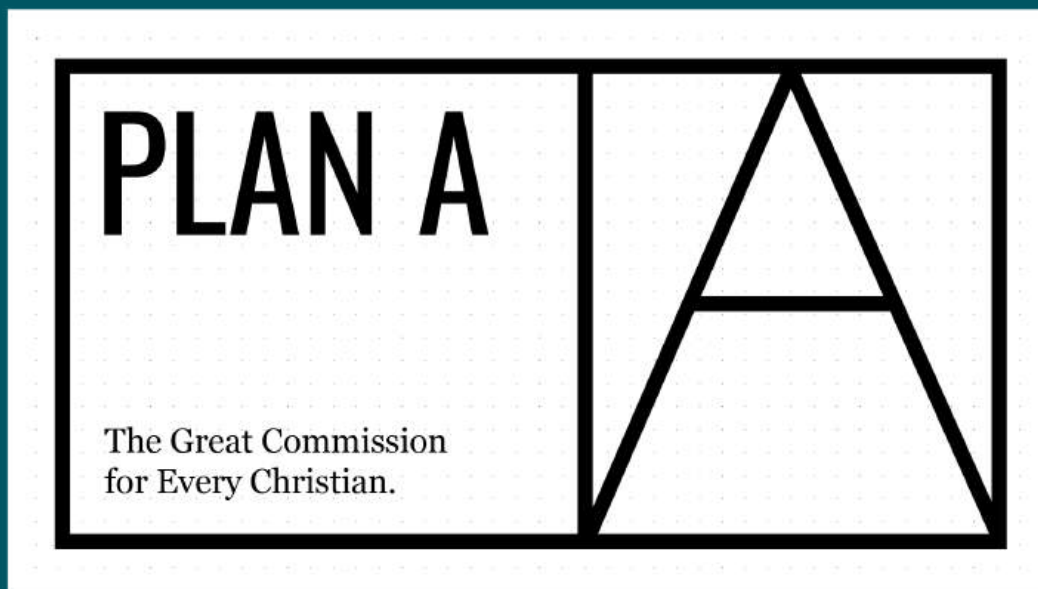




Bible Studies on the Five PLAN A Principles for Sharing Your Faith





Hey! You're Awesome!



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Thanks for choosing to do the PLAN A Bible Studies. You can print this pdf to take notes. If you'd like to save paper, you can print this pdf as a booklet. If you'd really like to save paper, you can use the free YouVersion Bible App. All the questions are there. If you create an account you can type your notes and save them for easy reference wherever you are! This is great for Bible Studies that meet on zoom. Scan the QRCode or click on the link to open the Bible study questions



The Great Commission **- Matthew 28:16-20 -**

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said,

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."



Let's Get Going?

I've had a few seasons in life since becoming a Christian in a public high school. I've worked casually in hospitality (ok, I sold McBurgers and fries), full-time as a computer programmer, part-time for the church and overtime as a stay-at-home mum. I've studied on campus and online. I've been a housemate, teammate, classmate, workmate, best mate and "I'm your mother, not your mate". I've had a season in the "Christian bubble" where every connection I had was church related. Through each of these seasons I have been asking myself "How on earth do I make disciples?"

My husband, Tim has been employed in his blue collar industry his whole life. Long hours, long commutes, long nights and long shifts. When he's at work, it's to work. There is no socialising when you are on the clock to grind, cut and weld. Time is money. If he eats lunch, it's on the run. Weekdays his alarm goes off 4am to get his day started but weekends are for rest and family. How on earth does he make disciples?

You might be able to identify with some of those seasons of life. Your life is full with the stuff that makes life well, life: family, wellbeing, hobbies, study, work, friendship, rest, church, charity. Maybe you too are asking, "how on earth can I go and make disciples?"

PLAN A is five principles to help you make disciples.

The good news (you know, apart from the gospel) is that Jesus does want ordinary Australians with everyday lives to be involved in disciple making. We are his PLAN A. Jesus always planned for ordinary people to go to ordinary people with the good news of Jesus. In fact, there is no Plan B. We don't need to come up with a new plan. We just need to understand the core principles of the original plan and put it into practice. The plan is simple: disciples are to keep *growing*, invest in *knowing* others, *sowing* seeds in respectful conversation, working with others by *rowing* together and to faithfully keep *showing up*, trusting Jesus is working to bring people into his kingdom.



If this is your first time hearing about the PLAN A principles (or you'd like a refresher) you might like to watch this ten minute video which summarises the PLAN A principles before you start. Scan the QR code or click the link and use this box to take notes. <https://vimeo.com/623806173>



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GROWING

PLAN A Principle 1: Growing as Disciples of Jesus

The first principle of PLAN A is "Growing". We must always be growing in our relationship with Jesus. After all, it is *disciples* who make *disciples* of Jesus. To be a disciple means to learn from Jesus how to live and love. This isn't a destination we arrive at, but rather a journey we take our whole lives. It's daily decisions that result in gradual life transformation, or as Eugene H. Peterson puts it "a long obedience in the same direction".

To help us do this we need regular times in our lives to invest in our relationship with Jesus. Each Christian must take responsibility for their own relationship with Jesus – it can't be outsourced to the church, the pastor, parents or a mentor. They are there to help and guide, but we need to be intentional about growing in our own relationship with Jesus.

Growing in our relationship with Jesus is its own joy, but it will also help us make disciples. God's people will shine as salt and light as they live out the teachings of Jesus. We will have stories of lives transformed by Jesus. And, thankful for what Jesus has done for us, we will be authentic witness who are full of grace, humility and love.

This first study will ground us again in the gospel - who Jesus is and why we live for him. As the Apostle Paul says, we don't just accept Jesus as Lord one time, but we grow by continuing to live with him as Lord.

"So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness." - Apostle Paul (Colossians 2:6-7)



Study 1: Growing as Disciples of Jesus

1. How many ways have you heard the word "gospel" used (for example "That's the gospel truth")?



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Optional Content: Did you know in the ancient Roman empire the word gospel meant to announce important news, similar to the modern "newsflash"? These gospel announcements often (but not always) referred to the deeds of the Caesars.

Scan this QR code or click the link to watch a 6 minute clip of John Dickson summarise the Christian and non-Christian use of "Gospel". <https://youtu.be/cNEmXleuxc4>

READ 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

2. How does Paul emphasise the importance of the gospel in v1-3?
3. What are the main points of the Gospel summary that Paul makes in v 3 – 8?

4. Share your thoughts on this gospel summary. For example, in what ways is this different\similar to any gospel summary you may have learned? You may like to discuss who the focus is on, parts that surprise, confuse or comfort you.

5. The gospel is the news that Jesus is Saviour (he died for our sins and has risen from the dead) and King (Jesus is the Christ).
 - a. In what ways can we (accidentally or deliberately) emphasise one over the other (for example in songs, prayers, attitudes, behaviour or conversation)?

 - b. Why is it important for our growth that Jesus be accepted as both King and Saviour?

 - c. Why is important for our witness that we live with Jesus as both King and Saviour?

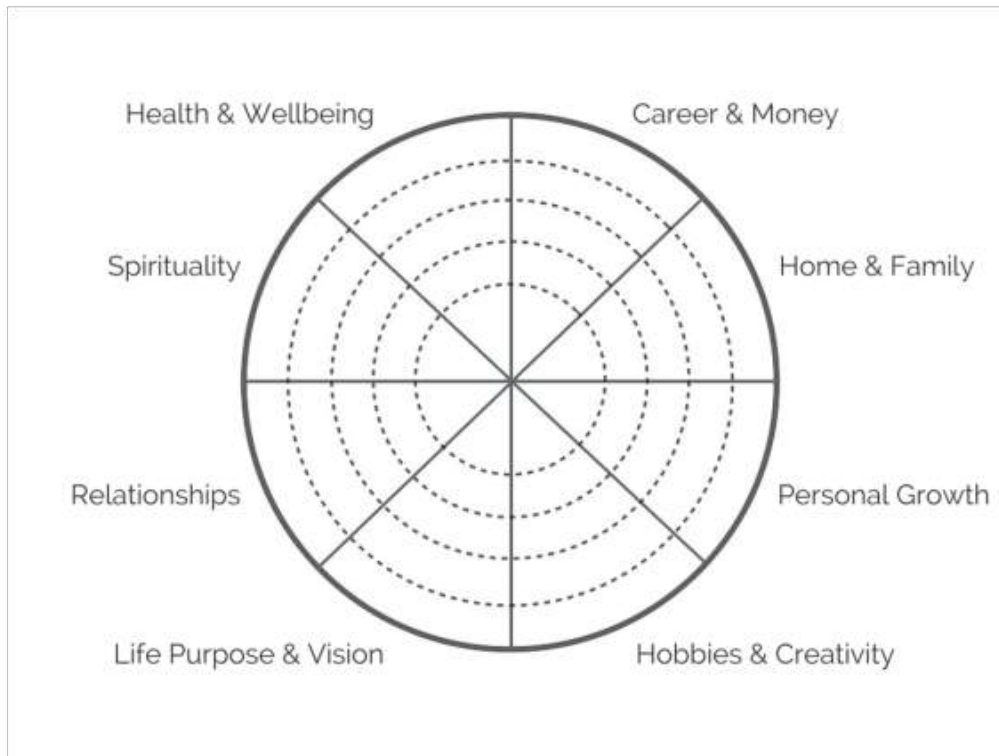
6. Paul says the Corinthians received the gospel and have taken their stand on it (v1). What does it look like to “stand” on the gospel? Is there anything holding you back from doing the same in your everyday life?

“So for Christians, how we forgive, how we live, how we work and lead, and, really, everything about our lives should be rooted in the gospel. What does this have to do with a culture of evangelism? Well, everything.

Understanding the gospel as a way of life means making sure our lives align with the gospel in every part. This helps the gospel come out of us whether we are with believers or non-believers. If we live gospel centred lives, we will find ourselves sharing the gospel.” - Mack Stiles

Stiles, J.M (2014) *Evangelism : How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus*. Wheaton, Illinois. Crossway. p90

7. On the wheel on the next page, colour each section based on how well you think this area of your life aligns with the gospel. Start in the middle and colour your way to the edge. The more you colour, the more you believe this area of your life has been transformed by the gospel. Reflect privately on your coloured wheel and write your reflections here:



8. Are you living a life consistent with the gospel? Is there one change you can make to help you grow with Jesus as your King and Saviour? If you feel comfortable, share with the group one change you would like to make?

9. What have you learned about the principle "Growing as a disciple of Jesus" by studying this passage?



KNOWING

PLAN A Principle 2: Knowing Others

Jesus loves your neighbour and you should too. Disciple making is a relational activity – it's about knowing others and being known by them. Jesus came to earth not just so we could know about God – but so we could really know him. And he did this by entering the lives and complexity of the people around him. When we look at Jesus' method of making disciples, we see he invested in knowing a small group of people. He didn't send them off to school or give them a textbook and an exam. He gave them himself. He called his disciples to do life with him. To see him up close. They were going to learn from him by being shoulder to shoulder with him over three years. The principle "knowing" is about the relationships we form and nurture with people who don't yet know Jesus.

One of the reasons I love this principle is that we can't always talk about Jesus (a bit scandalous for an evangelist to say) - but we can always live for Jesus. We can always be salt and light. We can show people through our small everyday decisions that we are living for the Risen King. Wherever you find yourself through the week there is a way you can be witnessing for Jesus by the way you invest in knowing others.

In this study we will learn from the ways of Jesus. In John 4 Jesus asks a Samaritan woman for a drink. From this encounter we can learn skills that will help us genuinely know people who need to hear about Jesus.

"The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" John 1:14



Study 2: Knowing Others

1. How does it feel when someone takes you seriously or takes time to get to know you?

READ John 4: 1-30

2. Why is Jesus traveling north from Judea to Galilee (v1, 2)?
3. Jesus could have avoided the region of Samaria by walking around it. Some commentators believe the reason Jesus “had to go through Samaria” (v4) is to meet the woman at the well. If this is true, Jesus is intentionally aiming to meet the woman at the well. He goes to her. Why might Jesus do this?
4. What does it look like for you or your group to be intentional about building relationships with people who don’t yet know Jesus?
5. What differences are there between the woman and Jesus? What clues are there in this passage that this interaction was awkward or unexpected?

6. Why do you think Jesus was willing to overlook their differences or the awkwardness of the situation in order to speak to the woman?
7. How willing are you to build relationships with people who are different to you? Can you share a story of your experience doing this? How did you feel and what helped you build the relationship?

"Historically, much of the outreach training Christians have been exposed to has said very little about the Art of Listening. Far too many Christ followers have been taught to give gospel presentations rather than to engage in spiritual conversations" - Mary Schaller & John Crilly

Schaller, M & Crilly, J *The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversation: Walking Alongside People Who Believe Differently*. ePub Format Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale. p182

8. John records a long conversation between Jesus and the woman.
 - a) What observations do you have about the conversation Jesus has with the woman?
 - b) How does Jesus demonstrate that he is participating in a spiritual conversation relevant to the woman and not just trying to get in a memorised gospel presentation?

9. Jesus could have gone into town, but he chooses to stay by the well, where it seems he is expecting to speak to the Samaritan woman. Jesus is seeking "the one" who is ready to hear that Jesus is the Messiah. What can we learn from this approach?
10. The interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman opens the door to Jesus accepting the hospitality of the Samaritan residents of Sychar (v39-42).
- a) Why does accepting help build relationships and open doors to the gospel? How good are you at accepting help from "the Samaritans" in your life?
 - b) Staying two days in Sychar is potentially a disruption to Jesus' travel and preaching plans. Have you ever allowed your plans to be interrupted for the sake of building relationships with others? What happened and how did it help you to get to know others?
11. What do you think the disciples learned from seeing Jesus with the Samaritans? What have you learned about the principle of "knowing others" by reading this story?



SOWING

PLAN A Principle 3: Sowing Seeds in Conversation

Our lives and relationships should point people to Jesus, but people still need to hear about Jesus. When Jesus met with the Samaritan woman (John 4) he didn't just enjoy a cool drink with her and hope she'd guess on her own she was sitting with the Messiah. And when Jesus stayed two days with the Samaritans of Sychar he didn't just stay for the food and drink. As important as it was for Jesus to spend time with people – he taught them about the kingdom of God.

But have you ever noticed how many ways Jesus used to share this news? He told stories, asked questions, used nature as illustrations, read and explained scripture, acted something out, preached to large crowds and gave special insight to a small group. And have you ever noticed Jesus didn't try to pressure people into belief or force them to listen? He let people walk away if they weren't interested. This means we too are free to use a variety of ways for people to hear about Jesus and we don't need to panic or feel like failures if people walk away.

That's why the principle of sowing seeds is important. Seeds are small and they are scattered. In our everyday life we should be looking to sow a seed about Jesus and see what God does. Perhaps the seed will grow into curiosity or interest and we will be able to say more as interest grows.

"So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers."

John 4:40-41



Study 3: Sowing Seeds in Conversation

1. What makes a person great at conversation?

READ Colossians 4:5-6

2. What does Paul say about how we should live?
3. "Outsiders" may sound like a negative term (v5). Is Paul warning us away from outsiders or encouraging us to build relationships with them? Why do you think that?

"Any and every situation is one in which we *are* to witness, by the way we live, to the fact that Jesus is our Lord. Equally, any and every situation is one where we *may* be able to witness, by speaking of that same Lord." - John Chapman (my italics)

Chapman, J (2005) *Know and Tell the Gospel*. Matthias Media. p94

4. What is Paul's instruction for how we should have conversations (v6)? What does this mean in practice?

5. Do you think Paul is more concerned with what we say or how we say it? Why does this matter?

6. "The best spiritual conversations usually occur in places where others feel comfortable." – Doug Pollock. Why is it living wisely to go to places your friends feel comfortable? When is it unwise? Why do good conversations happen in these places?

"We can have better results from our evangelizing... A better way exists, and it looks, sounds, and feels more like Jesus, the rabbi, than like Murray, the used car salesman. It involves more listening than speaking, inviting rather than demanding "a decision." Perhaps the most important component to this kind of evangelism is answering questions with questions rather than giving answers."
- Randy Newman

Newman, R. *Questioning Evangelism* ePub Format p26

7. Many Christians are concerned they will get into a spiritual conversation where they won't know how to answer. A great way of responding is by asking further questions about what the other person believes. Why are questions a key tool for having spiritual conversations?

8. Research has shown asking questions is more influential in changing behaviour than giving information.¹ Good questions arise from curiosity about the other person and what they believe. Look at the following list of questions and discuss whether you think the question is a good one or not. What makes it a question helpful or unhelpful?

If you could ask God one question what would it be?	How on earth can you believe that?
Have you seen God working in your life?	Have you always believed that?
Haven't you heard that's been proven wrong?	Do you have any spiritual beliefs?
What do you find hardest to believe about Jesus?	Are you too lazy to make it to church?
Could we talk about this some more over coffee?	What do you think about imputation?
If you were to die tonight do you know where you would go?	Have you been born again?
Have you ever had an experience you couldn't explain?	What are you doing for Easter?
Would you be open to changing your beliefs?	Do you think Hell is hot?
1	
2	
3	

9. Discuss other questions which might lead to authentic spiritual conversations. Fill in the gaps in the above table with three questions you could ask your friends about their spiritual beliefs.

¹ Research by Joseph Grenny and David Maxfield cited in *The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations* p189

"Once again I think it is worth stating that we are in conversation which is dialogue not monologue. At all times during the conversation we should be seeking to be sensitive to the signs which show when the other person no longer wishes to continue the discussion...remember God is well able to keep the conversation going for as long as we have everything to say which he wants us to say on that occasion. Sometimes we may be the first link in a chain of events which will lead that person to Christ." - John Chapman

Know and Tell the Gospel p134

10. Do you agree with John Chapman that "God is well able to keep the conversation going for as long as we have everything to say which he wants us to say on that occasion"? How does that encourage us if the person changes the topic? Do we need to panic about how much we can say?

11. What have you learned about the principle of "sowing seeds in conversation" through this study?



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Optional Content: Often evangelists share their best stories, and it can be a little intimidating! It's helpful to hear that "professionals" make mistakes and learn from them, just like we will. Scan the QR code or click the link to watch a three minute video of Sean McDowell (a full-time apologist) share his biggest evangelism mistake. There are some things more important than knowing all the answers! <https://youtu.be/6DeVUAiKFuU>



ROWING

PLAN A Principle 4: Rowing Together with the Church

So far, we've been considering principles that help the individual share their faith. But perhaps the most under-rated principle of the Great Commission is partnership between believers. When Jesus commissioned his group of disciples he commissioned the group together. They weren't to be lone rangers, but to partner together.

This principle is called "rowing together" to try and capture the idea of a team sport where it's essential each member of the team is contributing to the mission. The church really is a body that needs every part of the body to contribute with their God given gifts. We can do so much more together than we can do on our own. We partner together on Sundays for community worship, to create connections with our community, to support the vulnerable, to relieve loneliness, to feed the hungry and to proclaim the gospel here and overseas.

In this study we will see Jesus make possibly the greatest understatement in scripture: "the workers are few". Currently the worker count is one – Jesus. He's been doing the teaching and the healing. But he sees the need of the crowd and he multiplies the workers. He calls twelve of his disciples to him with the purpose of sending them out. The church was born out of the need to bring in the harvest. Your church has a mission. Are you rowing together with your church to help it happen?

"These are the names of the twelve apostles: first Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. These twelve Jesus sent out" - Matthew 10: 2-5



Study 4: Rowing Together with the Church

1. How many people were involved in your decision to follow Jesus? Was there a group (such as a Youth Group or Church) that influenced your decision to follow Jesus?

READ Matthew 9:35-10:8

2. What has Jesus been doing (v35)? Has it been going well?
3. What does Jesus feel as he looks out on the crowds? Why does he feel this way? Why is compassion a good motivator to witness to people? How can you grow in your compassion for others?
4. What does Jesus' compassion cause him to say to his disciples in v37-38? Do you think this is something we still need to do? If yes, where and when do you see this?
5. What is Jesus' solution to the problem (9:38-10:8)? How is the group of apostles an answer to their own prayers?
6. How does the creation of this group allow Jesus to reach more people? How does partnering with others help us reach more people?

7. In what ways is your church involved in both the words and deeds of mission?
8. Do you see yourself as a solo worker or as one of many workers in the field? In what ways can you work with others to bring in the harvest? If you are unsure, why not ask others in the group what skills and gifts they see in you.
9. We don't know very much about the twelve apostles. Are there any hints in their descriptions (10:2-4) that they are different to each other? Why might Jesus have appointed apostles who are different to each other?
10. Why is it important that the church today consists of people who are different to each other? How can this help with mission?

Optional Content: Sam Chan explains in this eight minute video why the most powerful factor in determining belief is community. Scan the QR code or click the link to listen to him explain why community is so important in evangelism and hear his tips on how you can "row" together with your christian friends.



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<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/gospelbound/the-most-powerful-factor-in-determining-belief/>

11. What have you learned about the principle of "Rowing together" from this study?



SHOWING UP

PLAN A Principle 5: Showing Up and Depending on Jesus

If, like me, you've ever made mistakes in evangelism, seen people leave the faith or prayed for people for years and years you might be tempted to give up on the whole Great Commission. I know I have been. But Jesus wants us to keep *showing up* and not become faint-hearted or weary of doing good. The final principle of PLAN A reminds us to keep *showing up and depending on Jesus*.

When Jesus commissioned his disciples, he made them a promise. He didn't promise that it would be easy – but he did promise them himself. He would always be with them, right till the very end. He would be there every step of the way, because quite frankly, they were going to need him.

Jesus sent his disciples to proclaim him as the Risen King to the very people who killed him; to the leaders and crowd who only days earlier had yelled in one voice "Crucify him!" In all likelihood the church faced a quick demise before it even made it out of Jerusalem. Then, if they survived that, they were to take the news to Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth. It was an audacious plan. Wherever they went their story would seem foolish, scandalous, offensive and/or insane. They were hunted, murdered, threatened, slandered and misunderstood. Yet, the plan worked. People all over the world have heard about Jesus and placed their trust in him as the Risen King. Why? Because the plan didn't depend on the disciples. The plan depends on the disciples showing up and depending on the power and presence of Jesus.

Nothing has changed.

"And surely I am with you, to the very end of the age." - Jesus (Matthew 28:20)



Study 5: Showing Up and Depending on Jesus

1. How can you tell if someone is devoted to something? What sort of things are you devoted to?

READ Colossians 4:2-4

2. What does Paul want the Colossians to do in v2? What could it mean to be watchful and thankful?
3. How does being "devoted to prayer, being watchful and thankful" help us practice the principle of "Showing Up and Depending on Jesus"?

"It is in a prayerless church that the enemy can best do his work of disruption"
-Dick Lucas

Lucas, D. *The Message of Colossians & Philemon* (The Bible Speaks Today; Leicester, IVP, 2006) p172

4. Where is Paul when he writes these verses (v3)? How would his circumstances be difficult for him? Do you know anyone today who is trying to witness under difficult circumstances?
5. Is there any evidence from these verses that Paul wants to keep showing up and not quit? Does this inspire you to want to keep showing up?
6. Share something about your circumstances (health\work\relationship\culture) that makes sharing your faith difficult or impossible. At the end, pray for each other.
7. Paul asks the Colossians to partner with him through prayer. How can you develop a prayer partnership where you and one or two others swap outreach inspired prayers?
8. What would an open door for the gospel message look like in your context? Do you feel pressure to force doors open, rather than ask God to open them?

9. Paul longed to preach the gospel publicly and asked for prayer. How can you pray for public proclaimers of the gospel like scripture teachers, pastors, youth group leaders etc?

"And so he (Jesus) tells his friends to pray—that activity that often seems so small and inconsequential, and yet changes the world and transforms eternal destinies. As Simon Barrington-Ward, the former bishop of Coventry, memorably puts it: *"Prayer is that apparently useless activity, without which all activities are useless."* - Rico Tice

Excerpt From: Rico Tice. "Honest Evangelism." Apple Books. <https://books.apple.com/au/book/honest-evangelism/id980543304>

10. Who do you long to see accept the gospel? Can you devote yourself to prayer for them and keep living out the other principles of PLAN A as you wait for Jesus to answer your prayers?
11. What have you learned about the principle of "Showing Up and depending on Jesus?"



Let's Get Going!

PLAN A isn't a five step plan because we don't ever complete each step. It's five *principles* of faith sharing: Growing, Knowing, Sowing, Rowing, and Showing Up. We incorporate each principle into our everyday lives. How that looks is different for each person. When I was a stay at home mum, it meant inviting my neighbours over for cups of tea and inviting them to playgroup. When I was a full-time worker it meant social squash games and inviting people to "how to host a murder" nights. For Tim, it means getting up early to pray for everyone, being a calm and trustworthy employee, answering questions when they come, and supporting others who share the gospel. The question is: what does it look like for you? How can you live out the five principles of PLAN A?

Want to go deeper into the PLAN A principles?

Did you know there are other PLAN A resources available? To help your church there are sermon outlines, LifeGroup Videos, video tips and more. If you'd really like to dig in why not ask about workshops or zoom coaching sessions?

Website: plana.website

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/PlanA.socials>

Email: planA@Crossover.org.au



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One final thing...we'd love to hear where these studies are being used. Have they helped you see how you can share your faith? Scan the QR code or click the link to send feedback to PLAN A. We love hearing your stories and suggestions! <https://forms.office.com/r/BsALrpk8iK>

PLAN A is a collaboration between Baptist Association of NSW and ACT and Crossover: Helping Australian Baptists Share Jesus. PLAN A was created by Belinda Lakelin.

