

Living the Life - Introduction
13th September 2009
Rev Janice Audibert

1. Integrated life
2. Living under the rule of the king
3. Values

I want to begin by asking you a question.

Are you a grapefruit or are you a milkshake?

A few years ago, I heard a speaker begin his talk with these words. What on earth is he talking about, I thought, and I'm sure that you may be having the same thoughts right now!

Well, today we begin our series on "Living the life" and as we start out to introduce the theme, this question is worth asking:-

In your life.... Are you more like a grapefruit or are you more like a milkshake? Do you split your life into segments - like the grapefruit or in the same way that the milk and the flavourings are "shaken together" in a milkshake so that you can't tell them apart - is your life an integrated life?

Do you have 'God focused time' - church on Sunday, small group, daily prayer time and then 'leave God behind' and get on with the rest of your life or do you live your life with Him the centre of all that you do.. say.. In all you think.....

I know for myself that I'd rather like to be more milkshake like than I am.. But often the things that I do, say and think can be a bit sour and segmented and would indicate that God's not really in the centre all the time - I can easily leave God behind... In fact, I can easily be a bit of a grapefruit - and I'm sure that I am not the only one!

In the reading that we heard from the letter to the Ephesians, Paul is talking about this whole issue of lifestyle to the early church. He was encouraging

the early Christians to live differently from those around them. He reminded them that when they started to follow Christ, that they were taught to *“Put off your old self.....put on your new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”* Their lives should be distinctive.

Living the life as a Christian is and always has been about living a distinctive life style not just about going to Church on Sunday. People should be able to see that we are Christians - by the way we live all the time, at church, at home, at work and at school. The way we live alongside others - whether they share our faith or not!

That's all well and good and it is quite easy to sit here and talk about what we all SHOULD do, but the reality is that we know the truth about ourselves. We know that even if we are 100% totally committed to God and letting him be in the centre of our lives that we don't automatically think all good thoughts and express all right attitudes.

Living the Christian Life is a process and one that requires us to keep listening to God and allowing him to bring about change in our lives. This process is on going and continues whatever our age, however mature in our faith we are, until we meet Jesus face to face that transformation will continue. Although change may be slow, it comes as we trust God to change us. The question that we need to ask ourselves - if we look back over the last year, do we see a process of change for the better in our thoughts, attitudes and actions?

What seems to happen is that when we first accept Jesus into our lives, there are big changes that take place.... But over time, it is very easy to become complacent and drift back into old ways and habits. For some of us who didn't have that moment of conversation - perhaps we have known God ever since we can remember, from childhood, have attended church as long as we can remember may be we have never actually stopped and thought much about how integrated our life really is?

In recent history in this country, there has been a tendency to privatise faith, to go to church on a Sunday and meet with God, and then to leave, perhaps with a nod and smile. For some, they might never know the names of other people in the church even after weeks or years. Faith and the way we live our life is our own business and not for sharing! In that kind of environment it is much easier to be grapefruit like and put church into one segment and the rest of your life in another.

In the bible we see a very different model of faith. Communities of people coming together to share their life together with God and with each other. The letters that Paul wrote to the early emerging churches were not just about how to live in relationship with God but with each other. It is much more difficult to be grapefruit like with people that you spend time with and know you well! Our families probably are the place where we are our true selves - especially when it comes to our negative qualities! People grow best in faith if they are around others who will both lovingly challenge and support them and really that is what is so important about small groups.

Over the next few weeks the teaching on Sundays and in the small groups will be looking at “Living the Life” - how God can be in the centre of every aspect of our lives, our thoughts, speaking, prayer, leisure, relationships, in our work. Sundays we will hear some up front preaching on the subject, but it is in the small groups that we can really talk and share with each other, issues that are important to us, perhaps things we don't really understand or are struggling with. If you are not yet in a group, please talk to me before you go and we can look at introducing you to an appropriate group.

Living the life is not just about ourselves - we are called to be outward looking, encouraging others to know Jesus for themselves. If we live integrated lives, truly allow Jesus to be in the centre of everything that we do, our lives will be distinctive. The result is that people will notice and be drawn to asking what it is that is different.

Living the life is living under the rule of Jesus our King. We are called to be the best that we can be and to share the blessings that we have received

with others. In the reading from Mark we hear Jesus making it quite clear what it really means. The ultimate call to leave behind 'a grapefruit' life style and be fully milkshake like! Jesus isn't offering a choice of a life of giving him a little bit of our life – as and when it suits us!

“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it”

Jesus wants us to be whole hearted for him and for the gospel! Whole-hearted for the things that are on the heart of God!

We see throughout the bible that God is a loving and caring God but the bible clearly talks about accountability before him. Taking up our cross and following Jesus IS something that WE have to choose to do EVERY day. Living lives fully committed to Him is not an easy thing to do and we probably will probably blow it and get things wrong all the time! In many ways it's not how often we've blown it or got things wrong that will be the issue - but about our hearts. Do we really love God and his people? Have we kept Jesus in the centre of our lives? It's about the values of the Kingdom of God - the values of the King. He wants us to 'live the life', totally integrated lives for him!