

THREE REASONS WHY FOLLOW-UP IS IMPORTANT

By David Bok

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Follow-up is a word of action... an attempt to transform biblical principles into conduct we can put into practice in daily life. In short, follow-up is the process of helping a new Christian become established in the Christian life. There are three basic reasons why we must participate in the work of follow-up:

A COMMAND

A RESPONSIBILITY

A NEED

THE COMMAND TO BE GOOD SHEPHERDS

When Jesus first called His disciples, He called them to be fishers of men (Matthew 4:19) in order to reconcile men to God. Later, in John 21:15-17, that call was transformed into a commission... and the metaphor of "fish" (unbelievers) became "sheep" (believers). The follower of Christ must reconcile men to God, but must also care for those who are new in the faith.

Peter's three denials in Matthew 26 demanded the three questions of Christ in John 21 (regarding Peter's love for Him). The proof of that love, according to Jesus, was FEED MY SHEEP. Later, Peter expressed his commitment to the work of follow-up in his first epistle (1 Peter 5:2-4). He instructs the elders that they need to SHEPHERD THE FLOCK OF GOD.

In the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commands us to make disciples of all nations... not merely to make converts. Of course, we ourselves must be disciplined by someone before we can disciple others.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SPIRITUAL PARENTS

Paul told the Corinthians that he cared greatly for them because "in Christ Jesus I begot you through the Gospel" (1 Corinthians 4:15). In this passage, Paul makes a distinction between spiritual tutors and spiritual parents... indicating that parents care more deeply for the well-being of their children. God speaks with disdain in Job 39:16 of the ostrich, which hardens itself against its young as if they were not its own. Parenthood must foster a sincere concern for one's children. Unfortunately, today there are many spiritual orphans who have never received help, counsel, or love from their spiritual parents.

THE NEEDS OF THE NEWBORN

The newborn in Christ needs nourishment... not with theological books, but with the milk of the Word of God (1 Corinthians 3:1-2). The milk here refers to the fundamentals of the Christian life, such as: assurance of salvation, devotional time, victory over temptation, etc. At first, it is necessary for parents to feed the newborn... but after a certain time, he himself must learn how to do it. A mature Christian should not depend only on sermons or theological books for spiritual nourishment. He must be able to feed directly from the Word of God.

The newborn also needs protection... especially against the attacks of Satan, who, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). New believers are very susceptible to the devil's attacks and need support in learning how to defend themselves.

Finally, the newborn needs training. We see Paul's example in this in Colossians 1:28... "admonishing everyone and teaching everyone in all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Christ Jesus." The new believer must learn how to:

EAT – Feed on the Word of God

WALK – Live in obedience to God

SPEAK – Share their faith with others

In the Great Commission, Jesus did not merely command us to teach all His words, He said, "...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:20) Without obedience to Christ, the person becomes lukewarm... which is abominable to God (Revelation 3:15-16).

APPENDIX

BY DANNY SHERMAN

WORKSHEET FOR PLANNING THE FOLLOW-UP OF THE NEW CONVERT

BILLY GRAHAM SAID THAT **5%** OF THE WORK IS EVANGELIZING THE LOST, AND THE OTHER **95%** OF THE WORK IS FOLLOW-UP.

EACH NEWBORN BELIEVER NEEDS TO LEARN:

TO EAT

NEEDS TO LEARN
HOW TO GET
NOURISHMENT
FROM THE WORD
OF GOD AND SPEND
TIME ALONE IN
FELLOWSHIP WITH
GOD

HOW CAN I FEED NEW BELIEVERS THE WORD OF GOD AND HELP THEM LEARN TO FEED THEMSELVES?

TO WALK

NEEDS TO LEARN
HOW TO LIVE IN
OBEDIENCE TO
GOD IN DAILY LIFE

HOW CAN I GUIDE NEW BELIEVERS TO LIVE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD?

TO SPEAK

NEEDS TO LEARN
HOW TO SHARE THE
GOSPEL AS A PART
OF THEIR NORMAL
LIFE

HOW CAN I HELP NEW BELIEVERS LEARN TO SHARE THEIR FAITH WITH OTHERS?