

Power to Recreate

Dawson Trotman

I. Introduction of the speaker.

A. Involved in Billy Graham Crusade for follow-up work. Trained follow-up workers in their own language in many places.

II. God's secret of propagation. (Genesis 1; Matthew 1)

A. Christ's last orders were to preach the gospel to every creature.

1. They had no modern equipment that we have today - they did not even have a ship as modern as the Mayflower.

2. Jesus has never given his people an order that He did not want fulfilled nor a command that He knew could not be fulfilled.

B. The divine strategy of creation. (Genesis 1)

1. For living things He put within it the power to reproduce itself - the seed.

C. Christ came through the seed of life. (Matthew 1) The point of the genealogies is to trace the seed of the Christ.

III. We adopt this method of propagation for the spiritual life.

A. We must be born again with incorruptible seed. (1 Peter)

1. One of the most tragic things in life is sterility. One of the most tragic things in the Christian life is spiritual sterility.

B. We now have the opportunity to sow the same seed that was sown in us as laymen.

1. The example of a disciple who wanted to do what the speaker did. He led one hundred and twenty five men to Christ. These men were leading people to Christ.

2. A young girl simply quoted John 3:16 - an older man was led to Christ through it.

C. It is not only an opportunity to share, it is a responsibility.

1. We need to lay up the Scripture in our hearts (God communicating to us), and we need to pray (us communicating to Him) in order to pierce a heart for Him.

2. God does not need very much - He needs a voice.

a. You can teach anyone to memorize Scripture.

b. God even used a donkey to share His word.

Application questions

1. How does God's method of reproduction in creation mirror the method of reproduction of the spiritual life?

2. What does it mean to be born again with "incorruptible seed?" How would you characterize your own spiritual life? Is it sterile or abundant with life?

3. Why is it so important to memorize Scripture? How does Scripture memory relate to evangelism? What steps can you take to incorporate Scripture memory in your own life? Be specific.

FOLLOW-UP

Dawson E. Trotman

Why Follow-Up?

You are in the greatest business on earth - that of bringing men and women into fellowship with Christ and to the place of greatest usefulness in God's marvelous plan. Your church is the heart and local headquarters of this tremendous program of taking the Gospel of Christ to every creature and building in each believer a life that glorifies God. The success of this worldwide mission will be the reflection of its success in each community like yours.

We hear anew our Lord's command to take the Gospel to the uttermost parts. Realizing this was done by the early church in its generation, let us investigate the reasons for their success.

In that day there was no radio, printed page or television to aid in evangelism. Yet it was said of the Christians in Rome that their faith was "spoken of throughout the whole world" (Romans 1:8), and of the Thessalonians, that "... from you sounded out the Word of the Lord ... in every place ..." (I Thessalonians 1:8). The evangelists brought the good news of the Gospel to new localities such as Thessalonica and Rome, and saw many respond and turn from idols to serve the living God.

But what had made the mighty impact upon the rest of the world? The transformed lives of the converts, whose influence had spread in widening circles, reaching men and women in every walk of life. These fruitful lives had been built up in the faith by the patient, tender care of those able to instruct and equip them for the Christian walk. This is the embodiment of what we commonly term follow-up. To the local body of believers was committed the task of giving the Gospel to all the world, and the record shows that it was accomplished (Colossians 1:6).

What significance has this for us as we consider the program of evangelization today? We believe every person in this generation can hear the gospel if the same conditions are fulfilled that brought such results in the first century, and follow-up is given its vital place.

Every member of your congregation who is spiritually healthy should be able to meet his own problems and help care for another. Thus, the need for your personal attention to both - the one helping and the one being helped may be greatly reduced. However, every member who is not spiritually strong doubles the responsibility. You must not only care for his own problem, but do the work he would be able to lift from your shoulders were he in good spiritual health.

Many pastors are of necessity burdened with the problems and ills of the spiritually sick among their congregations. This forces them to slight their regular duties and put aside the important work of "training the twelve," or the positive ministry of nourishing promising young leadership.

The simple application of follow-up will conserve, perpetuate and multiply the fruit of your weeks and months of prayer, visitation, and preaching the gospel. The transformed lives of converts followed up and built into the fiber of the church will begin to bear fruit and continue to thrive and reach others in the community.

In the physical realm, God provides parents for each baby. Giving birth to the child is only the beginning of carrying out the parental responsibility. A baby without proper attention and protection against disease may become a sickly child. The responsibility of the parent is to protect, feed, provide for, guide and train

the child. The child must be nurtured to maturity and completely equipped to do and be all that he should as a citizen of his community. The character of the citizen will be the result of the faithfulness of the parent in carrying out his responsibility.

In the spiritual realm, has God anything less wonderful for these who are born new creatures in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17)? For them, all the world is new. They have before them a grand new life with all its potentialities for blessing and profit and use. They can either, fall into a nominal Christian existence and be of little help, or an actual hindrance to the cause of Christ, or they can move victoriously into a life of fruitfulness and glory to the Lord. Is it not the responsibility of the spiritual parent, through whom the life was brought into existence, to provide for growth and training of these babes in Christ?

You as the pastor have the whole church family upon your heart. You must think of the needs of all, and attend to them in the best measure possible. Yet the answer to filling the initial needs and caring for these young Christians lies with your older Christians and personal counselors, those who helped them understand the Gospel and come to the place of the new birth. These are the spiritually healthy among your various age groups who can give individual time to individual needs. The baby is not responsible to the parents until it grows a bit older, but from the beginning the parents are responsible to the baby. They must take upon themselves the God-given responsibility of caring for the infant.

God intended that it should be this way. The heavy end of the work of the ministry is to be carried by the people, and not left in the hands of the already overworked pastor. "And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ . . . 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" (Ephesians 4:11, 12; II Timothy 2:2).

What Is Follow-Up?

What is this vital link called follow-up? Naturally, we understand that it is more than getting the new Christian to read a tract or book of encouragement or instructive material. It is more than getting him to attend church regularly, as essential as this is; for it was to those who were saved and in the church that Paul sent to know their faith, lest his labor be in vain (I Thessalonians 3:5) It covers the whole scope of Christian life and growth following the new birth, bringing to spiritual maturity and fruitfulness young believers God has committed to one's charge.

Follow-up is, in effect, spiritual pediatrics. Pediatrics of course is providing medical care for a child from birth to age 18. This is clearly illustrated in I Thessalonians 2:7-12, "But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children . . . As ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, Who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory."

Revival may be under way in your community, and the evangelistic program may be all you could have expected and more. Yet it may lose momentum, wither and die without effective follow-up. You have been busy enlarging the place of your tent (Isaiah 54:2) and lengthening the cords. Now it is time to strengthen the stakes, lest your labor be in vain. You have cultivated and prepared the soil through prayer, watered it through personal visitation and publicity, sown the seed of the Gospel and have seen tender shoots of new life break through into the light of day.

The wonder of newly found joy and faith in Christ will doubtless find expression voluntarily to those around, and the new converts become exhibit A for the gospel. To this fresh new zeal must be added

knowledge as they reach people with the reality and newness of their testimony that no one else may be in a position to reach.

Effective follow-up begins with effective evangelism. It includes providing conditions for a healthy spiritual birth, digestible food for the spiritual infant, and protection from spiritual disease. Training and correction, encouragement and challenge, instruction and example all contribute toward the goal expressed by the Apostle Paul: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13).

Granted, then, that follow-up includes all that parental responsibility entails, toward what tangible goals may we work in seeking to bring the image of Christ into view in the lives of new Christians, and older ones as well? The first and continual need in the spiritual life is for food: “Brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up . . . As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” was the advice written to those who had tasted God's grace (Acts 20:32; I Peter 2:2).

Not only is the Word important in building up a Christian life, but so is regular, consistent prayer. Jesus says to those who have come to believe in Him, “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My Name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24). In fact, prayer and the Word of God are linked inseparably in the life that would be Christ-centered, as pointed out by the Lord Jesus “If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you” (John 15:7).

Along with expression of his needs to God in prayer, and personal intake of God's Word, there should be instilled in the Christian the necessity of living in practical application of that Word. Jesus said, “He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me . . .” and a little later, “Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 14:21 15:14). True fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ is made possible by faithfulness in carrying out His wishes.

Finally, the one who is thus in fellowship with Christ through the Word, through prayer, through obedience to His known will, will have an effective witness both by life and word to those around him. As he seeks to tell neighbors and friends of his new-found life in Christ, the Word will give him wisdom and give authority to his testimony. Prayer will give discretion and open the hearts of those who hear. An obedient, consistent life will give power to the spoken word.

Paul's testimony at Thessalonica was: “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake” (I Thessalonians 1:5). We seek to build on the foundation in the life of each believer a structure which will endure to glorify God. As we help him carry out the command to “grow in grace” (II Peter 3:18), we may consider these, then, as definite goals: personal daily intake of God's Word, development of regular prayer habits, consistent obedience and faithful witness to God's grace.

The How of Follow-Up

But how is this important work of follow-up of the young converts to be done? Is the answer merely materials to distribute to those who come to Christ? No, it is obvious from the experience of successful follow-up programs, both in the new Testament and out of it, that follow-up is done by someone, not by something. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians that he was “night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith” (I Thessalonians 3:10). To the Romans he wrote, “For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end .ye may be established” (Romans 1:11).

When he had preached the Gospel in the cities of Asia Minor under great hardship, and returned to his home church, we read that “. . . 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). Although he wrote to them, he considered personal time with them most necessary for effective building in their lives.

Perhaps yours is a church where a few do the work that many should be doing. This large majority of Christians should have a part, and perhaps would be willing to do so if they but knew what to do and felt qualified to do it. Follow-up is something in which the whole church may participate.

In getting young Christians established in the Word, no one is more qualified than older Christians who are practicing in their lives the same things. Those who are your personal counselors, the ones who may even have had a part in bringing them to Christ, should be among these. But are the new Christians to be encouraged to start daily habits of prayer and Bible study merely by being told? No, they must be shown. The person who seeks to do follow-up must be what he is trying to teach, for the learner will follow the example of the teacher sooner than he will his word. Paul could say, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Philippians 4:9).

Many Christians who love God and seek to serve Him are yet content to live on the ten to twenty verses of Scripture that they have known for that many years. Is the new Christian who enters your church and the family of God to have such an example set before him? Or is he to find Christians who are regularly reading and studying the Word of God and writing it on their hearts? Will he also find those whose own personal prayer habits are regular and effective?

The people of the church, who are to be the examples for the young Christians committed to their care, will find the success of their task depends largely upon doing, and being, what they are teaching others to be and do. And how will they begin to do these things? They also must have a pattern to follow, in the officers and in the pastor, whose charge under God is to guide the affairs of the corporate, local body of saints.

How long after the campaign should follow-up be carried on? Let us look again at our purpose in follow-up: “Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect (mature) man . . .” (Ephesians 4:13).

Borrowing again an illustration from the physical family, the person whose estimated life span is to be threescore years and ten spends approximately twenty years coming to the place of mature usefulness as a member of the human economy. How much time should it be worthwhile to invest, then, in preparation and training in the way of life that is endless?

Titus was assured by Paul that “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works . . .” (Titus 3:8). Imparting truth, along with being a living embodiment of the truth, is the initial step. But once this is done, a constant vigil must be kept to insure that this truth is carried out daily in the life. It involves correction and instruction, for not only does the human mind forget, but the human will must be challenged to continue steadfast.

Peter, as pacesetter for the saints, was not negligent to put them always in remembrance of the things in which they had already been established. He exhorted them to take heed to the written Word of God, holding it up as a “more sure Word” (II Peter 1:12-19). Paul too challenged both pastor and people to continue taking in the Word of God. He himself was never satisfied to rest on either the knowledge or

accomplishments which were already his. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended . . . I press toward the mark . . . be followers together of me . . ." (Philippians 3:13-17).

Follow-Up Procedure

Having realized our tremendous responsibility and privilege in building the lives of those who have become new creatures in Jesus Christ, we turn to the practical aspect of what can be done in your situation. What plan may be followed for carrying out follow-up in your local church? Three things are necessary: (1) preparation of certain tools and helps, (2) choice of those who are to do the work, and (3) general procedure to follow.

I. The Tools

The main tools needed will be some simple helps in Bible study and verse memorization designed to meet particular needs in the life of a new Christian. Through personal study he may dig out for himself the answers to needs and questions that arise. Through memory of chosen passages he may carry in his heart at all times the Word of God with which he is to meet temptation.

It is suggested that simple Bible study and Scripture memory courses be used, the first steps of which may be given the convert immediately upon making his decision. Unless you have such material available, we recommend the Beginning With Christ packet, containing the first verses to memorize along with helpful information on the use of memorized verses in the new Christian life. The Introductory Bible Study, a first Bible study course designed to be completed in approximately a month by the new Christian or older one, is also recommended for showing him an easy to follow way to study the Bible. This study may be done whether the student has a Bible or merely a New Testament.

The pastor should become personally familiar with these materials and will find it extremely helpful to complete them himself. This would allow him to anticipate any problems and also would provide him leverage in getting the church leaders and personal counselors to do them. And naturally, the counselors would find it much to their profit to do the work, and in turn would find this a help in recommending it to the new converts personally.

Another tool you will need to prepare is a simple, adequate record system, a means whereby you may know the progress of each member in the materials, and be able to take note of individual needs. As progress is noted regularly, these records can be valuable in calling to your attention those who by their faithfulness are proving themselves trustworthy of greater responsibilities. They may also be used to enable you to note lack of progress where encouragement or challenge is necessary and to see that the cause is investigated.

II. Choosing the Workers

When the early church had a special work to do they chose from among them "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). The apostles were too busy with the overall ministry to do this specialized work themselves. However, to oversee even the physical task of caring for the needy, they chose men with spiritual depth and testimony of life. men like Stephen, whose mighty sermon and martyrdom proved him to be a man who walked with God.

At least three months before the campaign, the pastor should call together the men and women, including young people, who love the Word of God, and begin regular instruction classes for them in counseling and follow-up. (Should the pastor not be able to handle this himself, his best-qualified man should be given the responsibility of follow-up captain to carry out the program in the pastor's stead.) Doubtless,

ability along these lines will vary much within the group, according to their knowledge of the Word and ability to apply it to the inquirer's needs.

From among this group select a few, able in the Word to act as head counselors, whom the others may consult when help is needed. The number of those selected may vary, according to the size of your church, from two to a dozen or more. These head counselors will also be the key men and women in the follow-up program as it continues. The pastor will need to instruct these key people individually or in a small group, as well as instructing the entire group of counselors.

This, then, is the basic structure of your counseling and follow-up corps in the church: the pastor (or his appointed substitute), the head counselors or advisors, and the counselors themselves.

Various plans may be used for these preliminary instruction meetings, but the main goals to be accomplished are these:

1. Recommend that each counselor get started in the Bible study and memory program that is to be used for the new converts. It may be interesting and stimulating to report progress in these materials at the regular counselor meetings or in groups at cottage prayer meetings, and share things of special blessing or interest.
2. Instruction in personal counseling itself - such things as use of the Word, meeting of individual needs and common excuses, how to meet the problem most directly from the Word, making sure the inquirer understands the Gospel. You may desire to compile lists of "do's and don'ts for counselors" on helpful practical points.
3. Instruction in inquiry room procedure - what to do during the invitation, and the selection by the head counselors of an appropriate worker for each one who comes forward.

Specially prepared memory packets of 36 verses each, one set on SALVATION, another giving scriptural answers to 18 EXCUSES are helps for the counselor.

Helping Others Find Christ, a Moody Press book, contains material condensed from Billy Graham crusade counselor classes.

4. How to give Beginning With Christ or other initial material with sufficient explanation to get the inquirer started in the Word.
5. General instruction in how to lead the new Christian step by step. This will vary as individuals vary in capacity to digest the Word. However, as early as possible the convert should be started in various methods of Scripture intake and in regular daily prayer time.

III. General Procedure for Follow-Up

As we have seen, effective follow-up actually begins months before the campaign, with the choice and preparation of counselors and instruction in inquiry room procedure. The clarity and simplicity with which the Gospel message itself is presented, both by evangelist and counselor, also bears directly on the follow-up.

The campaign is in progress. Each one who has made a decision has been given Beginning With Christ and the Gospel of John, if these are to be used. The counselor has turned in to the follow-up office through the head counselor a decision card completely filled out with name, address, approximate age,

kind of decision, and any other information desired. Those who have made decisions for Christ during the previous weeks of visitation evangelism may be recorded in the same way.

The pastor may give the head counselors the responsibility of seeing that the proper counselor is selected for each one who comes forward in the meeting that is, of same sex and general age group, special workers for children.

The pastor will be responsible to see that each person making a decision, whether in or out of the church meeting, has a specific worker appointed to follow him up. Whenever practicable, this should be the one who helped him in the inquiry room.

According to the number of decisions, the pastor may wish to make his advisors or head counselors the captains of follow-up teams, each consisting of several follow-up workers. These workers will keep their respective captains informed, by whatever record system is used, of the progress of the converts for whom they are responsible. The captains will report to the pastor on the progress of both converts and workers.

The pastor may wish to call these captains together for regular fellowship, check up, working out of problems and reporting on progress. Each captain will be working similarly with several workers, and each worker will be following up one or more converts. With the work thus divided and specific responsibilities given, everyone in the church may be receiving personal help by someone, the pastor and leaders may be made aware of any particular needs, and the ones doing the work will be challenged by their responsibility to keep moving ahead.

We have said, "...everyone in the church may be receiving personal help." So far we have made no mention of those who were not qualified as workers, and hence not included in the setup just outlined. For any among these who desire help, provision could be made for the workers to get them started in the Bible study, helping them one by one as they are able to take them on without neglecting their first responsibility - the new converts. Thus these others in the church could be preparing themselves for usefulness as counselors in the future.

You will find that when each member of your church is faithfully digging into the Word day-after-day on his own and memorizing it, your problems will be reduced and you will have time to give to the positive side of your ministry. "And now, brethren, I commend you to God," Paul told the elders of the Ephesian church, "and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified". (Acts 20:32). This building process can be going on every day in the life of every member of your church.

A strong follow-up program is as necessary to your church for maintenance of normal health and growth as adequate nutrition and medical care are to the family. As you build solidly in the lives of those who are the central force of the local assembly, the church grows in strength and number, becoming an academy of strong, rugged soldiers of the Cross whose multiplied influence can eventually reach to every nook and corner of the world.

God is permitting us to see the beginning of a new era in the ministry of the church. Before long we may rejoice that the final command of our Lord Jesus Christ has been completely carried out.