

Sermon Notes on Galatians 5 vv 16–26, Genesis 5 vv 21–24
‘Keeping in step with the Spirit’ 16th August 2026

I have a lot of keeping in step stories which include Sat Nav stories, being part of Boys’ Brigade and learning drill as well as when Gilli and I go on our walking holidays. Last week you all received the ‘Moving on from your Vision Day’ document and like all the stories from above there are three things we need to do if we are to keep in step with Jesus. Firstly, we need to continue to learn wisdom in discerning and applying all that we hear Jesus saying to us. Secondly, we are to trust our drill master in the direction he is calling us to go. Thirdly, we are not to be distracted by the ‘good advice’ a local may give to us; this will always usually end up with us getting lost!! Graham Ensor, on the day itself and in conversation with us as a team urges us all to keep our eyes on the prize. To continue to seek to hear Jesus’ voice and to keep in step with him as this is the best way for us to be content in him and live as a church.

Enoch in Genesis chapter 5 is iconically described as one who walked with God. This is a fabulous description of what our heart, mind and spirit set is to be. As I have said before, it is not just something for 2026, or 2027 or even beyond that. Instead, it is to be a habit we grow in in our daily lives and it is to define us as followers of Jesus. In the time of the New Testament Enoch was understood to be someone who fathomed the mysteries of God and there are three books of ‘his’ in what is called the ‘Pseudepigrapha’. These were books claimed to have been ‘written’ by well-loved people of old and it was not just Enoch’s name which was used, as there are books by ‘Abraham’, ‘Solomon’ and the ‘12 Patriarchs’ and many more. Those who wrote these books were not being dishonest, but instead they borrowed the authority of these names to add weight to the ‘inside line’ they were giving to their fellow Jews to help them understand the times they were living in and how they were to live. I can only admire their heart and intention as they wrote so but don’t worry I won’t be writing any such books soon!!

Our ‘Moving on after our Vision Day’ document reminds us that our Vision Day was never the destination, instead it was a call to us to SIT UP!!, to stop staring into the middle distance, to stop assuming that vision is the job of others and to remind ourselves that we are a Baptist Church. It reminded us that vision is a responsibility of us all; there are no exceptions because all of us, especially when we meet as a church, are to speak into our vision. Out of our Vision Day there came six areas for us to get our teeth into. When we met with Graham, he was honestly surprised when no one mentioned worship, because worship always crops up in vision days. This underlies the value and importance of Joyful Noise and one of the great things of Joyful Noise is that it demonstrates to us how vision can bring real and genuine change to an area of the life of the church, but where there is still the appetite to continue to grow and develop. It would be folly for us as a team to assume that there is no space for other areas of the life of the church within our vision thinking which is why we would like you to prayerfully consider this, as well as recognise that everything cannot be done at once.

At our AGM Sandra Herman asked whether it was possible for the leadership team to work in a different way, since it is hard to find new deacons or elders, and whether

it would be possible for people to gain experience through taking on some their responsibilities. As a team we talked about this and there is no escaping the fact that there are certain legal responsibilities which just cannot be avoided but need to be embraced by the team. Yet, saying that, out of Vision Day two sets of opportunities are available to further Sandra's question. Firstly, these six areas are six ways for you to shape, mould and give input into what each area might look like in both the immediate as well as the long-term future. We as a team are keen to enable and facilitate **YOU** to make this difference to our church because we have no wish to disempower you and the difference each of you can bring to our life together. This means that we would like you to be open to this opportunity if you are asked and we would also welcome volunteers too. To expect the leadership alone to bear this responsibility is very unrealistic and so, secondly, we as a team recognise the need for us to grow and develop if we are to bear the burdens of overall leadership as well as we can.

So often it is assumed that Galatians 5 is a JAM thing, ie only about Jesus And Me, but what Paul is saying in this chapter is far bigger than this. Paul writes here in the plural and as we know the English language finds it hard to distinguish between 'you' as an individual and 'you' as a group. Galatians 5 is a mindset we are all to adopt and yes, it is about 'morality', but it is also about much more than that. The passage is also about the Kingdom of God where the rule of Jesus is to be seen in the life of the church and in the way, this penetrates the community and society around it. When we think about the fruit of the Spirit, in verses 22 and 23, we must remember they are primarily about the relationships between us as church. Which means that they matter more when we are thinking of Vision, the priorities we choose and the strategy needed to put it into effect. This was something which you did before in 2013 and when I read your profile and met the leadership team I found the clarity of the vision, the mission priority and strategy to enable it to be very appealing. I was so excited by this that I believed that this was a church worth going to despite the fact it was in the YBA and 100 miles north of Leicester which I had told God I was not willing to go past!!

It is essential for all of us as a church to keep in step with each other. We are in what is in effect a giant 3-legged race where we are all tied together and Jesus is calling all of us to follow him. Therefore, we need to keep in step together that together we may know where we are going, how we will get there and the route we are to take. This means we are to be both destination and journey focussed because both matter. It matters that we have this agreed focus and it matters that we all get there together. May we all walk well, walk together and walk knowing Jesus is with us.