

A Pattern For Life – Acts 1:15-26

Acts 1:15-26. If you're new . . . My name . . . Glad you're here . . . Welcome live stream. I'm going to do something I've never done before. I'm going to preach second sermon on the same passage, two weeks in a row. Not b/c I set *out* to do so, but b/c there's more here, and it just unfolded before my eyes. It's a classic example of something we see all *over* Scripture. That while every text has one intended *meaning*, it can have *several* applications. Several ways to *apply* that meaning.

So last week, we found principles to help us *understand* the Bible. And live accordingly. This week, we're going to see a pattern for *life*. A pattern to shape our every *day*, and guide our every *year*. A pattern to live by and act on. It doesn't *get* much more comprehensive. So follow along with me as I read.

[15] *In those days Peter stood up among the brothers (the company of persons was in all about 120) and said, [16] "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke beforehand by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. [17] For he was numbered among us and was allotted his share in this ministry."* [He was the perfect traitor, b/c he was an inside guy.]

And then, after Luke's *explanation* about Judas, that we covered last week, Peter *continues* in v20. The Scriptures had to be fulfilled . . . [20] *"For it is written in the Book of Psalms, "May his camp become desolate, and let there be no one to dwell in it"; and "Let another take his office."*

[21] *So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, [22] beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection."* [23] *And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. [24] And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen [25] to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."* [26] *And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.*

➤ When I was in 7th grade Home Economics, I made a vest. Kind of like this one. In fact, I'd like to think that I was a trend setter.☺ Man, I thought I was the bomb. And to make that vest, I bought a pattern. And then laid it out on the material, pinned the edges, and cut accordingly. Very carefully. Dotted lines. Knowing, that if I *followed* the pattern, I'd get a vest. If I didn't, I'd get a hot mat. It's amazing how many pieces of clothing end up as hot mats in 7th grade.

And the same is true of our lives. If you want a hot mat, start cutting. Just *forget* the pattern (Bible), and do whatever you want. Make your own lines. But if you want a life that honors God, a life that makes a difference, a life of impact, and joy, and peace, and purpose – follow *his* pattern.

Starting with this:

1. Know God's Word (v15-19)

That's the first part of God's pattern for life. Know the Bible. The Holy Scriptures.

One of the reasons Peter stood up and spoke with such boldness and clarity and compulsion, was his knowledge of God's word. He literally couldn't have said in v16, "*Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled,*" if he didn't know it. If he didn't *know* the Scripture. He couldn't have *applied* the Psalms to Judas, if he wasn't familiar with them.

If you're going to become the man or woman of God that he intends you to be, you have to know his Word. If you're going to influence *others*, like Peter, you have to know what it says.

➤ And there are 4 ways to do that. The first is to . . .

• **Read it.** In order to know God's Word, you have to read God's Word. Every day. Devotionally, systematically, and thoroughly. *Devotionally*, with an eye to *apply* it in your life. *Systematically*, according to a *plan*. A bunch of which are found on our website. And *thoroughly*, for the purpose of understanding. Not just *seeing* the words, but knowing what they mean. You'll never know it if you don't read it.

• **Study it.**

If you're going to *know* God's Word, you have to *study* God's Word.

You have to read and *re-read* it. And read good books *about* it.

Like **Christian Beliefs** by Wayne Grudem. And **God's Big Picture** by Vaughan Roberts. 2 little books that are very accessible and very informative.

And while you're at it, be sure to get with *others* who are studying God's Word. That's how you get the *most* out of it.

That's one of the reasons we have Small Group, and men's ministry, and women's.

• **Memorize it.**

If you want to know God's Word, hide it in your heart. Starting with the plan of salvation.

Like the Romans Road. A series of 6 verses from the *book* of Romans. Romans 3:23, 6:23, 5:8, 10:9, 10:13, and 8:1. You can Google it.

Even better, download **Fighter Verses**. An app for your phone with 5 *years* worth of verses, and a whole bunch of ways to memorize them.

I put them on my lock screen. So every time I open my phone, it's right there.

And then last . . .

• **Hear it.**

That's the 4th way to know God's Word. Hear it preached. Hear it expounded on. Hear it unpacked and applied, week in and week out.

Read it, study it, memorize it, and hear it. (**Summary**)

After all, how can you *follow* the pattern, if you don't *know* it?

2. Obey God's commands (v20-22)

That's the second part of God's pattern for life. Obey his commands. V21.

After *citing* one such command, that someone should take Judas' place, Peter says . . . "*So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, [22] beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to his resurrection.*" Must become with us.

He was urging them to obey. To obey the commands that applied to the situation at hand. A pattern for all of us. Obey them.
You can *know* God's Word all you want, but if you don't *obey* it, it's all for naught. As *children* of God, we ought to *obey* God.
We ought to know what to do, and do what we know.

- Including things like **tithing**. *Bring the full tithe into the storehouse* God says. It's a command. (Mal 3:10)
Or how about **praying**? *Pray without ceasing*. (1 Thess 5:17)
Or **servicing**? *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another*. (1 Pet 4:10)
And **gathering**. *Not neglecting to meet together*. Keeping the Sabbath *holy*. (Heb 10:25; Ex 20:8)

Let me tell you something. People don't want to hear those things today. Maybe even you. But those are the basics. The bedrock of God's *pattern* for life. All year, every year. Commands we ought to obey b/c we love God and want to please God. Commands that yield great joy, great fruit, & great passion. Individually & corporately.

- Unfortunately, we're missing it. We're lacking in these areas. And missing out. We don't tithe. We don't serve. We don't pray. And we don't gather. Not most. Not all. Not like we should. We keep our money for ourselves. We serve only if we have to, or we're asked to. We pray very little. And we gather when we feel like it.

And I gotta tell ya, it grieves me. And grieves the Lord.
We are so privileged and so blessed, and have been entrusted with so much – time, talent, *and* treasure – and yet we give of those things so sparingly. So sporadically. We excuse ourselves so quickly. We rationalize so easily. We disobey so blatantly.

Meanwhile, God's pattern remains. (**Summary**)
If you keep my commandments [Jesus said], *you will abide in my love*. (Jn 15:10).
You are my friends if you do what I command you (Jn 15:14).
So for his glory and your joy, *obey* God's commands.
Know what to do, and do what you know. That's the 2nd part of God's pattern.

3. Apply God's **wisdom** (v21-23)

After Peter says in v22 that *one of these men must become with us a witness to* [Christ's] *resurrection*, Luke says in v23 . . .
And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. IOW they applied God's wisdom.
They didn't just pick somebody from the crowd, or lower the bar so that *anybody* was qualified. They set some standards, and chose carefully.
Applying the wisdom God had *given* them.

- I love how J.I. Packer defines **wisdom**, in his book *Knowing God*. First published in 1973, he says, "*Wisdom is the power to see and the inclination to choose, the best and highest goal, together with the surest means of attaining it.*" Wisdom is the power or ability to *see* the best and highest goal, and the inclination to *choose* the best and highest goal, along with the means to attain it. Steps A to Z.

Ability and inclination. Good judgement, and the tendency to follow through.
That's the wisdom of *God*. Far more than just knowledge, *knowing* what's best . . .
It's the inclination to *do* it as well.

- What it's *not*, is automatic. The wisdom of God, is *God-given*. God-granted. When we fear him, follow him, and ask him.
The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, Proverbs says (9:10). Not fear of his wrath, but respect for his power. Wisdom begins when we *fear* the Lord.

And wisdom grows when we *follow* the Lord. When we walk in his ways and expand our experience. Like the *apostles* did for 3 years.
And wisdom is granted when we *ask* for it. James 1:5. *If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all*.
Wisdom comes when we fear God, follow God, and ask God.*****

- The problem is, we don't always apply it, do we? We have it, at least to *some* extent in our walk with the Lord, but don't always use it. For 2 reasons.

A. Sometimes *sin* clouds our judgment.

Our ability to *see* the best and highest goal, is obscured by the wrong in our lives. Like the couple who decides to move to another city for a better paying job, without regard for how it will impact their marriage or family. Without considering how it will affect their *spiritual* growth. Or the church they leave. Or the education of their kids. All they think about is the money. Better pay. So that the sin of greed clouds their *judgment*, and they fail to apply God's wisdom.

B. Sin sometimes weakens our *inclination*. The *other* part of wisdom. Our inclination to follow through. We *know* what's best, we just lack the desire to do it. Like the couple who's dating, and well *knows* they shouldn't have sex, but indulge anyway. They have the *ability* to see the best and highest goal . . .
But their inclination to *pursue* such purity is weakened by their sinful desire. So they too fail to apply God's wisdom.

Better to stick to the pattern. Better to seek God's wisdom by fearing him, following him, and asking him – and then apply all you've got, with a clean and pure heart.

4. Seek God's **face** (v24-25)

That's v24-25. *They prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two you have chosen [25] to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."*
They prayed. Seeking the will of *Jesus* for their situation.

That's the idea of seeking God's *face*.

It's appealing to him for *his* will. *His* insight. *His* favor. *His* decision in a matter. Like David said in **Ps 27:8** – *You have said, "Seek my face."* *My heart says to you, "Your face, LORD, do I seek."*
Your presence, do I seek. Your power, do I seek. Your will, do I seek.

- It's something we did the better part of last *year* as elders. And try to do always.

Harvest Bible Fellowship was the association of churches to whom we belonged for 12 years, to train pastors and plant churches.

And after it fell apart, due to some very poor decisions and poor behavior on the part of those in charge, we pulled out. And so did everyone else.

And after announcing that last *Fall* to you, we asked *you* to seek God's face. With us.

Meanwhile, many of the churches who were involved in the Fellowship, regrouped under a *new* name, and new *method*. Called the **Great Commission Collective**.

And it's turned into an international family of churches and strategic partners . . .

That exist to glorify God by planting, strengthening, and multiplying Great Commission churches around the world. Churches all about the gospel and discipleship.

It's far less centralized and much more collaborative than what we had before, and gives churches way more latitude in how to *use* their church planting funds.

For instance, only 2% is required from member churches for administration and staffing, instead of 5%; and we're free to use the difference as we see fit.

As long as it goes to plant churches.

- So after thinking and praying about it, *seeking God's face*, we decided to join. As did the vast majority of other churches. About 110 of the previous 140. So that now, there are 114 churches in the GCC, and hopeful for more.

We're still part of the Cooperative Program of the SBC, but *our* tribe, our *closest* relationships and partnerships, are in the Collective.

In fact, Becky and I will be with most of the other SP's and wives at a *retreat* next weekend, and look forward to reconnecting with so many we love and cherish.*****

I trust all of that encourages you. And that you *too* will seek God's face for his will. It's a pattern.

And then last . . .

5. Trust God's sovereignty (v26)

That's what the apostles did. They presented 2 men as qualified, v26 – *and they cast lots for them*. They rolled dice. Drew straws. Picked a name out of a hat.

Trusting that its every decision, casting lots, is from the LORD. Prov 16:33.

IOW they trusted God's sovereignty. They trusted that God was in control, and even superintended over "random" things.

- And we should too. It's a pattern for *life*. Not that we should cast *lots* like them. That's Old Covenant. Pre Holy Spirit. And there's nothing in the rest of the NT indicating or implying that such a practice was *perpetuated*.

What *is* perpetuated, is trust in God's *sovereignty* over our lives. His control. His foresight. His love. His care.

Trust that he's accomplishing his purposes, by what he allows and ordains.

Working all things together, conforming us into the image of his Son, and preparing us for his return. That, you can trust. And should.

- Which means, instead of worrying, you *depend* on him.

Instead of taking every matter into your *own* hands, you trust *his*.

Instead of shrinking in *fear* when the odds are against you, you trust his protection.

Instead of drowning in *despair* when tragedy strikes, you trust his sovereignty.

That's a hard one, isn't it? B/c it not only requires a decision of your will in the *midst* of the tragedy, but *beforehand*. Right now.

If you're going to trust God's sovereignty when disaster falls or misfortune hits, you have to decide right *now*.

Before that loved one dies unexpectedly. *Before* you're fired. *Before* you're criticized.

Before you're opposed.

Then and only then will you trust him in the midst. (Summ.)

- It's a pattern for life. Know God's Word, Obey God's commands, Apply God's Wisdom, Seek God's face, and Trust God's sovereignty. Otherwise, you'll end up a *hot* mat on the bottom of life's drawer. Rarely used, and often regretted. Better to be a vest any day.

Pray – Lord, thank you for passages like this that remind us of greater truths and layout patterns for life. Forgive us for not knowing your Word, and not wanting to. We confess. And we confess our disobedience. And foolish ways. Change our hearts to seek you, and trust you, and follow your pattern.

We give now our tithes. A duty of delight. Obedience *and* desire. For your glory and our joy.

Close – **Baptism. Guest Central. Elder/Deacon Prayer.**