

PathLights

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path"
Psalm 119:104*

February 11, 2018

God's Plan

by Frank Himmel

NOTE: This article is adapted from a brief one by the late Bill Walton.

Before He made the world, God had a plan for our salvation. His plan was that Jesus would die for our sins (Acts 2:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3). Those who put their faith in Jesus and become His disciples are forgiven, reconciled to God, and therefore saved. "This was in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confident access through faith in Him" (Ephesians 3:11-12).

God's plan includes caring for the saved as well as saving the lost. That plan was revealed through the apostles and put into practice by the first-century disciples. It was an amazingly simple plan, yet one that was eminently successful.

Within a few decades Paul could say that the gospel "was proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (Colossians 1:23), and "in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing" (v. 6). The gospel was sent to the lost, the disciples were built up, and the poor among them were cared for.

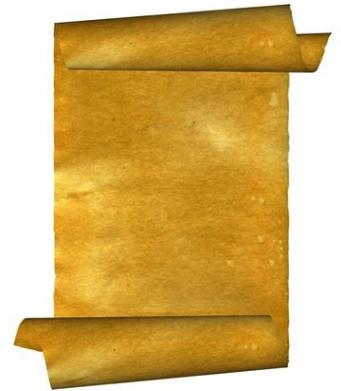
How was the gospel sent to the lost? By congregations (Philippians 4:15-16) and individual Christians

(Galatians 6:6) supporting evangelists to preach the gospel all over the world. Those whom they taught then taught others (2 Timothy 2:2).

How were the disciples built up? By regularly assembling together on the Lord's day and participating in worship which was both educational and uplifting (1 Corinthians 14:26); by the elders of each congregation exhorting in sound doctrine and refuting those who contradict (Titus 1:9); and by every Christian "encouraging one another" and "stimulating one another to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24-25).

How were the needy among them cared for? First, by individuals taking care of their own family members (1 Timothy 5:16); then, by each congregation providing for its own needy (Acts 4:34-35), receiving help from Christians in other areas when the need was too great for the local church to meet (Acts 11:26-30); and by every Christian using his or her opportunities to "do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith" (Galatians 6:10).

God's plan worked in the first century, and it will work today. We do not need a "new and improved" plan. What we need is respect for God's plan and zeal in carrying it out! ■



Using the Mirror of God’s Word

by Frank Himmel

James 1:22-25 likens reading our Bibles to looking in a mirror.

But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does.



How do we make this mirror work best? Like any other mirror...

Keep it handy. Why do home builders always mount a large mirror in every bathroom? They know we will want to take a good look every day. If we need frequent looks to check our physical appearance, how much more do we need constant checks on the spiritual side of things! Keep your Bible handy—

whether in electronic or paper format—so that you can consult it whenever the opportunity arises.

Keep it all visible. Steam from a shower often fogs the mirror. Sometimes we clear only a small section, just enough to see a little part of ourselves. When looking at our image in the light of God’s word, we need to see the whole picture. Read all the different sections. Look at yourself from a variety of angles.

Keep it clean. It is hard to get a clear picture looking at a dirty mirror. Smudges obscure what we see. God’s word can be “smudged” by our prejudices, our personal preferences, or by human reasoning. We must look at it as honestly and objectively as possible to see what it actually reveals, not what we wish it showed.

Keep it intact. Who would destroy a mirror because they didn’t like their looks? Some actually do that with their

Bibles! Someone showed me one just recently with a few pages torn out. While few people would go that far, the effect is the same when we refuse to read the Bible because we don’t like what it says. Of course, the word remains constant, regardless of our reaction to it.

Finally there is James’s point: *make the changes it calls for.* What’s the point of looking at a mirror if we won’t address the problems it points out? ■

Service Leaders for the Week		
	Sunday	Wednesday
GREETER	John Baucom	Howard Moore
SONG LEADER	Gary Hagler	Daven Daniel
OPENING PRAYER	Greg Winget	
LORD’S SUPPER		
BREAD	Bruce Williams	
CUP	Ray Moore	
CONTRIBUTION PRAYER	David Gray	
SERMON/INVITATION	Frank Himmel	Justin Candella
CLOSING PRAYER	Adam Gibson	Josh Baucom