

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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6. Resurrection joy!

(John 20.1-18)

[w/b Sunday 12th April 2020]

“.. I have seen the Lord! ..”

Resurrection lies very much at the heart of the preaching of the gospel (see, for instance Acts 4.33 and 17.18): the God who caused light to shine out of darkness is the God who speaks life into the dead. It is this life-giving, resurrecting power of God which lies behind any expectancy we have in terms of growth.

The gospel writers are careful, therefore, to record in some detail the narrative relating to the resurrection of Jesus - or, more accurately, the *discovery* of the resurrection of Jesus by His followers. Each of the writers records this slightly differently; John, therefore, highlights details omitted by the others.

[There are 7 questions as ever, all important - but your Community Group may well choose to concentrate on just some of them. Key questions in this study are probably 4, 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 John 20.1-18. If you've the time, it's worth reading *all 4* accounts (Mt.28.1-10: Mk.16.1-8: Lk.24.1-12): that will help you get a feel for the particular emphases John wants to highlight.

Why do you think John focused so fully on Mary and her experience of the resurrection of Jesus?

How has your 'discovery' that Jesus was raised from the dead impacted and affected your life and living?

2. Read John 20.1. No one simply fabricating the resurrection of Jesus back then would have had women as the first 'witnesses': John's focus is on one woman in particular, Mary Magdalene.

Read **Lk.8.1-3** (and Mk.5.1-20 to understand her 'story'): what lay behind Mary's clear devotion to Jesus?

How are you 'supporting' Jesus, as Mary plainly was continuing to do (the word means caring for the needs of others in a practical way)?

3. Read John 20.2-4. A sense of urgency is conveyed in the repeated reference to 'running': the events surrounding the death (and now the resurrection) of Jesus demand *action*.

Put yourself in the shoes (sandals!) of Mary, Peter and John ('the other disciple'): why would you be running and what would you be thinking?

Why do you think there is the repeated reference in these verses to 'the tomb'?

4. **Read John 20.5-9.** The level of detail here is indicative of the first-hand witness of the gospel writer, John, himself: it is striking that three different words are used in vv.5-9 for 'seeing'.

Did you suddenly 'see' what the gospel was all about, or did you only come to 'see' it gradually?

Read **2 Cor.4.4-6**: how do people come to 'see the light' as Paul put it - and what part can we play in that?

5. **Read John 20.10-13.** There's a sense in which for Mary Jesus Himself had become effectively her 'home': she therefore lingered at the tomb after the others left.

Why was Mary crying?

What has paralleled, or might parallel, this in your own experience?

6. Read John 20.14-17. It's instructive to note that it was sound rather than sight which enabled Mary to recognise the risen Jesus: as it was with the disciples going to Emmaus (Lk.24.30).

In what ways have you been aware of Jesus speaking very personally and unmistakably into your life?

Why did Jesus tell Mary not to 'hold on to' Him (v.17), and what lessons does that have for us today?

7. Read John 20.17-18. The instruction Jesus gave Mary was a pointer to the calling of all who are His disciples: she was given a message to pass on to others.

In what ways were the very terms of Jesus' instruction to Mary meant to encourage her, them and us?

Wild horses couldn't have held Mary back from sharing her testimony! What can hold us back from sharing our testimony with others?