



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

FOLLOW-UP OBJECTIVES

NOTES

The Road to Maturity

A Christian may long and pray for the day his non-Christian friend will come to Christ. He is faithful in his witness and his intercession, and at last the day comes when he leads the person to Christ. At this point the Christian witness may think his job is complete, but in reality, his work has just begun.

Spiritual birth is very similar to physical birth. When parents welcome their new son or daughter into the world, they know that their job has just started. For the next eighteen to twenty years, the work of bringing the child to maturity will be a consuming responsibility for the father and mother.

All parents facing such a task wish that they had a “Never-Fail Manual on the Care and Feeding of Children.” They wish there were a magic formula that would help them rear the child correctly so he would mature into a perfect adult. Unfortunately, no such manual exists. Parents soon realize that each of their children is different from the others and requires special attention in certain unique areas. Each child has special gifts, talents, weaknesses, and personality traits. No one **formula** could ever work for all children. The same is true for spiritual parents and children.

However, all parents, both physical and spiritual, can and should prayerfully set Biblical objectives for their children to help them grow and mature **physically, intellectually, socially, and spiritually** as Jesus did.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.

(Luke 2:52)

In this lesson we will attempt to define certain stages of spiritual development and suggest a basic syllabus to help the Christian parent as he seeks to follow-up his spiritual child.

Kinds of Follow-Up

Individual

One person meets one-to-one with another in an effort to help him grow in his walk with Christ.

Group

One person meets with several people at a time—also for the purpose of helping them grow spiritually.

The application of these two kinds of follow-up can take a thousand different forms, but all follow-up will basically fall into one of these two categories. We can find both kinds demonstrated in Scripture. For example, Jesus started His ministry by working among the masses and multitudes. Eventually, He called out from these large groups twelve men whom He would train and send forth. Even out of the twelve, there were three who were closer to Jesus than any of the others, and often He would call them out to minister especially to them. These three were Peter, James, and John. Of these three yet another selection was made. Jesus chose Peter as the one who would lead His team of followers after His return to Heaven.

Relationships in Follow-Up

There are four basic relationships that can be developed in follow-up. All of them can be accomplished either with a group of young Christians or with one individual. All of them are important aspects of a total follow-up program.

Recreational

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.

(Proverbs 17:22)

Having fun together in a recreational setting can do great things for the spiritual parent-child relationship. As we relax together in an informal way, the new Christian is able to observe that the Christian life can be full of healthy and wholesome fun. The spiritual parent, in turn, can observe his spiritual child in a relaxed environment with his defenses down and begin to know the real person he is following up. Recreational follow-up lets the babe know his parent is interested in him as a whole person and enjoys being with him as a friend and not just as a spiritual client. Sporting activities, having meals together, and working on hobbies or crafts are just a few of the things which can be engaged in when establishing a recreational relationship.

Casual

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

(Deuteronomy 6:7)

The casual relationship is also quite a loose and informal one. The spiritual parent simply attempts to use any informal opportunity available to build character and Christian practices into his babe. Meeting together casually at lunch break may give the Christian parent and child an opportunity to share blessings from their Quiet Times, to pray, to review verses or to have counselling time on various problems.

Christians should look for opportunities such as riding in the car or bus or walking somewhere together, occasional telephone calls or even letters to babes far away, spontaneous coffee dates, etc. Whatever casual situations arise, the key to making them effective is to work and pray to establish an honest and transparent communication. If the Christian parent is not willing to be honest and open and to share his struggles and needs, he cannot expect his babe to do so. We must all remember that we are dealing with people who have real life problems. We cannot expect them to share these needs if we appear to them as **perfect** or **preachy** or **moralistic**. At the same time, we do want to communicate that just as there are very real problems which we all must face, there is also a very real solution to each one in Christ.

Structured

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 28:20)

In the structured relationship we establish a certain time and place for regular Bible Study, prayer, and teaching. The Christian parent should have a clear idea of what he wants to teach his babe and why. A syllabus is very helpful here so that the structured time does not become a "hit or miss" operation. Stress should be placed on consistency, understanding the various Bible doctrines, and applying them to the personal life. Through the discipline of the structured relationship, we are able to build disciples who will be self-disciplined in days to come.

Partnership

Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

(Philippians 2:25)

In a partnership, the spiritual leader and babe team up to do the ministry together. Obviously this will not occur immediately after a

person is saved. Certain foundations and groundwork must first be established in the convert's life. But it is advisable that we also do not wait too long to introduce this aspect of follow-up. Even very young Christians should be led out by their more experienced parent to share their faith and win others to Christ. As they grow in maturity, spiritual children become peers with their parents—just as is true with physical children. When both the child and the parent are adults in spiritual maturity, they will be able to be co-laborers and encouragers to one another.

Stages of Growth

In his first epistle John describes three stages of growth for Christians:

I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

(1 John 2:12-14)

The Apostle Paul adds a fourth stage when he writes to Titus:

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

(Titus 1:5)

Babes or Children (Converts)

This is the stage of initial conversion. The main objective for this stage is to help the person get established in his daily relationship to Jesus Christ.

Young Men (Disciples)

In this stage a person is working on how to really become a committed follower of Christ. He is learning to overcome Satan and to abide and continue in the Word of God.

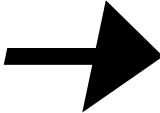

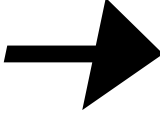

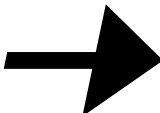

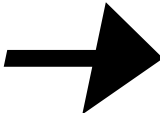
Fathers (Disciple-Makers)

These are people who have known and loved God for a long time. They have reproduced spiritual children and are faithfully continuing to do so.

Elders (Leaders of Disciple-Makers)

These are those who have been chosen to exercise a special role of leadership as undershepherds who lead and train others in the ministry.

Summary of Growth Related to Follow-Up Relationships

<p>Evangelism (Witnessing)</p> <p><i>And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15)</i></p>	<p>Produces</p> 	<p>Converts (Children)</p> 
<p>Establishing (Follow-Up—grounding converts in Christ and His Word)</p> <p><i>As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. (Colossians 2:6-7)</i></p>	<p>Produces</p> 	<p>Disciples (Young Men)</p> 
<p>Equipping to Minister (Man-to-Man Teaching)</p> <p><i>And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; (Ephesians 4:11)</i></p>	<p>Produces</p> 	<p>Disciplemakers (Fathers)</p> 
<p>Equipping Others to Minister</p> <p><i>For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee: (Titus 1:5)</i></p>	<p>Produces</p> 	<p>Leaders of Disciplemakers (Elders)</p>

Stages of Growth Related to Relationships in Follow-Up

- **Children**

Recreational and structured in groups and individually

Individual...Helps to get to know the person

Group...Has the advantage of peer pressure (especially good in working with teens)

- **Young Men (Disciples)**

Recreational, structured, casual, and some partnership

Both group and individual time is important at this stage. Individual time is especially helpful in dealing with observed areas of need.

- **Fathers (Disciplemakers)**

Structured should begin to be replaced with more partnership and casual time. Some recreational should also remain. Emphasis is on how to help him help his spiritual babes grow. *Man-to-man* individual time is more effective than groups in this stage.

- **Elders (Leaders of Disciplemakers)**

Casual and partnership are the best relationships for this stage. Recreational is also good for mutual refreshment. Individual man-to-man or couple-to-couple relationships are the most effective here.

Establishing Objectives

Every Christian's Objective



The objective for every Christian—young or old—is to be an obedient Child of God. This objective is best illustrated by the Wheel.

Christ... must become the center of every believer's life through repentance from sin and inviting Christ into his life.

Vertical spokes... illustrate every believer's daily relationship with Christ. I communicate to Him through prayer, and He communicates to me through the Word of God.

Horizontal spokes... represent the outreach Christ wants me to have to others. There are only two kinds of people in the world from God's viewpoint: those with Christ, and those without Him. He wants me to relate to both. Through fellowship I reach out to other believers, and through witnessing I share Christ with the lost.

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Objectives for Each Stage of Growth

- **Child (Convert)**—The objectives here should be:

✓ *Establish the vertical spokes in the wheel*—the convert should clearly understand the Gospel and be assured of his salvation. Then he must be established in a daily communication with God through prayer and the Word.

✓ *Demonstrate a willingness to be identified with Christ*— become part of a vital Church fellowship.

- **Young Man (Disciple)**—here the objective is two-fold:

✓ *Deepening the Relationship with Christ*—through Lordship commitment in many or all areas of life and through deepening in the Word of God. The Word Hand (Bible Study Hand) should be evident in his life at this stage as well as a consistent devotional life and a teachable spirit.

✓ ***Sharing His Faith with Others***—through learning and using the Bridge and developing his testimony. There should be a willingness to openly share Christ with others.

• **Father (Laborer or Disciplemaker)**—at this point the objectives should be:

✓ ***Continual personal growth*** in the disciples' syllabus (see above).

✓ ***Reproduction*** through evangelism and follow-up of his own babes.

• **Elder (Leader of Disciple Makers)**—because of his godly life and example, he is selected at this point to both:

✓ ***Nurture and care*** for the young Christians, and

✓ ***Help develop spiritual leadership*** for the Body of Christ.

The Syllabus

On the basis of the relationships in follow-up, the kinds of follow-up, and the stages of growth, we are able to write a specific syllabus for each stage and for each person we are helping. Some people will grow faster than others, so we may want to adjust the syllabus for each individual's needs. However, as we understand the objectives, we can tailor the specific program as God leads.