

# 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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## 17. Brothers and sisters

(Ephesians 6.21-24)

[w/b Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June 2020]

*“.. that he may encourage you ..”*

We are ‘family’ as believers. From start to finish this has been Paul’s theme, as he traced our life in Christ to its roots in the Father’s love: the life we have been given is that of children who now have access to the Father: and the lives we now live are shaped and defined by the Father’s own love for us.

It’s no surprise, therefore, that the letter concludes in a way that gives us a sense of, and an insight into, the strong relational ties which united these people, apostle and believers alike, as brothers and sisters in Christ.

*[Hopefully you’ll find all 7 questions are stimulating and valuable! But if you can’t manage them all, at least aim to cover questions 2, 3 and 6. 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.6.21-24.** Reflecting on these final verses help you get some sense of how the great doctrines Paul has expounded in the letter translate into our *experience* of life as the family of God.

What do these closing sentences in Paul’s letter tell you about the life of the early church?

What should you, or do you, look for in a local fellowship of believers?

**2. Read Eph.6.21.** This man Tychicus was a travelling companion of Paul whom he valued highly (**Acts 20.4, Col.4.7, 2 Tim.4.12** and **Tit.3.12**: some see **2 Cor.8.22** as a reference to him also).

What lessons do you learn from the ways in which this man Tychicus is described by Paul?

Do you make a point of speaking well of your fellow believers to others?

**3. Read Eph.6.21.** Paul recognized the importance of ensuring that the church at Ephesus continued to be well informed about the wider and on-going ministry exercised by the apostle.

In what ways do you think this period of 'lockdown' has underlined the importance of such 'communication'?

Do you have people committed to praying for you, and what steps do you take to keep them fully informed as to 'how you are and how you are doing'?

**4. Read Eph.6.22.** The reason for Paul's sending Tychicus to the church at Ephesus makes it clear that, despite being absent, Paul still knew a continuing concern for the well-being of the church.

What are the two purposes Paul had in sending Tychicus?

The ministry of encouragement is important: how might you today encourage God's people, here or elsewhere?

**5. Read Eph.6.23.** These are not simply parting words of greeting from the apostle: they are themselves a prayer from the man who has just exhorted them to 'pray in the Spirit on all occasions'.

In what ways might you give expression to this commitment to pray in the letters (or cards, or e-mails) which you write?

What was Paul looking to see the Lord effecting in the lives of the church at Ephesus?

**6. Read Eph.6.23-24.** In some ways Paul's closing words give concise expression to all that he has been teaching through the course of his letter.

From what Paul says here, what would you say are the major themes of this letter?

Notice how Paul describes Christians here: why do you think he described them in these terms?

How is such love for Jesus best cultivated?

**7. Read Acts 19 & 20.17-38.** As we close this study of Paul's letter to the Ephesians it's worth going back over their story as a church and his involvement with them.

How did their love for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ show itself – and how do you think this was cultivated?

What specific lessons has this letter taught you, and what will you do in response?