

Lesson
1

Follow the Pattern

If you wanted to build a house, what would be the first step? Before you can start the work, you must have a plan. You must decide how many rooms you want and where to put the doors and windows. You need a pattern to help you as you build. Then you will be pleased with the results.

In the Old Testament we read that God told His people to build a place to worship Him. He gave them a plan. In fact, He told them seven times to be sure and follow His plan exactly. When they obeyed Him, the building was completed successfully, and God was pleased.

If we want to win people to Jesus Christ, we need a pattern, or plan. God has given us the plan in His Word. We see this plan in Jesus' life and ministry, and through the example of early



Christians. As you learn about God's plan, you will be able to apply it in your own ministry of sharing the good news about Jesus Christ. This is personal evangelism.

In this lesson you will study . . .

God's Plan
Christ's Life
Early Christians' Example

This lesson will help you . . .

- Understand the true nature of God's plan for personal evangelism.
- Apply in your daily life the example of Christ and the early Christians.

GOD'S PLAN

Objective 1. *Explain what God's pattern for personal evangelism is.*

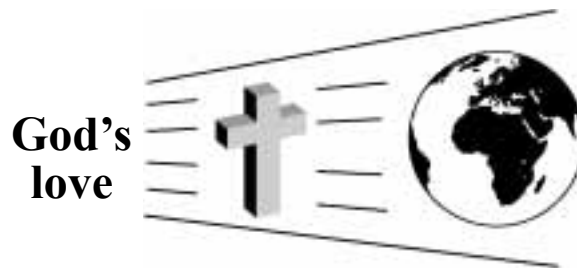
Have you ever wondered why God decided to create the universe: heaven and earth, stars and seas, mountains and valleys, and, of course, man? Many people do ask this question. The answer is simple. God has a purpose, a plan, for everything. Nothing was created without purpose.

Right from the beginning, even before man's creation, God's purpose was to share all He has and is with man. This is the true pattern of personal evangelism—sharing what we have!

“And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image’” (Genesis 1:26, KJV). God shared with man His personal being, His own nature. This was good news, that God would share Himself with man. After sharing with man His own nature, God then gave to man all that He had created. Later, in the beautiful Garden of Eden, God came down and walked hand in hand with that man—Adam. Just like a father would talk with his son, they talked with one another. There was perfect understanding between them. I wish I were a good artist! But even if I were, I would completely fail to show you how beautiful it was.

One amazing reality is that the sharing love of God did not stop with Adam alone. When man sinned, God was sad, but His attitude did not change. He came down again and shared with man the good news of the coming Savior. In Genesis 3:15 we see the first announcement of this good news. God is talking to the serpent, Satan, and He says, “Her offspring will crush your head.” Here He was talking about His Son, Jesus Christ. He was saying that the serpent Satan crushed Adam when he tempted Adam to sin. But He would send His Son, Jesus Christ, to crush Satan.”

Yes, God’s sharing love knows no limit. In John 3:16 we read, “For God loved the world *so much* that he gave *his only Son*, so that everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life.” This well-known verse is the heart of God’s own pattern for personal evangelism. His love is a personal, giving, and sharing love for all people, including you.



In each of these *For You to Do* sections, the questions or exercises will help you review or apply what you have just studied. For the first two exercises, choose the answer that best completes each sentence. Circle the letter in front of your choice.

- 1 God showed His plan of personal evangelism by
 - a) walking with Adam.
 - b) putting Adam in a beautiful garden.
 - c) sharing His own nature with Adam.
- 2 When Adam sinned, God continued to share Himself with men by
 - a) giving us His Son Jesus.
 - b) punishing the serpent.
 - c) being sad.
- 3 Why did God want to share Himself and His Son with all men and women?

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You will find the answers to these exercises on the last page of this lesson. Check your answers to these exercises now.

CHRIST'S LIFE

Objective 2. *List ways in which Jesus showed us God's plan for personal evangelism.*

Man has sinned. Sickness, sorrow, wars, and even death have come as a result. Although God could no longer walk with humankind as He once did, He still had a plan to continue His sharing work with people. That plan was to send us Jesus.

Speaking about His own work and mission, Jesus said:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has chosen me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind; to set free the oppressed and announce that the time has come when the Lord will save his people (Luke 4:18-19).

While in Burkina Faso, West Africa, I was in a church of about 600 Christians. They were singing these words:

“Had it not been for your healing and saving power, Oh Lord, Hills would have been my dwelling place, and hell my lot!”

Jesus taught us the pattern of personal evangelism by His own example. He made no distinction among people. He received well-educated people like Nicodemus and some Greek scholars. He went to stay and eat with sinners. Lepers came to Him, and He healed them all. Even demon-possessed people came to Him, and He set them free. When He needed to rest, He took time to be with children. Soldiers and widows found help from Him. Who would ever accuse Him of being indifferent to people who needed His help?



Jesus had one goal: to do the work and the will of the One Who sent Him. The apostle Peter, speaking about Jesus' life and ministry, said, “He went everywhere doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). God was working in Christ, forgiving sin, bringing people back to Himself.

Christ was willing to make many sacrifices in order to accomplish His Father's plan. First He left His home in heaven, His throne, His glory, to come down to us. He was born in a manger because those He came to help did not receive Him. But His greatest sacrifice was when He willingly gave His life on the cross. It was not until then that Jesus cried out, “It is finished” (John 19:30). It was a cry of completion. His work was done. The pattern for personal evangelism—sharing the good news—was forever made clear.

Yes, Christ has tasted death that you and I may live. He has paid our debt to God. Christ, the Lord of lords and King of kings, walked on this earth as a servant with nowhere to lay His head. He did this because He loved us. Is there any good news better than this? Certainly there is not.



For You to Do

4 Here are some statements about Jesus. Put a circle around the letter in front of those that are TRUE.

- a He was sent by God.
- b He cared about people.
- c He did not help everyone who came to Him.
- d His power was limited.
- e His goal was to do God's will.
- f He was willing to sacrifice.

5 Why was Jesus willing to give Himself for us?

Check your answers.



EARLY CHRISTIANS' EXAMPLE

Objective 3. Explain why the early Christians can be our example in sharing the good news about Christ.

Christ came, as we have seen, to tell us about God and His love. Wicked men crucified Him on the cross. But He did not stay in the grave. He came back to life, rose from the grave, and is now sitting at His Father's right hand in heaven. But I thank God that His plan for sharing the good news did not stop with Christ. Christ passed it on to the apostles and to His disciples. He told them, "Go throughout the whole world and preach the good news to all mankind" (Mark 16:15). This command is not only to a group of selected people such as the apostles, the evangelists, the deacons, the pastors, or the teachers. This command is for all of us.

But how did Jesus send His disciples out? In His prayer to His Father, Christ said, "I sent them into the world, just as you sent me into the world" (John 17:18). And how did God send Jesus? He sent Him with a mission. He sent Him with power and authority. He sent Him to all people. He sent Him not to condemn, not to judge, but to set people free. This is the mission Christ has passed on to us. It was as if He said, "Father, just as You sent Me, I have also sent them. Keep them as You kept Me. Listen to them as You listened to Me. Be with them as You were with Me." Isn't it wonderful to realize that we are God's messengers?

Now let us permit our eyes to gaze upon Peter as he talked about this same Jesus on the Day of Pentecost. The story is recorded in Acts 2:14-39. Try to see him standing before the crowd, sharing Christ with others. Listen to him as he talks before his judges. You can hear him say, "How can I stop sharing what I have seen and heard?"

Now follow him to the house of the Roman officer, Cornelius, a man who was seeking God. You will see him once again sharing his testimony about Christ with other people. (See Acts 10: 34-43.)

The Book of Acts gives us many details about the apostle Paul and his travels. Follow Paul in his travels and listen to him. He would speak of no one but Christ, and Him crucified. The ever-burning desire of the apostle Paul was winning people to Christ and sharing his personal Christian experience with others.

Paul was willing to suffer in order to share this good news. He was thrown into prison, he was beaten, chained, hungry, lonely, forgotten by his co-workers. None of this stopped him from sharing the good news with others. If he could not speak, he would write down his message, or have someone write it down for him. He did this until the day he could say, "I am ready to die. I have finished my course." (See 2 Timothy 4:6,7, KJV).

In times past in Africa, when a hunter killed an elephant, he would run back home and announce the good news to all. When the Americans landed on the moon for the first time, radio, television, newspapers spread this good news—by all the mass media—to all people everywhere. It is the nature of people to want to share good news with others. Should not you and I, who have far greater news, share it all around us?



When Jesus revealed Himself to the Samaritan woman, she too, like this African hunter, hurried back to her people. She shared with them all that Christ had done in her life. (See John 4:5-29.)



For You to Do

- 6** What did the apostle Peter, the apostle Paul, and the Samaritan woman have in common?
- a) They were educated people.
 - b) They wanted to share Christ with others.
 - c) They wanted people to respect them.

7 Why did the early Christians have such a desire to share the good news about Christ with other people?

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8 Here is a chart to show *how* and *why* God sent Jesus to earth. Under the heading *Disciples Were Sent* put an X in the blank spaces if they were sent by Jesus in the same way. Then put an X in the blank spaces that show how and why *We Are Sent*.

Jesus Was Sent	Disciples Were Sent	We Are Sent
• With a mission
• With power
• To suffer
• To all people
• To set people free
• To share good news
• To be an example of God’s love

By their testimonies and witnessing, the early Christians were able to share the good news about Jesus with all of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the entire Roman Empire. The believers went everywhere. They preached and shared their Christian experience with all people. It was actually the unbelievers who saw them speaking, living, and acting like Christ that gave them the name *Christian*. This name means “like Christ” or “followers of Christ.”

The early Christians had such a love for Jesus, and were so thankful for what He had done for them, that they could not keep from telling the good news. We want to share with others what Christ has done for us for the same reasons: because we love Him, and we want to give His love to others.



Check Your Answers

- 1 c) sharing His own nature with Adam.
- 2 a) giving us His Son Jesus.
- 3 Because He loves us so much.
- 4 a True
b True
c False
d False
e True
f True
- 5 Because He loves us.
- 6 b) They wanted to share Christ with others.
- 7 Because of their love for Christ and for others.
- 8 You should have put an **X** on every line in both columns.