have all been given various gifts. What does Jesus' ministry teach us about 'How to Use' them?
4. What responsibility do you feel being a 'steward of God's grace' brings to our lives? Is this a new concept?
5. Ephesians 4 v22-32. How can we develop a more grace filled life - does the passage guide us?
6. John 8 v4-11. What can we learn from this passage about how to minister to others? What was the driving motivation in Jesus?
7. 2 Corinthians 9 v6-10. How do we feel about receiving such promises? Does it encourage us or make us afraid?
8. Luke 6 v6-11. How would we have responded to these Scribes and Pharisees?

9: THE CROSS CENTRED LIFE

“The Cross is not the cross of a man but the Cross of God, and the Cross of God can never be realised in human experience. Beware of saying that Jesus Christ was a martyr. Nowadays He is frequently looked upon as a martyr, His life is acknowledged to be very beautiful, but the Atonement and the Cross are not being given their rightful place, and the Bible is being robbed of its magnitude and virility. The death of our Lord was not the death of a martyr, but the exhibition of the heart of God, and the gateway whereby any member of the human race can enter into union with God. The Cross is the centre of Time and of Eternity, the answer to the enigmas of both.”

Oswald Chambers

READ

Luke 9 v 22 - 27

Matthew 16 v 24 – 26

Mark 8 v 34 – 38

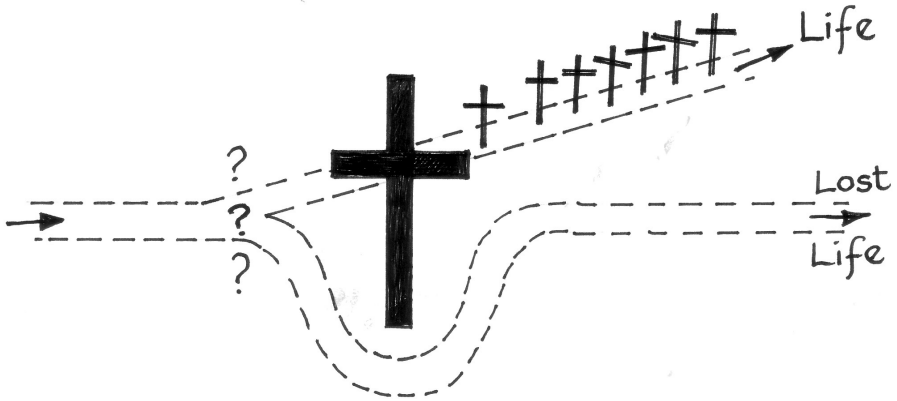
Keep these chapters open as you go through the rest of this study.

NOW WATCH THE DVD

We all know that we have to come to the Cross in order to be saved. But the Cross of Jesus Christ is not to simply remain at the beginning of our Christian lives. The Cross of Christ needs to become a mind-set that rules the way we live. As Children of God we are meant to emulate our Master who has gone on before us, and he lived his life under the shadow of the Cross. His life demonstrated the kind of unselfish living that he wants to see in us. This is what is meant by a Cross-centred Life.

The simple diagram below illustrates this concept.

It is very simple and rather crude, but I hope it will make things a little clearer. Working from the left-hand side the dotted pathways are our Christian lives, and those lives come to a place of decision (you will see that I have put a few question marks there). Once we come face to face with the Cross we have a choice, we can both circumnavigate round the Cross and avoid it completely; or we can go THROUGH the Cross and follow Jesus. You will see that the life line that goes through the Cross is dotted with lots of little crosses, and this is the bit that Jesus was speaking about when he said, *“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”*



Had you ever really taken on board the fact that we are to daily “take up our cross” and follow Jesus?

What, in the past, have you considered your “cross” to be?

Do you think that we can grow so comfortable in the lives we live that “taking up our cross” has become something that we tend to put on the back burner?

Why do you think that some people limit their “cross” to someone or something that they find difficult to cope with?

Jesus taught that each and every day of our lives we need to deny our self life; we need to refuse to allow our natural self-centred inclinations to dominate the way we live. In other words we have to “put to death” things like self-concern, self-sensitiveness, self-awareness, selfishness. We have to learn to crucify each and every self-inclination that naturally affects our daily living.

What do you think are the most common self-centred inclinations that dominate our lives?

Jesus also gives us a very severe warning in Luke chapter 9 when he says, *“If anyone is ashamed of Me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.”*

What do you think he meant by this? How do you think this statement might affect us in our future in Christ? Do you think that Jesus really meant us to take this declaration literally?

Jesus said that he had come, not to be served but, to serve. Throughout his whole life Jesus spent his time and energy on caring for and serving

others, even to the detriment of himself. There were times when he was harassed and exhausted by the crowds, yet still he healed them. There were times when he was abused verbally and physically, and yet he still maintained a real and genuine love for his abusers.

If we are to emulate him, then what changes need to be made in our lives and how do you propose we can make those changes? What help do we get from God?

Not once in all the Gospel records did Jesus ever say or do anything to deliberately hurt someone. He could become angry and could reprimand and challenge those who were in the wrong, but his anger was never ever vindictive; it was always based on his love and concern for the wrong-doer.

Why is it that, when we are angry, we tend to want to hurt other people? How can we begin to turn our thinking around?

Jesus never ever had to say, "I'm sorry, I didn't mean to say that!" Can you just imagine never ever having said something that you regret?

Our tongues seem to run away with us, do you think that we could ever be gracious enough to accept a reprimand from each other should we ever say a cruel thing? Or would we possibly compound the offence and get even angrier?

In John chapter 15 Jesus said, *"This is My commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than to lay down his own life for his friends. You are My friends if you keep on doing the things which I command you to do..... You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you and I have appointed you that you might go and bear fruit, so that whatever you ask the Father in My Name, He may give it to you. This is what I command you: that you love one another."*

In the Greek, where it says "lay down his life" it has the same meaning as rolling out a carpet. So Jesus is actually saying, "No one has greater love than to roll his life out like a carpet...." We walk on carpets; yet in the secular world people say, "I'm not going to let anyone walk all over me; I'm not going to be anyone's doormat!" Is Jesus saying that he wants us to be "doormats"? What do you think he means?

Interestingly, in the Old Testament King David said, (Psalm 84 v 10) *"I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the House of the Lord than dwell in the tents of*

wickedness". A doorkeeper in those days was the equivalent of a doormat; their job was to wipe the feet of visitors; and David was the king! And, you will remember, in John 13 Jesus, the King of kings took a towel and washed the disciples' feet, doing the job of a doorkeeper. He then said that we were to do the same; that he expected us to wash one another's feet.

How can we "wash each other's feet"?

But, Jesus has coupled this directive with the command to "*love one another as I have loved you*". Does really loving someone as much as Jesus loves them take the sting out of "laying down your life"?

Jesus says that he has chosen us, and appointed us to do these very things. He says that acting in this way is "bearing fruit" and those that bear this kind of fruit will receive the blessing of having their requests granted by Father God.

How many times have you prayed desperately for something or someone and your prayer seems to go unanswered? Could there be some explanation here?

How can we, at WBC, obey this command of Jesus so that our corporate prayers might be answered?

How can we, individually, obey this command? And how hungry do we have to be for answered prayer in order to be blessed by Father God in this way?

But, surely, denying ourselves, taking up our cross and following Jesus isn't reliant on painful and horrible situations. We can each "take up our cross" by using all the day to day opportunities that God gives us for nurturing unselfish and loving attitudes.

There is a very old form of prayer called the Prayer of Examen. At the end of the day we come before God and ask him to examine each part of the day just past. We ask the Holy Spirit to trouble our spirit should there be anything that grieves him. This is an excellent way to begin to monitor our progress in walking the way of the "cross". As he illuminates something that we may have said or done that was not loving and unselfish, so we repent and ask his help to change our wrong and selfish attitudes.

And, surely it is a great honour to be asked by Jesus to do something as difficult as this. If he expects us to live in this cross-centred way then he knows that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can accomplish it.

10 : A HOPE FILLED LIFE

As we come to the last session in our series, take some time at the beginning of your small group meeting to share what you have learnt, discovered and appreciated about this **Jesus Shaped Life** series of studies.

- ◇ Out of the nine studies we have had so far what study has stirred you to be more like Jesus?

There is a concern that I would share with you:

In such a series as this one, there is a temptation when thinking about becoming more shaped like Jesus: it is that we seek to imitate Jesus (which we are certainly called to do – *‘Be imitators of God, therefore as dearly loved children’* Ephesians 5:1) through the power of our own human resources and strength. This inevitably leads us into trying to keep a list of rules and regulations.

Rather, what we should be concerned about, is the need to allow the indwelling Christ to reign and rule in power. The Jesus shaped life is about Jesus living his life in us. The New Testament speaks of how we are a people ***in Christ***.

Maybe Jesus’ illustration of the image of the vine and the branches will help us. There is the call extended to us *to remain* in Jesus...and allow his indwelling life to be that which flows out from us into appropriate growth and increased fruitfulness.

Watch the DVD

Alan spoke about how we can end up going round in circles in the Christian life and never really making any progress.

- ◇ Take a moment within your group to share what it is that has helped you sometimes get out of the circle and make some kind of progress in your Christian life.
- ◇ How would you monitor progress in the Christian life?

The call to a hope filled life is a fitting final study because it is all about experiencing the resurrection life that empowers us to live out the Jesus shaped life with increasing authenticity.

Jesus was aware of how God was going to act in resurrection power. Jesus went to the cross with a deep assurance in his heart that God would come through for him and his future was not a permanent rotting grave (Psalm 16:8-11), but the powerful “new” of resurrection.

It is this fullness of hope that we have that is centred in Jesus who is resurrection and life. It is all about a future confidence that is bursting with hope - a hope that is imparted by God himself.

We, as a people of hope, build on the power of the empty tomb. As the angel gave the message *he is not here, he is risen*.

- ◇ How do you think the disciples really felt in the Upper Room – before and after Jesus appeared to them?

Peter's theme in his letter, 1 Peter, takes up this powerful theme of hope.

1 Peter 1:3 *'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'*

For a few minutes I want you to think about this resurrection hope.

N.T. Wright is a very gifted theologian and he has written extensively on the nature of this hope that we are to enjoy.

He says the Christian life is not simply about 'you go to heaven when you die'. There is a greater promise of God that is about the earth being filled with the glory of God. As Tom Wright says 'The great drama will end, not with 'saved souls' being snatched up into heaven, away from the wicked earth ...but with the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven to earth, so that 'the dwelling of God is with humans'.'

This is where we are, all waiting for the bodily resurrection. One day Jesus will raise his people to a bodily life in the new heavens and the new earth.

The resurrection of Jesus implies the restoration of the whole created order and the faithful followers of Jesus have a definite role to play in the final ordering of a transformed creation.

- ◇ Does this idea stimulate us to live in the present in the light of the future?
- ◇ In what way does it challenge us?

It is the resurrection that gives hope in the face of suffering.

Paul says in Rom 8:18 *'I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.'*

There is much by way of sickness together with injustice in the world. The hope filled life is foundational in the Christian life for it is such hope that sustains us when we are faced with bewildering events, not only in the wider world but in the immediate experience of our own personal lives.

- ◇ How do we share the hope filled certainty with someone going through a really tough time when everything in their lives appears to be falling apart?

It is the resurrection that assures us that Jesus is with us.

The disciples struggled to understand that they would be better off without Jesus than with him.

- ◇ Why do we have the same difficulty as well?

It is the power of the resurrection that is the power of the Holy Spirit that comes to dwell within each believer.

- ◇ Take a few minutes to reflect on the implications of Romans 8:11 '*If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you....*'

It is the resurrection that needs to be lived out daily - we live in the power of resurrection not just on Easter Day but every day

God's resurrection power has already been released in the here and now of today's world and it is to equip God's people for mission in the world.

- ◇ In what ways are we to be effectively living? [for instance in being good neighbours, people of integrity in the work place, caring for the needy]

It is the resurrection that gives us the ability to bring hope to the world, and work for the transformation of society.

The future reality is to influence us as we live as citizens with two passports.

- ◇ How does Paul express this and its implication when he writes to the Philippians in chapter 3:20-21 expressing the fact that we are a colony of heaven on earth?
- ◇ What about the great ethical issues of the day? - take one of the issues like euthanasia, nuclear weapons, embryo experimentation, environmental concerns, national debt. How does a hope filled life address such issues in our rapidly changing global village?

It is the resurrection that constantly challenges the church to be a people of resurrection faith, hope and love.

Chick Yuill says 'The church doesn't exist for itself. Our primary task isn't to build bigger congregations, but to create a better world. It isn't to fill our pews with people, but to fill all creation with the glory of God. It isn't to invite people to come to church on Sunday, but to go into all the world making disciples and renewing communities every day of the week. It isn't to send the maximum number of people to heaven, but to labour and pray to bring the kingdom of heaven to earth...'

Remember the verse of scripture that Alan closed with from 1 Cor 15. Paul has been talking extensively about the resurrection and the implications of that doctrine for all believers.

The call of Jesus to his people is very focused and that is to work until he returns.

Let us live out the hope filled life as we continue to love and serve the Lord.

‘Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labour in the Lord is not in vain.’

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, Chris Lukkien and Laurie Martin.

Study 6	A Wholeness Enjoying Life	Chris
Study 7	A Worship Exalting Life	Alan
Study 8	A Grace Overflowing Life	Laurie
Study 9	A Cross Centred Life	Mavis
Study 10	A Hope Filled Life	Alan

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