



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

BASIC FOLLOW-UP

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Introduction

Through the efforts and outreach of many churches, evangelistic organizations and individual Christians, thousands of people are turning to Christ each year. Unfortunately, only a very small percentage of these new converts ever become part of the local church. Of those who do join the church, many become inactive within the first few years. Their names may remain on the roll, but they are no longer involved in church activities.

One study reported that in an average total church membership:

- **20% seldom pray,**
- **25% seldom read the Bible,**
- **50% seldom go to Sunday School,**
- **70% seldom give to missions,**
- **80% seldom go to prayer meetings,**
- **95% have never won another person to Christ.**

It becomes obvious to the most casual observer that something is wrong. What is the problem?

When God first instituted the power of physical reproduction, He was aware that the children who would be born would need care and protection. He therefore established the family where the newborn infants could find love, care, and safety, as well as food in order to grow to a healthy maturity.

Spiritual infants also need love, care, feeding and protection to grow to spiritual maturity. Unfortunately, very few Christians or churches are skilled in the *care* and *feeding* of spiritual babes. Since they lack the necessary nurturing, most converts are lost to the Body of Christ—gradually drifting away. Dr. Billy Graham, one of the world's leading soul-winners and evangelists, says that conversion is 5% and follow-up is 95% of the Christian life. Clearly, we must learn the fine art of follow-up and be able to help new converts get established in the Christian life if we are ever to see the world reached for Christ.

What Is Follow-up?

Although the word **follow-up** does not appear in the Bible, we have firm biblical grounds for using it because it is a basic idea which is to be found throughout the New Testament. Follow-up is seen in practice in the lives and ministries of the following people:

Jesus

In the great commission Jesus said “*make disciples*,”—not “make converts.”

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

(Matthew 28:19-20)

Apostles

On the day of Pentecost when three thousand were converted, we find the apostles continuing with the people establishing the converts so they would become disciples.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

(Acts 2:41-42)

Paul

In the ministry of Paul we see one of his consuming passions in life portrayed in his letter to the Colossian church.

Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

(Colossians 1:28-29)

He saw it as his responsibility not only to win, but to *nurture* believers. We see Paul doing this in the Scriptures on his missionary journey.

• Making disciples

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra,

and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

(Acts 14:21-22)

- **Making return trips to newly established converts**

And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do.

(Acts 15:36)

- **Sending letters to them**

Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.

(Galatians 6:11)

- **Sending others to minister to them**

So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season.

(Acts 19:22)

- **Praying**

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers;

(Romans 1:9)

Definition of Follow-up

Follow-up is the process of training which brings spiritual children to a place of maturity in their walk with the Lord and their service in the body of Christ. It incorporates all that we do individually or collectively in the church to help young Christians grow from converts to disciples.

Spiritual Child-Care

Paul saw himself as a nursemaid caring for the needs of new followers in Christ at Thessalonica.

But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse
cherisheth her children:

(1 Thessalonians 2:7)

He knew if they were to grow to maturity, they would need at least four things:

- **Love**
- **Nourishment**
- **Protection**
- **Training**

While he was there, he provided these things in person, but in his absence he was still responsible for them. His letter was an effort to provide these four essentials. As you read 1 Thessalonians, you will see how his letter works to meet these needs.

Have you ever noticed how meticulously the doctor and hospital staff watch over a new baby? Then, when the parents take the baby home, they carry on in the same way. They both realize how frail that child is and how desperately it looks to them for life.

In contrast, have you ever noticed the way believers handle and care for new converts? It is tragic to see how carelessly we look after their needs. It is of little wonder that we have such a high mortality rate among our spiritual children. If we are to engage in follow-up, we must be willing to be nursemaids, even as Paul.

Spiritual Parenthood

Have you ever stopped to realize that just as God has commanded us to be parents to physical children, he has also **commanded** us to be spiritual parents? Jesus charged Peter to feed and care for his lambs or spiritual children.

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter,
Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?
He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love
thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs.

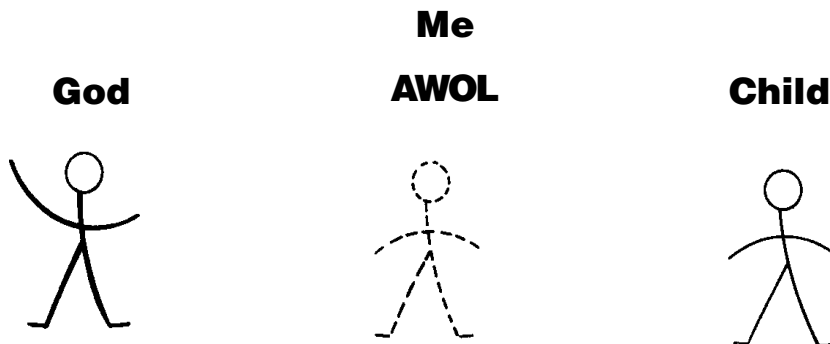
(John 21:15)

I realize in the physical realm that I am responsible to care for that child for at least the next eighteen years. If I don't, the law will take the child away. Every one of us would look down on a person who neglected to care for his child. But far too often as spiritual parents, we bring a person to Christ and then somehow disappear and leave God to care for that child. In the military they say we are AWOL

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(absent without leave). If God used me to bring someone to Christ it is reasonable to believe He wants to use me also to help that person to grow. If I abandon this child, how will he grow? Too many Christians are AWOL.

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God provides Ananias to care for Saul:

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief

priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

(Acts 9:1-6; 10-19)

God provides Peter to care for Cornelius:

While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them. Then Peter went down to the men which were sent unto him from Cornelius; and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God, and of good report among all the nation of the Jews, was warned from God by an holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words of thee.

(Acts 10:19-22)

Why do you think God provided Ananias and Peter? Why didn't he just use the angel to minister to Paul and Cornelius?

God's plan is to use *us* to help His children grow. He doesn't want us to disappear and neglect our God-given responsibility.

Importance of Follow-Up

- **It is commanded in Scripture.**

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that

after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.

(Acts 20:28-29)

We are to look after the flock so it is not lost to the enemy.

- **It helps to mature converts into disciples.**

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

(Matthew 28:19-20)

God wants us to make disciples. Nowhere in Scripture are we commanded to make converts or to be satisfied with converts alone. The imperative of the Great Commission is that we make disciples.

- **It conserves the fruit of evangelism.**

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

(John 15:16)

It was God's intention that our fruit would remain. It will only remain if we take care of it.

- **It is the key to spiritual multiplication.**

And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

(2 Timothy 2:2)

Every time we add a reproducing disciple to the Kingdom, it allows us to multiply.

- **It is the source for a crown.**

Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

(1 Peter 5:2-4)

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It allows us to win the Undershepherd's crown for feeding and building up God's Kingdom.

- **It increases the church.**

And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.

(Acts 6:7)



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