

FOLLOW-UP IN CRUSADE AND CHURCH EVANGELISM

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Follow-up has been defined as the process of giving continued attention to a new Christian (new babe) until he is integrated into the church, discovering his place of service, developing his full potential for Jesus Christ, and helping to build Christ's church. This may sound a bit idealistic, but it is a pattern set forth in Ephesians for reaching the lost and building the church. "Some of us have been given special ability as apostles; to others he has given the gift of being able to preach well; some have special ability in winning people to Christ, helping them to trust him as their Savior; still others have a gift for caring for God's people as a shepherd does his sheep, leading and teaching them in the ways of God. Why is it that he gives us these special abilities to do certain things best? It is that God's people will be equipped to do better work for him, building up the church, the body of Christ, to a position of strength and maturity; until finally we all believe alike about our salvation and about our Savior, God's Son, and all become full-grown in the Lord — yes, to the point of being filled full with Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13). Many books have been written on follow-up. No book is, however, quite as clear or as pointed on the subject of follow-up as the New Testament. The Apostle Paul is the pace-setter. His strategy and methods were fruitful and effective in his time and should work today.

Of utmost importance was his love and concern for new Christians. He was willing to become involved in their lives, in spite of the cost. "Because we were yearning for you so tenderly, we were willing, not only to share with you God's good news, but to lay down our very lives too for you, all because you were so dearly loved by us" (I Thess. 2:8). This may be one of the greatest obstacles to follow-up today, the unwillingness to give of ourselves and of our time to become vitally involved with a new Christian.

The Apostle Paul was deeply concerned for the new Christian because he knew the power of the evil one to spoil his work. "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (II Cor. 11:2-3).

His chief concern obviously was for their growth and development. His goal was their maturity. "Oh my dear children, I am suffering a mother's birth pangs for you again, until Christ is formed in you" (Gal. 4:19). "And we proclaim him, admonishing every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ" (Col. 1:28).

With this aim in mind, the maturity of the individual, the Apostle Paul by his *letters* kept in constant touch with churches and individuals, pouring out his great heart of love. "For to this end also did I write, that I might know the proof of you, whether ye be obedient in all things" (II Cor. 2:9). His *prayers* revealed the desire in his heart and his longing to be with people, ministering to them in their deepest needs. He prayed specifically, long and often for their growth. "Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (I Thess. 3:10).

When he could not go personally, *he sent on follow-up missions men that he had trained*. "So when I could not bear it any longer, I decided to be left behind in Athens alone, and so I sent my brother Timothy, God's minister in the preaching of the good news of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith, so that none of you might be deceived amid these difficulties" (I Thess. 3:1-3).

No doubt the greatest secret of his success, he returned *personally* to individuals and church groups to meet with them face to face to teach them. His first mission was launched from Antioch with Barnabas. "While the Christians were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set Barnabas and Saul apart for Me to do the work I called them for.' Then they fasted and prayed, laid their hands on them, and let them go" (Acts 13:2-3). They visited many cities, preaching with great power and authority before returning to Antioch. They then took a second major trip and the prime objective appeared to be follow-up. "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). On this trip they further evangelized but also ministered in depth. "Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering decrees, which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe. So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily" (Acts 16:4-5). "And he settled there (Corinth) a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them" (Acts 18:11) The Apostle Paul again returned to Antioch and after some time departed on another trip for the purpose of follow-up. "After spending some time there (Antioch), he started out again, and by a definite schedule traveled all over Galatia and Phrygia, imparting new strength to *all the disciples*" (Acts 18:23).

A precedent is clearly set. New Christians do need care for various reasons and the care should be administered by someone. True, the Holy Spirit is able to minister to individuals — but the Scriptures provide the food necessary for growth and the new Christian must be fed. The one who wins a person to Christ is logically the one who should help work with the new Christian since there is a natural affinity. By "work with" I mean being available for further help and counsel, encouraging the inquirer to get started in good devotional habits, making certain that he is regularly attending a church where he will be nurtured and become active for Christ. The "Evangelism Explosion" program is an excellent example of the church at work today, reaching people for Christ, nurturing them and helping them become active Christians. Workers are trained

not only to witness and win people to Christ but also help them become active in the life and outreach of the church.

Crusade evangelism follow-up

There will always be evangelistic meetings where numbers of people will respond to an invitation to receive Christ. Some measures need to be taken to give immediate and individual care to these people and help them continue in the faith. The following suggestions come out of our crusade experiences of many years.

Personal counseling. A clear commitment is the first step in good follow-up. Unfortunately, in many evangelistic efforts, issues are not made clear and people respond to an invitation for various reasons without having their real needs met. This becomes evident in the follow-up. The inquirer often becomes a "drop-out."

Effective follow-up can only begin in the life of one who has been born again by the Spirit of God. When the Holy Spirit is at work in the life of the individual, drawing, convicting and regenerating, then one can say with assurance, "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

Personal counseling, although not a "cure-all," can be of immeasurable help in any meeting where people are invited to receive Christ. Mature counselors, able to diagnose and rightly use the Scriptures, can be used of the Holy Spirit to make the issues clear. They can introduce material and follow up those they have counseled.

In our crusades, we train counselors to give personal counsel and to follow up crusade inquirers. The help they give will, of course, depend somewhat on the maturity and the burden of the counselor. Some years ago we were in South America and a missionary, helping as a counselor, told us that he had committed his life to Christ five years earlier in Scotland. His counselor was still praying for him and helping with his support. This was an unusual situation but we have found through the years that counselors have been very faithful and helpful in counseling and following up inquirers in our crusades. We ask counselors to telephone, write, or visit each inquirer they counsel and send us a report.

Bible study correspondence. As an important part of the counseling program, each inquirer is given a "Knowing Christ" booklet to help clarify his commitment. This booklet is the first in the "Living in Christ" series and contains the Gospel of John plus Scripture memory verses, devotional reading, and two question-and-answer Bible studies. The material in this booklet is aimed at answering questions the inquirer might have immediately after his commitment, and to help give him a simple but firm anchor for his faith. The three other booklets in the series contain additional studies, Scripture verses and devotional aids. Many churches in the United States are now using this material for follow-up.

Church follow-up. New Christians need to be brought into a meaningful fellowship with other Christians in the church. For this reason, on the same night of the commitment, through the efforts of scores of volunteer workers, the name of each inquirer is sent to a local pastor. This makes it possible for the pastor or a church representative to follow up crusade referrals, day by day. Immediate follow-up is most im-

portant, even if it is only a telephone call. It does show a concern and gives the inquirer an opportunity to ask questions and get further help.

Through the seminars and schools of evangelism we encourage a pastor on two levels:

(i) Nurture activities to feed and develop those who have responded as crusade inquirers.

(ii) Ongoing evangelization which harnesses the keen interest and enthusiasm of "turned on" believers who have been active in the crusade.

Specific suggestions are made to integrate the new inquirer into the mainstream of church life:

(i) A reception for all crusade inquirers. A social setting in which the membership may be introduced to inquirers and help establish new friendships in the church family.

(ii) A review of church programs is recommended. Scheduling a new-member-orientation class, finding places of service and activity, etc.

(iii) A spiritual adoption plan, providing a spiritually mature friend to act as a "parent" or sponsor for each inquirer. Parents are specially trained by the pastor to guide inquirers in Christian growth and development.

Specific suggestions are made to continue the outreach of evangelization — utilizing the gifts of the membership to meet the needs of the community where the church congregation meets.

(i) An evangelistic visitation plan, designed to provide a perpetual calling effort to systematically visit each church prospect and present the Gospel story in the home.

(ii) Try some new methods, such as film crusades, beach invasions, shopping center outreach, et cetera.

(iii) Local church campaigns to mobilize the energies of crusade workers in prayer groups, choir, ushers, visitation, "Andrews," and focus on opportunities open to the local church.

Three principles of follow-through are identified:

First, the pace-setting leadership of the pastors and church leaders. This follows the example of Jesus who said, "Follow me" and follow through came in the context of his dynamic life-style.

Second, the learn-to-do-by-doing. This means on-the-job training with emphasis on practical demonstration.

Third, matching resources with opportunities.

Discovering the talents, gifts and skills of the congregation and applying them to the practical situations of need that confront the congregation in its setting.

Literature follow-up — A few days after his commitment, each inquirer receives a letter of encouragement from Dr. Graham with further helps. Then on a monthly basis the inquirer receives DECISION magazine containing several pages of helpful material, i.e., Bible studies, inspirational testimonies, sermons and other articles to strengthen his faith. At times, the inquirer receives Dr. Graham's book *Peace with God* which contains the "Rules for the Christian Life."

Bible study follow-up — A small-group prayer and Bible study fellowship provides a good environment for the new Christian. An opportunity to come together on a regular basis to share what God is doing in the life can be enriching. We have developed "Studies in Disciple-

ship," a seven-lesson study to be used by the churches in follow-up. Each member of the group covenants to pray daily for other members of the group, prepares a written Bible study and shares with other group members in a discussion-type study. The leader does not teach, he leads the discussion. We call them "Nurture Groups." The lessons in this study deal with Christian assurance, the Lordship of Christ, the authority of the Bible, effectual prayer, walking in the Spirit, and witnessing for Christ.

weekly assigned projects are aimed at helping each individual establish a daily time of fellowship with Jesus Christ and become involved in ministering to the needs of others.

A discussion-type series for teens, "New Scene," has also been developed and it covers the same general area of concern as the Discipleship studies. However, a different approach is taken, allowing the teen a great deal more versatility in doing his lesson. Hopefully, this makes the study more attractive and interesting, yet biblical and basic to the Christian life.

Prior to the crusade, hundreds of church representatives are trained to lead "Nurture Groups." They learn-to-do-by-doing. Over a four-week period, they meet once a week in groups of ten, to become familiar with the lesson material and techniques in leading a discussion. Having had this experience, they have a greater confidence in leading follow-up nurture groups after the crusade is over.

Post-crusade follow-up survey — To make absolutely certain that every inquirer has been contacted and given further help as necessary, we have developed a post-crusade survey. About three weeks after the crusade ends, giving opportunity for the normal channels of follow-up to function, every inquirer is called by a trained worker. Questions are asked and if the inquirer is doing well the interview takes no more than a few minutes. This interview helps reveal weaknesses in our follow-up. It also provides opportunity for further counseling, which is often necessary.

We are able to enlist many more people in the Bible study nurture program and give the inquirer additional help, where necessary, in getting established in a church. This may seem like a duplication of effort since we have asked both the pastor and counselor to contact the inquirer. Our experience indicates that not only is the survey necessary, but the call is most appreciated by the inquirer.

Special follow-up — The preceding facets of follow-up are routine in most of our major crusades. We have adopted the "shot-gun" approach to follow-up, trying a lot of different things, trusting one method will take hold.

Additional programs of follow-up may be used from crusade to crusade if and when they seem appropriate.

Radio follow-up — A series of fifteen-minute messages on the new life in Christ has been developed through the efforts of several Team members. At times, we broadcast a daily program in the evening for several weeks. This gives a good continuity to the follow-up program and reaches hundreds of individuals at one time.

Special student follow-up — In crusades where there is a large student population, especially college-age, we organize follow-up on cam-

pus. The name of each student inquirer is sent to a student leader on campus, where prayer and Bible study groups have been scheduled to follow up the crusade.

Special teas and coffees — In some cities we have had special meetings for groups by occupation, such as nurses, people in the entertainment profession, and business executives. Having them mingle with fellow Christians and listen to someone respected in their own profession either give a testimony or a message, is a good way to reach busy "hard-to-reach" people. This meeting can provide a springboard to further opportunities of ministering to them.

Conclusion

God is faithfully calling out and building his church, using a variety of people and methods. No doubt, more important than the material or method is the man. E.M. Bounds said, "The world is looking for better methods, but God is looking for better men." Should we not ask ourselves, "Are we in perfect union with Jesus Christ, with no unconfessed sin to hinder his working effectively in and through our lives?" Are we totally surrendered to God's will? Are we using fully the God-given abilities to help build his Church? Are we completely yielded to the Holy Spirit and trusting in his enabling power to do the work of the ministry? Are we completely open-minded, willing to learn from others, willing to accept new ideas, and willing to adopt new methods and materials, even if they do not originate from within our group? Are we setting a good example in prayer and Bible study, so that we can say with the Apostle Paul, "The things you have learned and received and heard and *seen in me*, practice these things, and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:9).

How we as individuals answer these questions may well determine how deeply we become involved in God's work of calling and building his church.