

w/b 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020

# 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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## 14. The life of God

(Ephesians 4.17-5.2)

[w/b Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020]

*“.. created to be like God ..”*

In the previous study, the work of the Holy Spirit was set out by Paul in terms of the life that He imparts, the gifts that He bestows, and the fruit that He produces in our lives. In this next passage Paul begins to speak in greater detail about what that ‘fruit’ looks like.

Key to what Paul says is the contrast between what we were formerly and what we are now. The Bible underlines throughout that who we are determines what we do (and not vice versa): having explained who we are, he now works out how we will now therefore live our lives.

*[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!]*

*There should be, as usual, a video introduction to this study, available under ‘Resources/Live streams and videos’ on the website.*

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1. **Read Eph.4.17-5.2.** Reading through the whole passage will give you a sense of the contrast being drawn by Paul between the former life these Christians lived and their new life in Christ.

Thinking back over your own life, in what ways is your manner of living different from what it once was?

In a society which has largely departed from its biblical roots, how do you think Christians will be distinctively different?

**2. Read Eph.4.17-19.** The life of the Gentiles (that's to say, a people whose living is not informed by the biblical revelation of God) is here described by Paul in terms of its general features.

What does Paul set out as the main characteristics of the 'Gentile' world?

What illustrations of these characteristics do you observe in our contemporary society?

**3. Read Eph.4.20-24.** The replacing of the 'old self' with the 'new self' in the transforming work of the Spirit of God in our lives is neither automatic nor magical: God's work is matched by ours.

Thinking of yourself, what would you identify as the 'old self' patterns of your 'former way of life'?

How does Paul envisage this change is brought about in our lives?

4. **Read Eph.4.25-28.** Paul now goes on to illustrate some key areas where this replacing of the 'old self' with the 'new self' will find clear expression.

What three illustrations does he give in these verses, and why do they have continuing and contemporary relevance?

In each of the three illustrations given here, how does his expanding on the exhortation help you to apply it?

5. **Read Eph.4.29.** It's worth pausing over this one verse which has to do with what we say and how we speak: our speech matters - Jesus is 'the Word', and our every word is to reflect Him.

Read **James 3.8**: in what ways have you found what James says to be true in your own experience?

What are the key considerations which Paul exhorts upon his readers in regard to how we speak?

**6. Read Eph.4.30-32.** Basic to our new life in Jesus is the ongoing work of the Spirit of God, who through His indwelling *is* our life: we are to keep in step with Him, therefore, as He works in us.

What does Paul mean by saying that we were 'sealed' with the Holy Spirit 'for the day of redemption'?

How, according to what Paul says here, do we avoid grieving the Holy Spirit?

Which aspect of v.31 do you find hardest to address in your own life?

**7. Read Eph.5.1-2.** Paul rounds off this passage by insisting that it is "*as Christ loved us..*" and not "*as the Gentiles do ..*" (4.17) that we are to live our new life 'as dearly loved children'.

What will be some of the practical repercussions of you imitating God?

After all the exhortations contained in this passage, what specific action have you sensed God calling you to take?