

# the next step

## stepping out and following where He leads

Jesus' summons is simple - 'Follow Me!'

As His disciples, those who have responded to His call, the church is, by definition, a people on the move.

As Ruth said to Naomi, so His church says to Jesus, 'Where you go, I will go.' We are bold, therefore, both as individuals and as a local fellowship of believers, to step out in faith and to follow where He leads. 'The next step' is always the most important one and it's what that 'next step' looks like for ourselves that this series of studies addresses.



You can find the background to this short series here.

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### 3. Responding to the Word

(Luke 3.1-20)

[w/b Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020]

*“.. what should we do?..”*

It was the reality of growth is a constant characteristic of the kingdom of God which formed the focus of the previous study. The Scriptures make it clear that such growth as a feature of the kingdom of God is always (right from the start) tied in to the release of the Word of God.

In this study we consider how that Word of God is ministered in such a way that growth is its issue. Luke's account of the ministry of John the Baptist provides a really good illustration of all that is involved: and it contains important lessons for ourselves and for all that ministry of the Word of God entails today.

*[Although there are 7 questions as ever, all of them important, your Community Group may choose to concentrate on just some of them. Key questions in this study are probably 4, 5 and 7. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]*

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**1. Read Luke 3.1-20.** To a greater extent than the other gospel writers, Luke gives a very thorough account of the ministry of John, not least in terms of the content of his preaching.

Reading through the whole passage, what are the features of his ministry which you find most striking?

What do you think it was about him that saw such crowds going out to him (see also **Lk.7.24-28**)?

**2. Read Luke 3.1-3.** Luke carefully 'locates' John's ministry in a particular historical setting as he summarises the essence of that ministry in these opening verses.

At the start of chapter 2, Luke had previously also noted the political context: what will have been his reason for naming the specific personnel in vv.1 & 2 here?

Why do you think John chose the 'wilderness .. around the Jordan' as the setting for his preaching rather than, say, the city of Jerusalem?

**3. Read Luke 3.4-6.** Like the other gospel writers (although more fully), and indeed like John himself (see Jn.1.23), Luke sets the ministry of John against the backdrop of OT prophecy.

Read **Lk.1.68-79**. 'Salvation' is a major theme in Luke's gospel: what's meant by the phrase "*all people will see God's salvation*"?

How did you come to "see God's salvation"?

4. **Read Luke 3.7-9.** It's evident from the account which Luke here gives us of the content of John's preaching that the man didn't exactly pull his punches!

In what respects do you think he provides a model for the preaching of the Word of God?

What was the essential thrust of his challenging message?

5. **Read Luke 3.10-14.** By recording the sequel to John's preaching here, Luke makes it clear that this part of the ministry of the Word is as important as the actual 'sermon'.

Why did John detail so specifically the action which different people should be engaging in?

How does this tie in with the message of 'grace', that we are saved *not* by works but through faith in Jesus?

How might we be afforded the opportunity to respond in this sort of way to the preaching of the Word of God?

**6. Read Luke 3.15-18.** As the prophecy of Isaiah had foretold, John was preparing the way for the Lord: here he directs the people's attention to Jesus.

What was the content of the 'good news' (v.18) about Jesus which John proclaimed?

In what respects did John indicate that Jesus is more 'powerful' and more significant than himself?

**7. Read Luke 3.19-20.** John was never afraid to *apply* the Word of God, both in the public preaching and in his personal 'pastoral' ministry.

In what ways does John's ministry of the Word of God in these two verses mirror what we read in vv.10-14?

Do you think there is a sufficient 'edge' to the way in which the Word of God is *applied* in our own context?