

# 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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## 7. The royal family

(Ephesians 1.1-14)

[w/b Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2020]

*“.. adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ ..”*

This study moves us into the second main strand of that ‘next step’ which we are bidden by the Lord to take - the resolve that, by the grace of God, we will be a *family*. Over these next weeks we’ll be seeking to understand what it means to be God’s family.

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians is the classic New Testament exposition of the nature of Christ’s church; and the apostle’s primary working picture of the church in this letter is very much that of the family of God.

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*[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 3, 4 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 Eph.1.1-14.** After a customary (but significant) initial greeting, vv.3-14 comprise in the original a single sentence as Paul sets out the extravagant plan and purpose of God.

In a ‘one-liner’ what prompts the praise in the heart of the apostle as he writes?

What clues do you get in this passage that Paul understands the church as a family?

**2. Read Eph.1.1-2.** A greeting such as this was the standard way to start a letter: in a variety of ways Paul gives it a distinctively Christian tenor.

What point does Paul want to stress in the opening line of his greeting?

In what sense can we be described as 'saints' and 'faithful', when as believers we often feel thoroughly 'unsaintly' and rather faithless?

**3. Read Eph.1.3-6.** Paul traces the existence of the church in Ephesus right back to its roots: there are believers in Ephesus because of the eternal purpose of God.

How far back can you trace the 'family tree' of Gilcomston Church, and where does that ultimately lead you?

How many verbs used of God can you find in these verses?

In what ways does each verb serve to prompt the initial note of praise (v.3) in your heart?

4. **Read Eph.1.7-8.** From speaking about the reason *why* there is a fellowship of believers in Ephesus, Paul turns in these verses to explain *how* such a fellowship has come into being.

'Redemption' is a word suggesting the purchase price of a person's freedom: from do you understand yourself as a Christian to have been set free?

What does Paul mean by saying the God's grace has been lavished on us '*with all wisdom and understanding*'?

5. **Read Eph.1.9-10.** Paul proceeds to explain that the work of Jesus which brought us into God's family is part of a purpose far larger than merely our being forgiven and reconciled to God.

From what you learn here how would you describe this grand purpose of God in Christ?

How (if at all!) does seeing that affect the way you live?

6. **Read Eph.1.11-13a.** It was to Gentiles (“*..and you also..*”, v.13) that Paul was writing, and he here describes how the gospel came first to the Jews (v.12) and then to the Gentiles.

Perhaps the best commentary on the thought of these verses is in **Rom.11.28-36**: in what ways do you find yourself praising God’s glory as you reflect on His plan?

7. **Read Eph.1.13-14.** This whole opening passage is rounded off by Paul with a reference to the way in which the saving work of Jesus was applied to the lives of the believers at Ephesus.

What does the Holy Spirit do in effecting our salvation according to what Paul says here?

What does Paul mean by speaking of the Holy Spirit as ‘a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance’?