

# 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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## 4. Spread the Word!

(1 Peter 3.8-16)

[w/b Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2020]

*“.. that you may declare the praises of Him ..”*

Growth as a feature of the kingdom of God remains the underlying theme of this study. Because we live in a ‘celebrity’ culture, it’s easy, even as Christians, to think in similar terms of ‘celebrity’ preachers (particularly when we see their ‘mega-churches’) as being the means God uses to bring about such growth in the life of His church.

The key to the spread of the gospel in the early church was the testimony of countless ordinary believers - much as we saw in the way the church in Antioch came into being (Acts 11.19-21). The teaching ministry of the church is intended to equip the followers of Jesus today to do fulfill just such a ministry.

*[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 2, 6 and 7. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]*

*Hopefully there’ll again be a video introduction to this study under ‘Resources/Live streams and videos’ on the website.*

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1. **Read 1 Pet.2.9-3.16.** The verses we’ll be focusing on come as the conclusion to a passage in the letter which runs from 2.9: reading the whole passage will be helpful.

In what ways would you say you are a different person from what you 'once were' before trusting Jesus?

As you read through the whole passage what struck you as the key themes and challenges of these verses?

**2. Read 1 Pet.2.9-12.** It's vital to be clear about who we are in Christ, because who we are determines what we do: Peter here provides a helpful summary of who we are as followers of Jesus.

How do you introduce yourself to someone for the first time - by reference to what you do or who you are?

What does Peter set out as your primary calling under God as a follower of Jesus?

In what ways are you able to fulfill that calling?

**3. Read 1 Pet.3.8-9.** Peter rounds off what he's been saying in the previous verses (2.13-3.7) with some general exhortations as to the way we are to live.

How challenging do you find it trying to put into practice these exhortations?

What helps you to rise to the challenge of these verses?

4. **Read 1 Pet.3.10-12.** The quotation from Psalm 34 (vv.12-16) is given by Peter as the biblical warrant (and encouragement) for what he's just written.

What is the encouragement you take from these verses?

In the light of this quote from Psalm 34, to what do you think Peter is referring when he speaks of inheriting a blessing (v.9)?

5. **Read 1 Pet.3.13-14.** The controlling thought behind this whole section (2.9-3.16) is his exhortation in 2.12: and it's this which, therefore, also lies behind these next two verses.

Read what Paul writes to Titus in **Tit.2.7, 14; 3.1, 8, 14**, and set that alongside Peter's own words in **Acts 10.38**: why is being '*eager to do good*' (v.13) an integral part of, rather than a contradiction of, the gospel?

V.14 ends with a quote from Isaiah 8, from which Peter has already quoted (2.8): read **Is.8.11-15** and consider - why are we 'not (to) be frightened'?

**6. Read 1 Pet.3.15.** This is a key verse for this study! It was precisely because ordinary believers were able to give a reason for the hope they had that the early church grew so rapidly.

Why is it so important, before we have said anything, first to have 'set apart Christ as Lord' in our hearts?

What is 'the hope that you have' as a Christian, and what is the reason for that hope?

What do you think might prompt people to ask us about this?

**7. Read 1 Pet.3.15-16.** The manner of our testimony was clearly for Peter as important as the content; hence his concern to stress the importance of the way in which we share our faith.

From what Peter says here, what are the three 'qualities' we are to display in the way we testify to Christ?

What opportunities have you had in the past days to speak to others about the 'hope' you have?

*Keep praying that such opportunities will be given you, and that you'll be given both the words to say and the grace to say speak them well!*