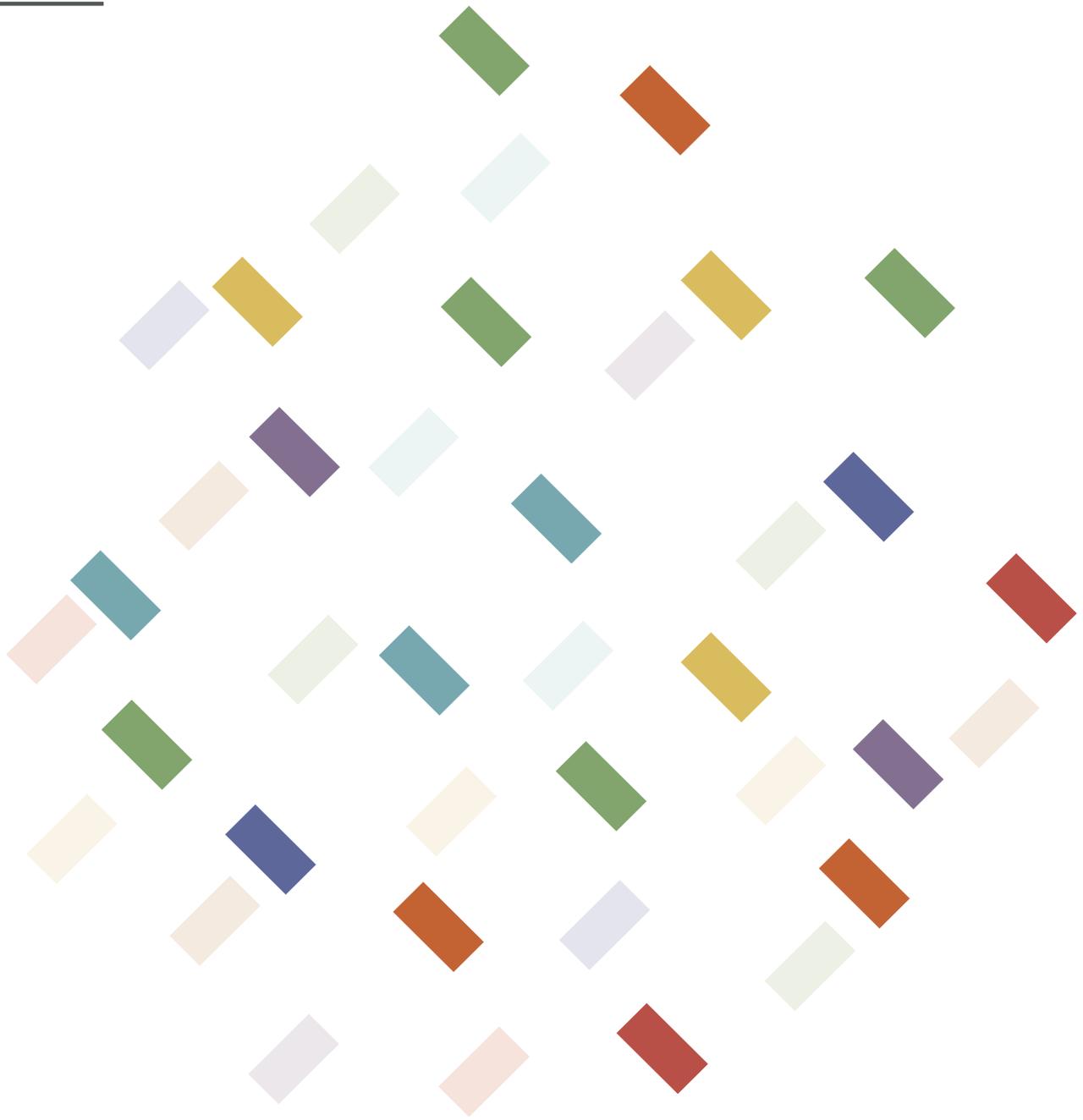


ST GEORGE'S  
CHURCH  
LEEDS



ACADEMY OF LIFE

VIDEO COURSE NOTES

“I AM CONFIDENT THAT HE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL  
CONTINUE TO PERFECT IT UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST JESUS”

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# SIGNS

## TRUE LIFE

Live God's Word

## FULL LIFE

Receive God's Spirit

## SHARED LIFE

Love God's people

## DEEP LIFE

Rooted in God's love

## PURE LIFE

Walk in God's freedom

## SERVING LIFE

A channel for God's blessing

## BOLD LIFE

Witness to God's Kingdom

Can we live like Jesus? Really? On a day to day basis? Where you live and where I live?

it can feel a tough ask. Impossible, even. How can ordinary 21<sup>st</sup> Century people follow the path walked 2000 years before by God's own Son?

That is exactly what Jesus offered: I am the way the truth and the life; I have come that they may have life; whoever believes in me will do the things I have been doing - even greater things!

Jesus not only showed what God's life looks like but he also gave it to us as a gift by dying for us. Now God, by his Spirit makes us like Jesus, one step at a time and he won't give up until all his people together attain the full measure of the stature of Christ!

In other words it's not only possible to be like Jesus - it's our destiny.

# OF LIFE

Now, biologists tell us that every living thing has seven signs of life: movement, respiration, sensitivity, growth, reproduction, excretion, nutrition. That's incredible, when you think of it: over 8 million species have been identified on this planet, but they all share the same signs of life.

What if there are seven signs of God's life?  
 What if all of us, though we are wonderfully different, can all share the same signs of life?  
 The Academy of Life helps us to describe this.  
 It is about seven ways God makes us like Jesus.

This material takes biblical teaching and creates ways for us to access it together. First we look at Jesus and all God's given us through him; then we notice how he's already giving us signs of life; and finally we commit to growing in these seven ways.

It is possible to live like Jesus – it's at the same time the greatest privilege and challenge we've ever been given. It's God's highest priority for our lives and the world is eagerly waiting to see signs of this life in every sphere of society. The Academy of Life is for people who want to take up this calling. I hope you join in.

## NOTE TO GROUP LEADERS

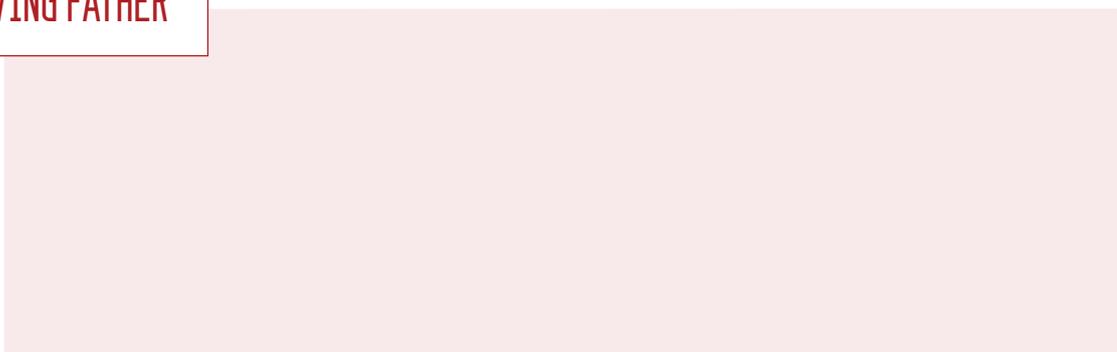
This material was designed to fit into seven 90 minute sessions, perfect for the many small groups that meet from 7:30 to 9pm. You would be advised to start each session with feedback from the last one and then play the video.

The videos are around 25 minutes long, with a pause at about 8 minutes in to allow initial reflection.

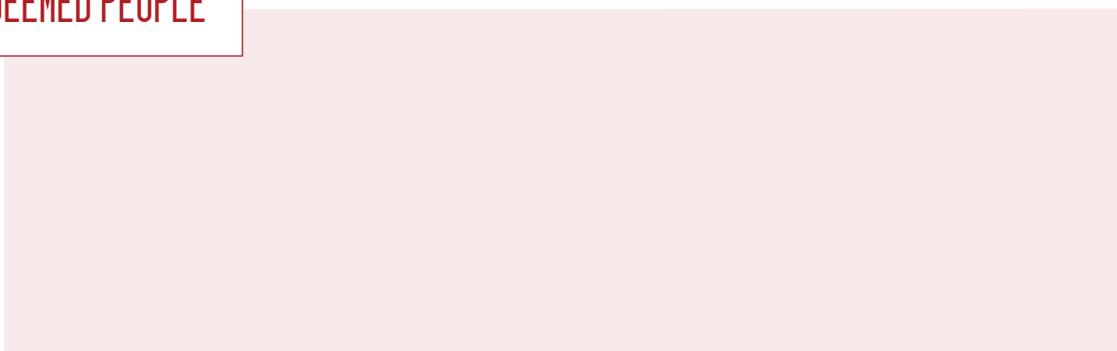
The group exercises suggested in this booklet are intentionally practical. The Christian life is meant to be lived, not just talked about. The hope with this material is to encourage people to practice the life of faith so that they form new habits and values.

# TRUE

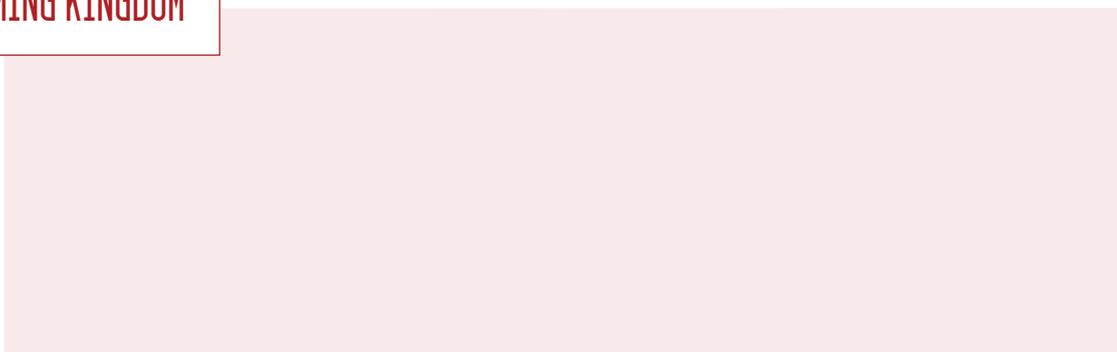
LOVING FATHER



REDEEMED PEOPLE



COMING KINGDOM



# LIFE

How would you summarise what True Life is?

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Can you see examples of True Life in Jesus' life and in your own life?  
(This is a good question to begin with, unless you have already discussed it in the middle of the video)

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What have you already learned about how to feed on the Scriptures?

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A crucial part of growing with God is feeding daily on God's word. Each week fourteen passages are provided in this booklet for groups that meet fortnightly. Groups that meet weekly might want to take seven of the passages.

Each week can you commit to:

- Read the passages
- Spend time reflecting on the meaning, for instance, by meditating the words, writing your reflections in a journal or committing some of them to memory
- Put what you learn into practice in the way you pray, think and live

## TRUE LIFE DAILY READINGS

The truth about God

- Psalm 103:8-12 | Matt 6:28-33 | Rom 8:31-38 | 1 John 4:7-12

The truth about God's people

- John 15:5-8 | Eph 1:3-10 | Gal 2:20 | 3:26-28

The truth about God's kingdom

- Matt 5:3-10 | 19:28-30 | 1 Cor 7:29-31 | Rom 8:18-25

Spend some time looking closely at Matt 5:3-10. What could it mean to live these words in the coming days? (For this exercise, don't focus on questions about the passage. Focus on how you can practically live out the parts that make sense to you).

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Can you commit to read, reflect and put into practice each passage in the True Life Daily Readings?  
Are there any other ways you can commit to True Life before you meet again?

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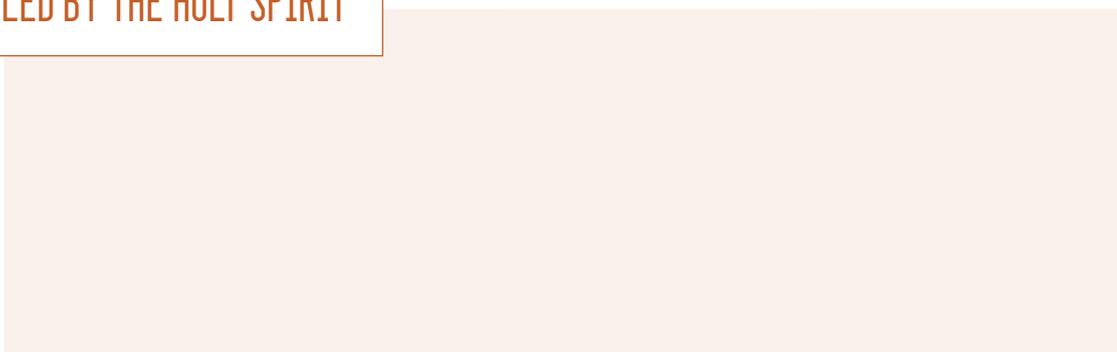
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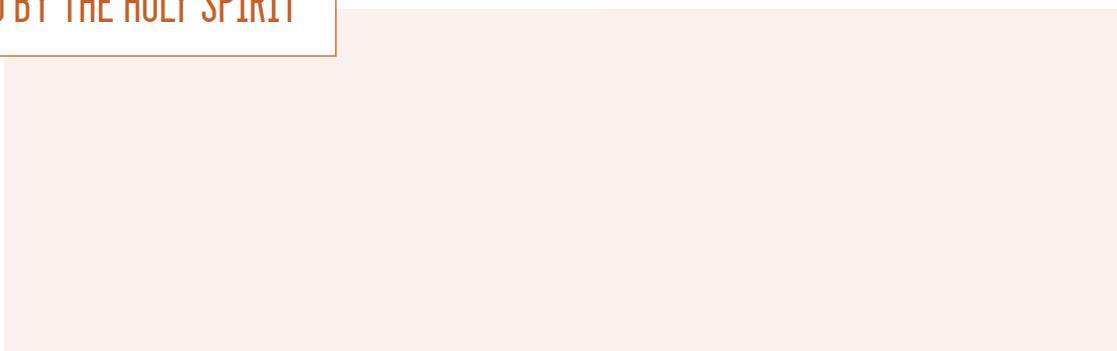
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# FULL

FILLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT



LED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT



EMPOWERED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT



# LIFE

How would you summarise what Full Life is?

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Can you see examples of Full Life in Jesus' life and in your own life?

(This is a good question to begin with, unless you have already discussed it in the middle of the video)

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What experience do you have of being filled with the Holy Spirit?

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Read out 1 Cor 12:7-11 and Rom 12:6-8. Have you been given any of these gifts?  
Are there any gifts you would like to ask for?

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### FULL LIFE DAILY READINGS

- 14 Acts of the Spirit
  - Luke 5:12-15 | 5:17-26 | 7:1-17 | 8:40-56 | 10:1-24 | 24:1-12
  - Acts 2:1-11 | 3:1-10 | 4:1-3 | 4:32-37; 6 | 9:1-19 | 12:25-13:3 | 19:1-22

Take a look at the Full Life Daily Readings.

Can you commit to read these passages, and each day to act on anything you feel the Spirit is saying?

Next time you meet, feedback any stories you have to share about this.

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Take turns to pray for each other, one by one. You may need to be in smaller groups to make sure everyone can be prayed for. Ask for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on each person. Speak out any words or Scriptures that could be from God (you might also write these down for the person).

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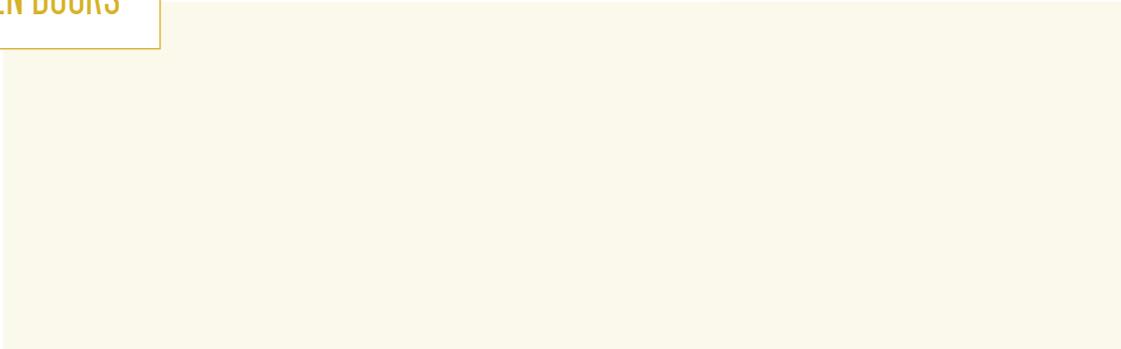
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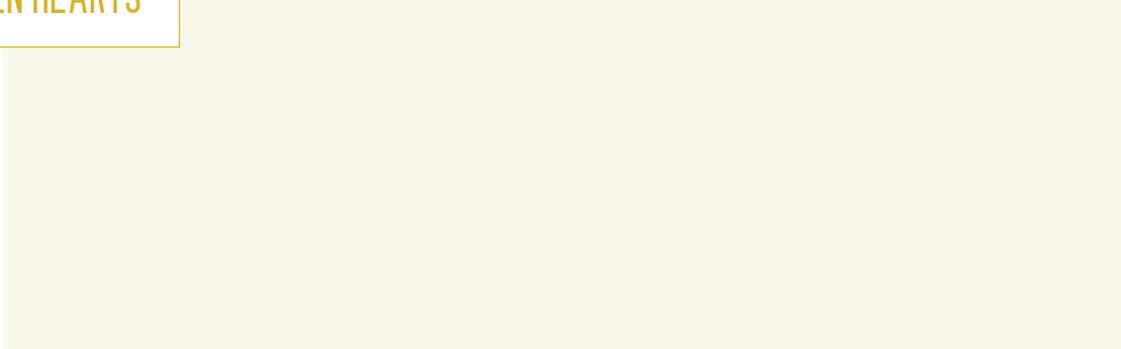
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# SHARED

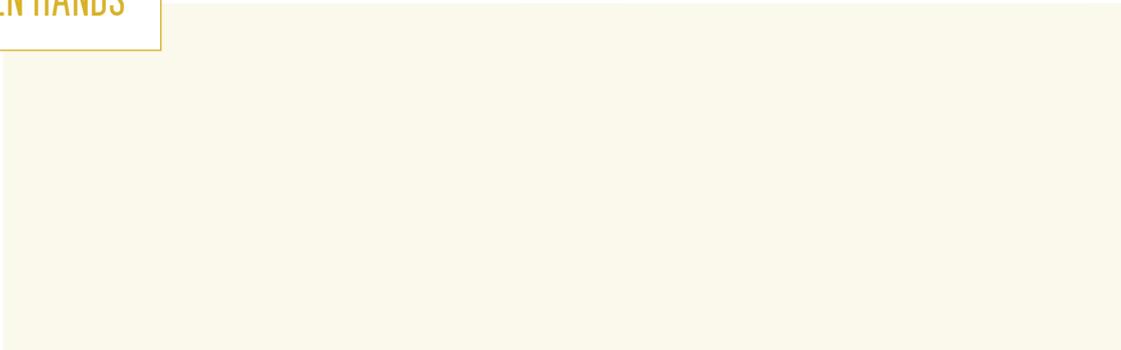
OPEN DOORS



OPEN HEARTS



OPEN HANDS



# LIFE

How would you summarise what Shared Life is?

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Can you see examples of Shared Life in Jesus' life and in your own life?  
(This is a good question to begin with, unless you have already discussed it in the middle of the video)

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Look at Acts 2:41-47. What signs of Shared Life do you see in this account?

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Get practical. How would you rate your group for having Open Doors, Open Hearts and Open Hands?  
What can you practically do to share life more as a group?

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## SHARED LIFE DAILY READINGS

### The Shared Life of Jesus

- Matt 9:9-13 | 18:1-14 | 18:15-20 | 18:21-35 | Luke 14:1-14

### Shared Life in the Church

- Acts 2:42-47 & 4:32-37 | Rom 12:9-21 | 14:1-18 | Eph 2:11-22 | 4:17-28 | 4:29-5:21  
Heb 13:1-8 | Jas 2:1-13 | 1 John 3:11-18



# DEEP

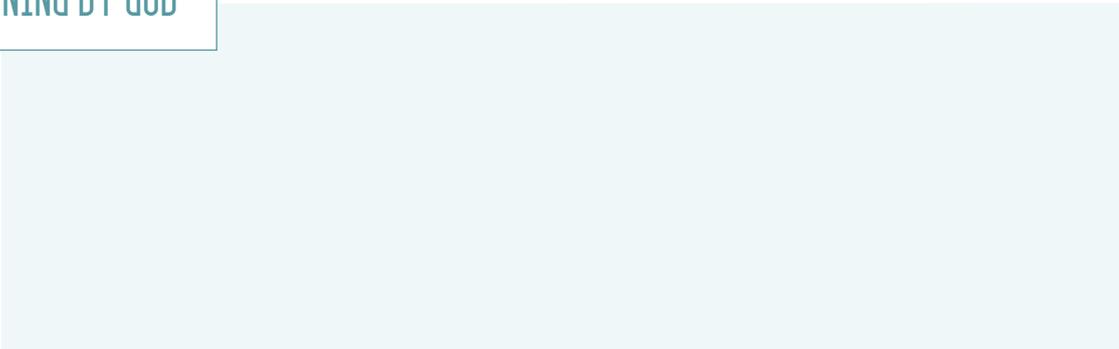
PURSUIT OF GOD



PEACE OF GOD



PRUNING BY GOD



# LIFE

How would you summarise what Deep Life is?

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Can you see examples of Deep Life in Jesus' life and in your own life?  
(This is a good question to begin with, unless you have already discussed it in the middle of the video)

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What have you learned already about how to pray?

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	Daily	Weekly	Seasonal - Monthly, Termly or in Season
Time with God			
Shared Life with God's Family			
Other Key Relationships			
Physical Exercise			
Sleep, Rest & Recreation			

Using the table on the previous page, spend some time filling out a 'Rule of Life'.  
What would you like your habits to be in each area?

Share together what this exercise has shown you. What can you commit to do next?

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Time to pray and reflect as a group.

## DEEP LIFE DAILY READINGS

Deep Life and the Psalms

- Psalm 23 | 63 | 131 | 139 | 145

Jesus and Deep Life

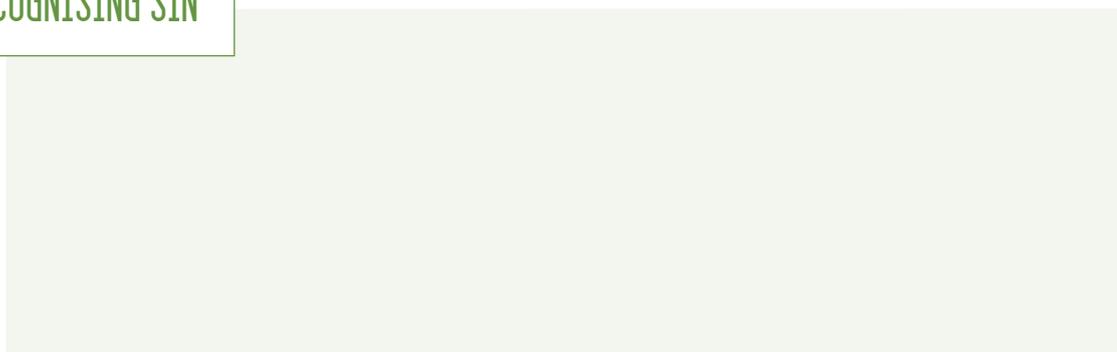
- Luke 4:1-13 | 11:1-13 | 18:1-14 | 22:39-46

Deep Life in the New Testament

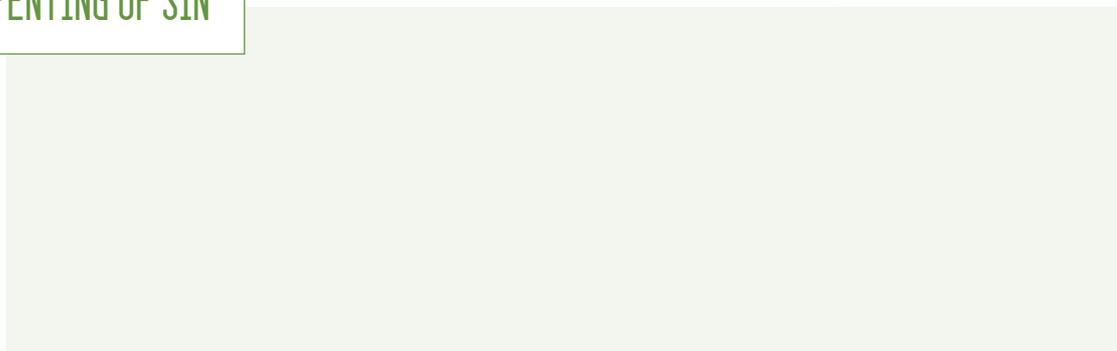
- Rom 8:14-27; 2 Cor 1:3-11 | 12:1-10 | Eph 3:14-21 | Phil 4:4-9

# PURE

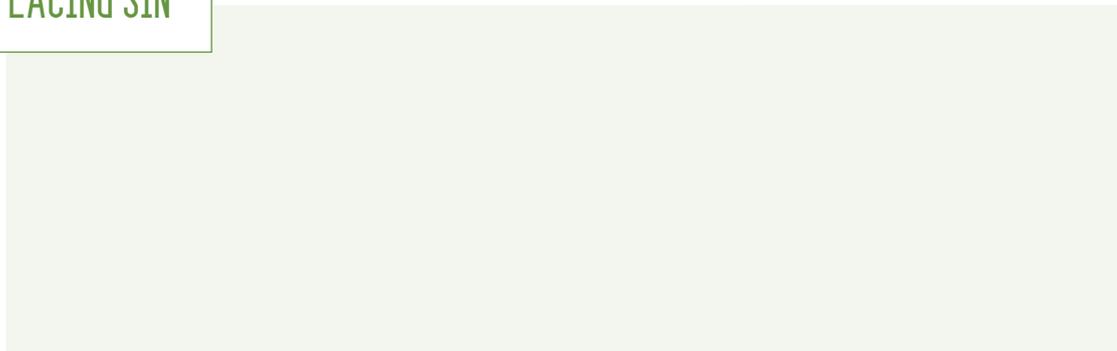
## RECOGNISING SIN



## REPENTING OF SIN



## REPLACING SIN



# LIFE

How would you summarise what Pure Life is?

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Can you see examples of Pure Life in Jesus' life and in your own life?

(This is a good question to begin with, unless you have already discussed it in the middle of the video)

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On the next page, look at the Pure Life lists.

Use this as a private moment to let the Holy Spirit convict you of sin.

Take some time to repent together and pray for each other. You can do this by sharing one or two items on this list which apply to you. Begin by recognising and repenting of these in prayer. Then those who are praying with you can pray for God's wisdom as you seek to replace this sinful pattern in your life.

How do you feel about being accountable to someone on a regular basis?  
Who might that person be? Could you do something this week to make this happen?

### SINFUL PASSIVITY

Insecurity	I fear for myself/ my loved ones	I get paralysed by worry	I doubt God's provision	I often don't feel safe
Apathy	I am not motivated to grow with God	Little changes in my spiritual life	I often draw back from change	I am preoccupied with myself & comfort
Shame	I feel unworthy of God's favour & love	I fear unexpected embarrassment	I draw back from being known	I keep secrets from supportive friends
Hopelessness	I often despair about my future	I often speak negative & cynical words	I frequently imagine terrible things	Nothing good is to come from my life
Self-hate	I dislike myself/ my name/my life	I expect others to reject me	I deliberately damage my body / humiliate myself	I often wish I was someone else
Self Pity	I often dwell on my failures	God has been unfair to me	I feel no one understands me at all	I constantly struggle with hurts & rejections
People-Pleasing	I draw back from confronting others	I hate to let other people down	I depend too much on certain relationships	I seldom witness to my faith
Hesitancy	I am afraid to commit myself	I miss opportunities God has for me	I'm frozen by the idea I will miss God's 'will'	I delay and avoid rather than do what is right
Inferiority	I often feel I am simply not good enough	I draw back from new opportunities	I don't accept compliments	I admire others too much & don't offer myself
Complacency	My main concern is career/family/security	My life is little different from non-believers	I always have & expect more than I need	I steer clear of significant giving & hospitality
Unbelief	I draw back from the promises of God	I refuse to act unless I have total proof	I hide behind complicated arguments	I rarely take risks in my faith
Bitterness / Unforgiveness	I frequently recall hurts done to me	I cannot move on from the past	I resent certain people	I rarely say sorry & offer forgiveness

## PURE LIFE DAILY READINGS

Psalm 51 | Prov 12 | Matt 5:17-48 | Luke 7:36-50 | 11:37-54 | John 7:53-8:11  
 Rom 6:1-23 | 1 Cor 10:1-13 | Eph 4:17-5:2 | 5:3-20 | Tit 2:11-3:8 | Heb 12:1-17  
 1 John 1:5-2:2 | Rev 21:11-22:8

## SINFUL AGGRESSION

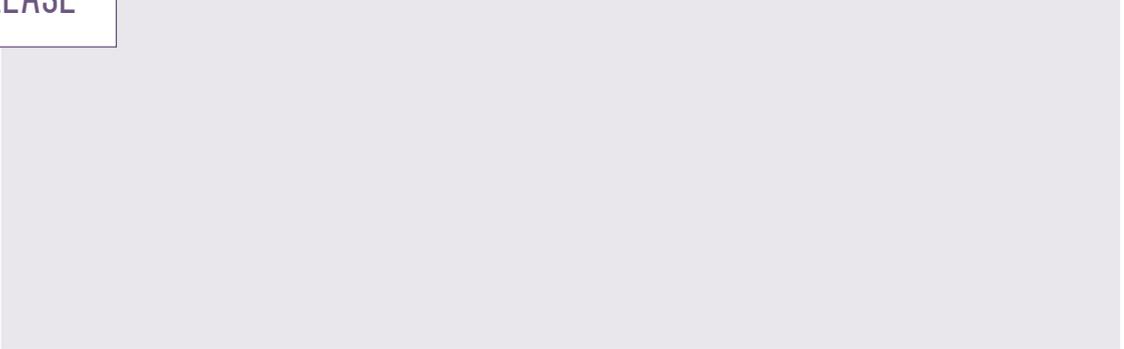
Competition	I seek to outdo others & prove myself	I often compare myself with others	I am driven to succeed at all times	I find failure or threat of failure devastating
Unteach-ability	I know better than most other people	People think I am stubborn	Hearing from God rarely changes the way I act	I pay little attention to the words of others
Critical Spirit	Things are rarely good enough for me	I am critical of people who hold responsibility	I often see the negative	I make jokes at other people's expense & criticise in public
Ambition	It is important that I am widely recognised	I make detailed 10-year plans	I'm frequently frustrated when others delay me	I live in the future not the present
Entitlement	I have the right to say no to God	I cannot grow unless I have everything I want	I have the right to choose how I use my time & resources	I expect a certain standard of living
Attention-Seeking	I find myself dominating conversations	I feel cross or insecure if I am not noticed	I get withdrawn if I have unmet expectations	If I have something to say it must be said
Self-Sufficiency	I don't need other people	I seldom pray & ask for help	I struggle to work in a team	I often find others disappoint or frustrate me
Greed	I have what I need but it's not enough	I dream of a luxury lifestyle	I resent invitations to give	Serving the poor is not significant in my life
Lust	I habitually rate others according to appearance	I cultivate sexual images in my mind / using technology	I engage in sexual fantasy/activity that isn't Godly	I flirt with others or dismiss them if unattractive
Control	I can't relax if I don't have all the information	Others always know when I disapprove	I feel I know what is best for people	I have a hard time accepting other's judgments
Anger	I exhibit sudden rage/outbursts/abusive behaviour	I get wound up easily & show impatience	I respond fiercely to criticism	I'm quietly critical of others in my thoughts

# SERVING

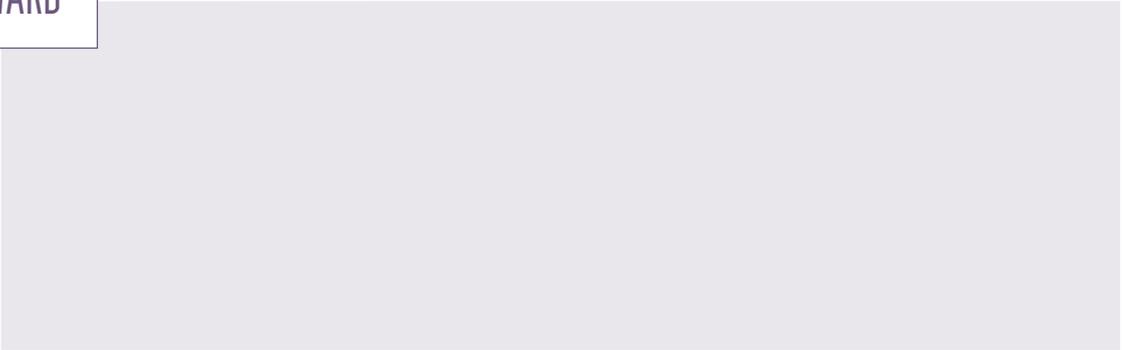
RICHES



RELEASE



REWARD



# LIFE

How would you summarise what Serving Life is?

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Can you see examples of Serving Life in Jesus' life and in your own life?  
(This is a good question to begin with, unless you have already discussed it in the middle of the video)

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What does it mean to serve out of riches?

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Make a list of the things are you most thankful for in your life (include financial, possessions, skills).

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## SERVING LIFE DAILY READINGS

### Serving Life in the Old Testament

- Deut 15:1-11 | Isa 58 | Amos 5:1-17

### Jesus and Service

- Luke 4:14-30 | Matt 20:20-28 | 25:1-30 | 25:31-46

### Serving Life in the New Testament

- Rom 12:1-8 | 2 Cor 8 | 9 | Gal 6:1-10 | 1 Tim 6:6-19 | Heb 13:1-8 | Jas 2:1-13

Take turns to review your lists, what does it mean for you to serve with what you have been given? How can you use these gifts to bless those who are poor?

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Pray for each other and listen for guidance from God.  
Are there gifts God wants to give? Are there ways God is calling this person to serve?

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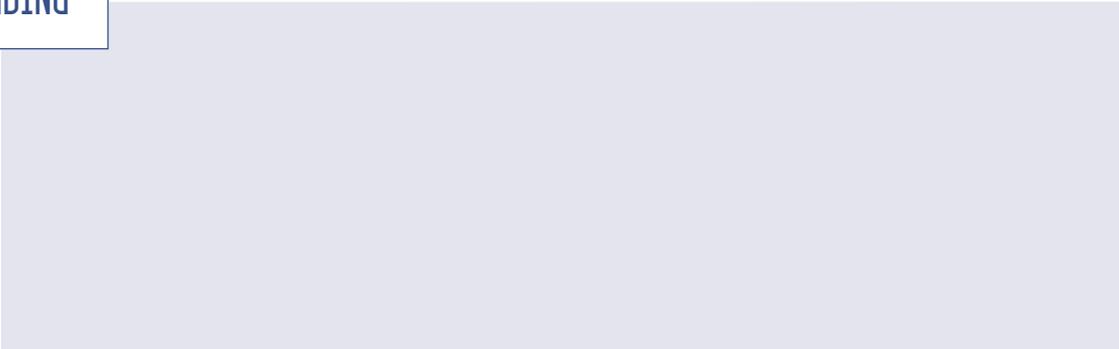
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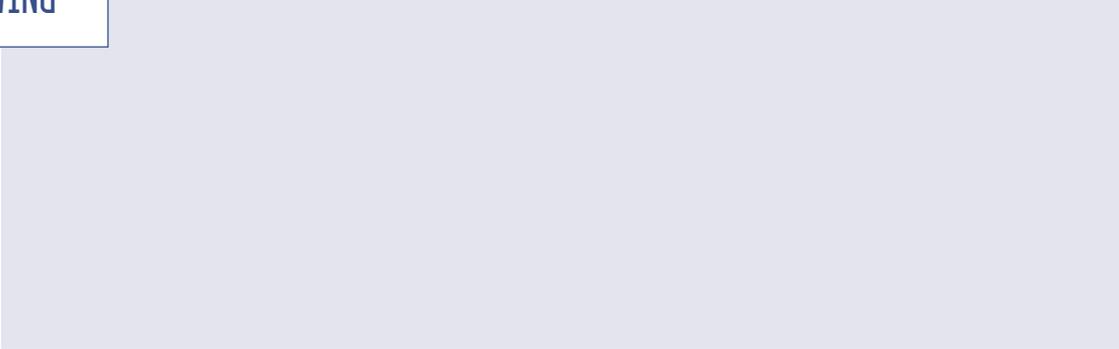
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# BOLD

SENDING



SOWING



SUFFERING



# LIFE

How would you summarise what Bold Life is?

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Can you see examples of Bold Life in Jesus' life and in your own life?  
(This is a good question to begin with, unless you have already discussed it in the middle of the video)

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Take it in turns to tell a short story (e.g. 2 minute) of how you came to faith and the difference Jesus has made to you.

As an individual, where and to whom have you been sent?

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Can you recognise the people you are sent to as an individual?  
As a group, do you recognise certain people or groups that you are sent to?  
What does it mean for you to sow kingdom seeds among these people?

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Ask God for opportunities to listen to others and share your story.

Plan a Review session (see next page) where you can tell stories of putting Academy of Life into practice.

## BOLD LIFE DAILY READINGS

### Bold Life in Jesus

- Mark 1:14-20 | Luke 5:27-31 | 10:1-24 | 13:31-35 | 15:1-10 | Matt 28:16-20  
John 20:19-31

### Bold Life in the New Testament

- Acts 4:1-31 | 16:11-40 | 17:1-15 | Rom 10:1-21 | 15:14-33 | 2 Cor 5:11-6:2  
2 Tim 2:1-13

Academy of Life is about God's life in action through his people. One of the best ways to reflect on this is to tell stories of stepping out to do something (great or small) and sharing what God brought about as a result.

Go through each sign of God's life. Who can explain how this sign of life works? Who can give a personal example of this sign of life at work (there may be several examples for each sign of life)?

### TRUE LIFE

### FULL LIFE

### SHARED LIFE

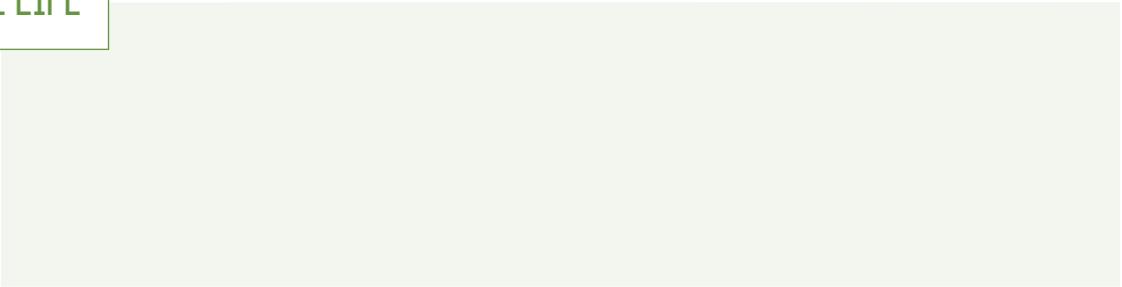
DEEP LIFE



SERVING LIFE



PURE LIFE



BOLD LIFE



What does it mean for you to continue growing in what you've learned in recent weeks?

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Pray for each other.

## TAKING IT FURTHER

It is quite clear that the holiness of every individual Christian is a community project. We don't become more Christ-like on our own but rather as part of His family.

As we seek to become more like Jesus we will need people to ask the right sorts of questions and hold us to account. On the next couple pages are a number of questions that we can use for this purpose – some for individuals and some for groups. They can work well in team meetings, in mentoring relationships, in marriage & in all sorts of other contexts.

## ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

### True Life

- Am I secure in the Father's love?
- Am I relying on myself or on Jesus?
- Am I living for the kingdom?
- How is God teaching me through the Scriptures?

### Full Life

- Do I ask for the Holy Spirit's help?
- How is the Holy Spirit leading me?
- Do I lack any fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5)?
- Am I using and developing my spiritual gifts?

### Shared Life

- How is God blessing me through others?
- Am I sharing my life with my small group? How are my relationships with family and friends?
- Am I showing hospitality?
- Is there anyone I need to forgive? Is there anyone whose forgiveness I need?

### Deep Life

- Am I too busy? Is time a blessing or a curse?
- Are the rhythms of my life healthy?  
(Eating and sleeping, working and resting, celebration and retreat)
- Am I allowing God the space to draw me near to him?
- Am I in a time of pruning?  
Can I see God at work in it?

### Pure Life

- Is fear or anxiety holding me back?
- Am I seeking to grasp or control more than God has for me?
- Am I stuck in any sinful patterns?
- When was I last accountable to someone?

### Serving Life

- How am I experiencing the generosity of God?
- Am I serving freely and faithfully?
- Am I blessing the poor?
- Am I living for the approval of God or others?

### Bold Life

- What kingdom prayers is God giving me?
- Who is God leading me to (Luke 10:6)?
- How am I demonstrating the signs of the kingdom?
- Where do I face opposition or need to be bold?

## COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

### True Life

- Are we coming to know the Bible and living out its message?
- Is our group centered on Christ?

### Full Life

- What are the signs of us being filled, led and empowered by the Spirit?
- Are we exercising our gifts: in church life and our wider communities?

### Shared Life

- Are there open doors (welcome, hospitality, honour)?
- Are there open hearts (honesty, forgiveness, prayer)?
- Are there open hands (practical generosity, financial giving, shared tasks)?

### Deep Life

- What is the depth of our prayer life?
- How is God at work through our suffering?

### Pure Life

- Are we in accountable relationships?
- Are we facing up to sin and being released into new life?

### Serving Life

- Are we each discovering their our callings?
- Who is being liberated and blessed through us?

### Bold Life

- Is our group outward-looking?  
Who are we seeking to reach?
- How are we demonstrating the kingdom?  
Who is coming to faith in Jesus?

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Academy of Life is Biblical and Jesus-centered and it goes without saying that it wouldn't exist apart from God's grace given to us through his Son and communicated to us through the Bible.

Whilst the material is built on the Bible it has also been inspired by the work of Richard Foster (Streams of Living Water) and Dallas Willard (Divine Conspiracy) to name but two sources.

The precedent for trying to codify the life to which we are called goes back as far as the Apostles. In 2 Corinthians 8:7 Paul gives the Christian six graces in which they should excel. In 2 Peter 1:3-8 the apostle gives eight qualities of an effective Christian. It should not surprise us that this pattern has continued throughout church history and the Academy of Life is an attempt to describe the Christian Life using 21st Century English in a way that builds on the very best that Church history has to offer.

The Academy of Life material was developed at St George's Church, Leeds, England and the 600 or so church members have been very patient over the years as the material has been crafted and re-crafted many times. It became quickly apparent that this material would not only form a course but over time became the language describing the very values of the church community itself.

As a part of the Church of England, it is appropriate that the last word be given to our liturgy. Within these five challenges to the baptism candidates, the heart of the Academy of Life can be seen as no more and no less than the heart of the Church itself.

*Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?*

*Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?*

*Will you proclaim by word and example the good news of God in Christ?*

*Will you seek and serve Christ in all people, loving your neighbour as yourself?*

*Will you acknowledge Christ's authority over human society, by prayer for the world and its leaders, by defending the weak, and by seeking peace and justice?*