

1 God's Family of Workers

Kim, a man who has been a Christian for only a few months, is delighted with the beautiful truths he is finding in his study of God's Word. He reads of the ways God spoke to the world and discovers an interesting pattern woven throughout the Bible.

As he reads his Bible, he sees that God has always had a family, and that this family has carried out His work in the world. He reads about the prophets who lived in Old Testament times and the disciples and apostles of the early church in New Testament times. He notices how these men and women have told God's message to others.

Kim finds himself praying, "Lord, how can I be a part of Your work?" This prayer has become the cry of his heart as he sees the needs of the world around him. Is this prayer the cry of your heart? As you study this first lesson you will begin to discover what God's plan for you is and how you can be a part of His work today.

The Plan

- A. God Has Family
- B. God's Plan for His Family

The Goals

1. Discuss the development of God's family.
2. State three things God plans for His family.

A. GOD HAS FAMILY

Goal 1. Discuss the development of God's family.

God's Family in the Old Testament

The book of Genesis records that God created man and woman, making them like himself, and He was pleased with what He had created (Genesis 1:27, 31).

Though God created all creatures, only humans were able to fellowship with the Creator. God wanted to share himself with humanity. He wanted a family.

But fellowship with the Creator was soon broken because of Adam and Eve's sin (Genesis 3:1–24). Yet, God continued to have a family, and throughout history He continued to fellowship with those who obeyed Him.

In Genesis 4:26 we read that people began using the Lord's holy name in worship. The story of Noah indicates clearly that God had a family at that time. "Noah did everything just as God commanded him" (Genesis 6:22). Already God had men to do His work.

Beginning with Abraham, we have a complete record of a family, which became the Jewish nation—God's special people. They were people with a God-given mission. This Jewish nation was called Israel. Among its leaders were Moses, who led the children of Israel out of Egypt; David, a mighty king; the prophets, who spoke God's message to the people; and

many others. We can follow the history of God's special people throughout the Old Testament. Many of them obeyed God and did His work.

Application

1 Write the number of the person (right side) in front of each phrase that tells something about him (left side).

- | | |
|---|------------|
| ... a He was a mighty king of Israel. | 1) Abraham |
| ... b He led Israel out of Egypt. | 2) Moses |
| ... c The record of the Jewish nation begins with him. | 3) David |

Check your answers with those at the end of this lesson.

God's Family in the New Testament

When Jesus, God's Son, came to earth, He brought comfort and help, healing and forgiveness. But He also had a greater work to do that only He could do. He gave His blood as the perfect sacrifice for sin. The animal sacrifices that God commanded in the Old Testament had all pointed to Christ. After Jesus gave himself, animal sacrifices were no longer needed.

Jesus' death was in the will of God, as Jesus had come to do the will of His Father. Jesus said, "My food, . . . is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work" (John 4:34). Pleased with His Son's work, God raised Jesus from the dead. And after Jesus spent forty days with His disciples, He returned to heaven (Acts 1:3–9).

What were Jesus' followers to do when their leader was gone? He had told them before He went away. They were to go into all the world and preach the gospel (Acts 1:8).

In the book of Acts we read about men and women who worked for Jesus after He returned to heaven. Some of these

people had been His followers while He was on earth. Two of them, Peter and John, were on their way to pray in the temple when they met a beggar who had been crippled from birth. Having no money to give the beggar, Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk” (v. 6). Peter took the crippled man by the hand and helped him up. The man went away walking and leaping and praising God (Acts 3:1–10). Jesus’ work continued through Peter and John, as many people became Christians and the church grew.

Another special worker we read about in the book of Acts was the apostle Paul. Before he understood the message of Christ he persecuted Christians. But after a personal encounter with Jesus, Paul became one of the church’s most faithful workers. He starting churches in many countries.

Application

2 (Fill in the blank.) Once a persecutor of Christians, later believed in Jesus.

- a)** John.
 - b)** Paul.
 - c)** Peter.
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God’s Family Today

The work of Jesus continues today—more than 2000 years after Jesus returned to heaven. Before Jesus left the earth, He commanded His disciples to “go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15). Jesus’ command is to Christians of every generation. The words of Jesus are for us now.

As the message of God’s salvation through Jesus Christ is received and believed, the family of God continues to grow. Godly men and women from Old Testament times, believers from the first church, and believers today are all God’s children and part of His continuing family.

God speaks to the world through His family. Jesus is in heaven, but His work on earth will continue through us. The message of life, the message of salvation through faith in God's Son will always be told, for that is the work of Christians.

Application

- 3** The Bible verse that tells us what Jesus' command is for us today is
- a)** Genesis 6:22.
 - b)** Mark 16:15.
 - c)** Acts 3:1.
- 4** Circle the letter in front of each true statement.
- a)** God's family began in the New Testament.
 - b)** God's family includes people who lived before Jesus came to earth.
 - c)** Believers in Jesus today are part of God's family.
 - d)** It was not possible for people who lived when Moses did to be members of God's family.
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B. GOD'S PLAN FOR HIS FAMILY

Goal 2. State three things God plans for His family.

We know God has a family and has had one since the creation of Adam. Now let us think about His hopes and plans for His family.

To Be Like His Son

Would it surprise you to know that God is looking for His image in His children? Romans 8:29 says, "Those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son." Nothing pleases a father more than to see his image in his children. God wants our lives and our desires to be like His. We should seek to be righteous and holy even as He is righteous and holy. Then we will be like His Son. Unless we are

like His Son we will not be able to continue His Son's work on the earth.

There was once a missionary who went into a new country to preach the gospel. He thought no one had ever been there before to testify of Jesus. When the missionary told of Jesus's awesome personality and works, the people replied, "Oh, Jesus has been here. We have seen Him." The missionary knew it could not be true, but as the people talked he understood. Another missionary had been there years before. He was so much like Jesus that the people thought they had seen Jesus!

We must be like God's Son if we are to continue His work. We must walk with Him. Talk with Him. Read and obey His Word. Seek to know His will and do it. Then, we will become like Him.

Application

- 5** When we say that God wants to find His image in us we mean that we are to be like Him in
- a)** physical appearance.
 - b)** character.
 - c)** outward features.
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To Carry the Gospel

We have Jesus' command to take the gospel into the whole world. What does this mean? First of all, there must be workers willing to go. Then there must be workers to pray for them as they go. And there must be workers who support them financially so they can go and preach. Bibles and teaching materials are needed in gospel work.

When churches are started, many people are needed to teach, to pray, to minister to the sick, and to comfort those who sorrow. Some will be needed to build the church building, and some to clean it. There is a place for every person who will

work. All Christians should be willing to work unto God’s glory.

To Spend Eternity With Him

At the end of the day parents welcome their children home. Even when the children are older and live away from home, still parents want to see them and be together with them.

Jesus said, “In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). God is looking forward to the time when His family will return home. He knows that the time is coming, so He has prepared and planned for an eternal family reunion.

At that celebration, the Father will issue rewards. Jesus says that there will be a special reward for those who have suffered for His name: “Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12).

Application

6 Suppose you wanted to tell a friend about God’s plans for His family. Write below the three things you would share and a Bible reference for each one.

- a)
- b)
- c)



Check Your Answers

The answers to your study exercises are not given in the usual order, so that you will not easily see the answer to your next question ahead of time.

- 4** a) False
b) True
c) True
d) False
- 1** a) 3) David
b) 2) Moses
c) 1) Abraham
- 5** b) character.
- 2** b) Paul.
- 6** Your answer should include the following, in any order:
 - a) To be like His Son, Romans 8:29.
 - b) To carry the gospel, Mark 16:15.
 - c) To spend eternity with Him, John 14:2.
- 3** b) Mark 16:15.