

FOLLOW-UP STRATEGY GROUP REPORT

Charles Riggs, head of the Billy Graham follow-up team, introduced each session with a short talk on follow-up. He showed us the Billy Graham material that is used in follow-up. On the night the person is counseled he receives the first in a series of booklets (or "bottles of milk" as Mr. Riggs called them). These were designed to tell the new believer about the Christian life and introduce him to the basics of it, i.e., Bible reading, regular praying, etc. Contained in the first book was a copy of the Gospel of John. After the person had read through it, there was a lesson to be completed and returned to the Billy Graham office. Once this was received in the office, the second bottle of milk was sent to the believer.

They had also developed a booklet that was good to use in home Bible study groups. It was entitled *Studies in Discipleship*. But as Mr. Riggs put it, telling is not teaching and listening is not learning, as we learn by doing. So this book was designed to do just that. As the new believer studies, there are questions that are asked to promote discussion.

After the name of the person was received by the office, it was sent to a local minister in the area for follow-up. In addition to that, the person who counseled then is asked to follow them up within 24 hours. The office also contacts the person three weeks after the crusade and finally, in some areas, radio time is bought and talks are given for a period of a week. All of this is done in order to keep in contact with the new believer. It is hoped that if one method failed the others would succeed.

With all of this said, Mr. Riggs then stressed the most important side of follow-up and that was men. All of our methods and means can never replace the men God uses. If the people involved are not led by the Spirit of God our methods would fail. He stressed the fact that follow-up begins with the pacesetter — one who is walking with God daily in prayer and Bible study. Godly men (Psalm 12:1). The person needs not only to be filled with the Spirit but also walking in the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Gal. 5:16).

As people involved in follow-up we need to feed-protect-train people. We need to see reproduction coming from the new converts themselves. In order to do all of this we need men and women who are able to say with Paul, "I am willing to spend and be spent" (II Cor. 12:15). Follow-up takes time and demands a sacrifice. It is a time of helping new converts over rough patches and we need to be available when they need us. The only place that we are to take the new converts for an answer to their problems is to the Book. For it is only as they look at the Bible and go to it that it becomes a mirror reflecting the things that are wrong in their lives. God is able to speak to them from the Bible and we need to get the convert to learn to have a regular quiet time. Not only that, but Mr. Riggs encouraged us to get the new convert to memorize the Word of God, so that it can be used by the Spirit as a sword. God's Word needs to become the direction and control of their lives.

We then faced some problems people encounter in follow-up.

Question: Do we have any statistics to show the percentage of people who went on for God, under the above follow-up method?

Answer: There was much debate as to what was the most effective method of follow-up. Some people felt that the Billy Graham method was not successful, in their area. Dr. Bob Ferm has interviewed many thousands of inquirers and has found that over a period of years, forty-five to ninety percent of all the people that had been followed up were active in church life.

It was also pointed out that in Oak Hill Bible College in England 50 per cent of all its students had been converted at a Billy Graham rally. Similar figures were available for Australia.

Question: A question was put to Mr. Riggs. How do you keep from becoming slick and mechanical in your work? After so many crusades don't you find the methods push the spiritual life out?

Answer: He replied that every crusade he does, he goes into it as though it were his first. This way we can always be open to the leading of God, should he want to develop new ideas and methods. Our reliance was not on the methods that we used, but it needed to be constantly on his Word. If we could look at our follow-up process as living and growing then we can never say we have arrived at the perfect method.

Question: How does one prepare churches to accept the new converts?

Answer: One method that was suggested: to have Bible studies in homes so that the new convert is not only coming to Sunday meetings. This would mean that members of the church open their homes to new converts from their area for Bible studies and discussion groups.

This would not only give the converts a sense of belonging, but it would also give the church members a chance to get to know the converts on an informal level.

The emphasis from all over the world was on lay Bible study groups. Mr. Ben Siaki from the Philippines shared with us something of what the Lord was doing in his country. They had developed what was called the C.O.W. program.

CHRIST THE
ONLY
WAY.

But a cow has to have legs to stand on and this is where the strength of the program lies.

LAY
EVANGELISTIC
GROUP
STUDIES

This was a method where new converts were brought into small groups to study God's Word. In a recent survey done, out of 900 people that gave their lives to Christ, 276 had become active church members and another 142 had joined L.E.G.S. groups and were growing in the Lord.

Another way of getting churches involved would be to send a complete set of follow-up material to a particular minister. Then ask him to appoint someone who would act as a parent to the new convert. This would be a very effective way of having the personal interest. It would also introduce the new convert to church life.

The converts need to be brought into a church where they could grow in God.

Question: What does one do when you hold a crusade in an area where there are no evangelical churches? Where do you send the new converts?

Answer: A person from Africa provided a very good answer to this. What they had done in their follow-up work where they have faced the same problem was to train the new converts (sometimes for up to ten hours a week) in the Christian life. They then send their converts back to the churches not to be fed but to feed. This resulted in a few things:

- a) The new convert had an ideal opportunity to share his faith.
- b) If he did come into any difficulties there was someone to help him.
- c) The Gospel was being shared in a group or church that did not normally hear it.

Question: How do you do follow-up in a small group or pastorate and not in a big organized crusade?

Answer: A gentleman from Uganda faced this problem as well as the fact that there was no follow-up material in his own language.

He found that the only answer was to mobilize the church members to do the follow-up work verbally. Again it was brought out that the most effective follow-up tool is people.

Question: All the methods and materials are good; but how do you follow-up illiterate people?

Answer: We found that most of our follow-up material was very western-oriented. In some places of Africa and Asia you could not ever get an address, for many of the people did not have a street or box number as we know it in the west. Therefore, it would be impossible to post follow-up material to them. Again the answer rests in the man involved in follow-up.

It was suggested that these be a type of teacher who could travel around among groups of new converts giving them Bible studies.

Something very important was brought up and that was that the new converts should be taught to memorize the Bible. Even though our follow-up is western-orientated the Bible is not. Every culture group can do this without any fear of being influenced by another culture. For the Word of God is totally relevant to every culture, tribe or group of people.

One participant from Africa started an extra class in his church just to cater for the new believer, where they were taught the basics.

Someone suggested a local broadcasting company be approached with the view of giving time on the radio. An isolated village could then be given or loaned a radio and they could hear the Word of God that way. This was done very effectively in Australia, where portions of "Good News for Modern Man" were read daily on the radio.

At this point a plea was put out to the Bible societies. It was asked whether all the English translations were necessary when there were tribes without Bibles. It was suggested that some of the money be redirected to help these other groups get the Bible in their own language.

We then dealt with a very interesting aspect of dealing with the illiterate. This was through the medium of cassettes.

Someone suggested that Bible studies be put on cassette in the mother tongue of the country, then be distributed to outlying villages. In the village would be a recorder and the whole village could hear the Bible study. With this idea it was suggested that the tape be returned after a week or two, wiped clean and a new Bible study put on it. This would save money.

Another method was suggested whereby a church or local minister could secure a set of tapes on Christian maturity. Then he would lend them out, one at a time, to the people concerned. When they returned the tapes he would ask them a few questions and have a discussion with them. This would save the time of teaching them the lesson. The new believer could listen to the lesson in his own home.

A challenge was put forth to the great Bible teachers of the world to send copies of their sermons (on loan) to some struggling countries. It was also suggested that those who had the resources to provide equipment should do so as unto the Lord.

Follow-up films could also be used, but these would have to be restricted to English as most of the films are in that language.

List of people currently involved in follow-up and where information may be obtained.

For the Whole World

Billy Graham Organization
c/o C.A. Riggs
2512 Deerpath Drive
Nashville, Tennessee 37217
U.S.A.

Campus Crusade for Christ
Arrowhead Springs
San Bernardino, CA 92403

For Malaysia

Goh Keat Peng
Scripture Union
386 Jalan 5/59
Petaling Jaya,
Western Malaysia

It was asked whether someone could not be appointed to do research into follow-up in different countries. A group of men have agreed to pray for one another and write to one another in order to keep abreast with new ideas.