

HOW TO FOLLOW-UP A NEW CONVERT

Abstract

The need to follow up new converts cannot be over emphasised. It is an urgent assignment expected of all believers. The paper explained the steps to be taken when following up a convert which include how to care for converts, how they are to walk in the spirit and how best to deal with life's problems. It concluded by stressing the need for believers to urgently embark on ways by which young Christians can be helped to attain the level of maturity in his/her relationship with God and man.

Introduction

Evangelism is God's heart-beat. All believers are called to go out to witness at all time and to make the preaching of the gospel our lifestyle. Are we doing this? We are commanded to tell others about the saving power in the Lord Jesus Christ. Failure to open our mouths and declare the message to sinners around us and everywhere amounts to a blunt refusal to keep God's commandment. Remember God says: **"If you love me you will keep my commandment"** (Jn. 14: 15)

By the grace of God if we obey His voice and we have converts, we have to compulsorily bring them up in the Lord. This is because at the time of conversion, the new believer is a babe in the Lord, raw to the core; hence it is our duty to help him grow in the Lord. Following him up is therefore a must for the new converts to be stabilized.

The term **"follow-up"** can be defined as the process of giving continuous and systematic help to a new Christian to enable him/her grow towards maturity and fruitfulness.

Similarly, Popoola (1988) in his book 'Personal Evangelism Made Easy' define follow-up as "the process of conserving, maturing and multiplying the fruit of Evangelism".

The goal as it is recorded in Col. 1:28 is to present everyman matured in Christ. Follow-up is important for the following reasons:

- a) Jesus followed-up His converts and since He is our example, if the master did it, we have to follow His steps. After calling the disciples Jesus spent most of his

time teaching them (see Matt. Chapter 5-7) such teaching includes the "**Sermon on the mount, beatitudes**", "**Salt and Light**", **the higher righteousness**", "**anger and reconciliation**", "**oath and retaliation**", prayer and fasting. Jesus did this because He knew that the disciples were just babes. He gradually brought them up to the level of maturity before He ascended to heaven. He also strengthened the weak ones, prayed for them and got them firmly stabilized in the Lord before He departed this world.

- b) The early church also took similar steps. Apostle Paul and others did so extensively. It is our duty to emulate them.
- c) We are called to make disciples Col. 2:6-7.
- d) Our convert must be protected and encouraged to separate him/her self from old friends that may easily entice him/her back to old sins.
- e) If he/she backslides, restoration might be difficult.
- f) In order to protect him/her from false teachers.
- g) In order to strengthen those who may be facing persecution.
- h) There is greater joy in disciplining them than in converting them.

The new believer must be visited within 48 hrs of his conversion. Many of us will not visit until after a week or one month after conversion, we leave them as easy prey for the devil to consume. From the on set, we must realize and note that it is better for sisters to follow-up sister converts and brothers to do likewise. Our male converts can be handed over to committed brothers.

You are supposed to see yourself as a counselor. You should therefore ensure that your spiritual life is in order. Confess all known sins and put everything in order before you visit the new believer. In following up your convert/counselee the following steps must be taken:

1. Caring for the new convert.
2. Giving assurance of salvation.
3. Reading God's word (Teaching him how to study the bible)
4. Learning to pray.
5. Putting Christ first.
6. Walking in the spirit.
7. Sharing with God's people.
8. Witnessing to others.

9. Living a victorious Christian Life

10. Dealing with problems.

Particular attention will be paid to these, one after the other.

(1) How to Care for New Converts.

You must bear in mind that you are offering parental care to your spiritual child. You must therefore be very close to him, visit him often, know his problems and be ready to help. The unfortunate thing is that many of us have failed God in this regard, we have always complained of having no time for follow up, no time to know what our converts are passing through. We must pray as it is recorded in 1 Thess. 5:10. We should also repent of our failures, get up to do the business of our father for He will not come down to do it. We are God's ambassadors, He is making His appeals through us and if we fail we shall surely reap the fruit of our laissezfaire attitudes. 11 Cor 4:20.

We must love our convert/counselee unconditionally, be concerned for his needs. Don't have double standards but allow him to read Christ in you. Make sure you intercede for him on a constant basis, for stability and knowledge of God. Pray before you go for follow-up for God's guidance and wisdom in all discussions. We must be patient, gentle and caring as a nurse (1 Thess. 2: 7-11). Don't rush, allow him to express himself while you listen to him keenly. Allow the Holy Spirit to speak through you. Be flexible, it is possible for you to have prepared something to share while the Holy Spirit suddenly leads you to other issues. Always support your answers with biblical quotations. Let him express his needs and be ready to help, if they are beyond your reach you can contact the church (CFIAA).

If your convert is living far away, may be in another town or state, you must be ready to contact him through letters. Paul, while in prison wrote almost all the epistles to the different churches that got converted through him. He admonished, corrected, rebuked, praised and prayed for them through this method.

Therefore, for those who are not within our personal reach, we have to collect their names, postal and residential addresses and make sure we write them. We can also send them tracts, recorded messages, books and anything that will enhance their spiritual growth.

(2) Giving Assurance of Salvation.

We must ensure that the person we are helping to grow is genuinely converted. The authenticity of his commitment must be established. You can do this by encouraging the new believer to share why he made his commitment to Christ. His commitment can be determined by the following questions:

- a) Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on the Cross for your sins and that He rose again from the dead?
- b) Did you sincerely repent and ask Jesus to come into your life?
- c) Is He in your life right now?
- d) How do you know? Rev. 3:20 (Behold I Stand.....) you can review the gospel message if necessary. Tell him to believe God's facts and not feelings Rom. 8:16 (The Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit.....) Rom. 8:1-No condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

Let him know that he should not go back to his old life, for it is like a dog that goes back to eat it's vomit. (1 Cor. 5:17). We must allow the Holy Spirit to help us discern, this is because some people might have said the sinner's prayer when the gospel was presented to them but when we visit them, they may begin to complain of not having time to listen to us. Some may frown, or hide somewhere when we approach the house. If we notice these, we should let the fellow know that he is not serious, present the gospel all over again and if he is genuinely ready, you can pray with him, but if he is not, you go your own way and continue to pray for his conversion.

(3) Reading God's Word

For the new believer to grow, he needs to eat spiritual food. We must stress the need to read the bible daily (1 Pet. 2:2-3), Like new born babes long for the pure spiritual milk that you may grow up to salvation". Jos. 1:8, (Night and Day). Matt. 4:4-believers are not to live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. Berea church examined the bible after their conversion to establish the authenticity of the message they have received (Act 17; 11).

Endeavour to teach him a devotional method of bible of study. He should be made to know the need to find a suitable place and time. Apart from this, he should

always ask god to help him understand his word and expect to speak to him. After studying the bible each day, let him ask himself the following questions:

- a) What does the passage say?
- b) What does it mean?
- c) How does it apply to me? What should I do?
- d) Are there sins to forsake?
- e) Are there promises to claim?
- f) Are there examples to follow?
- g) Is there any command to obey?

He should pray about what he has learnt from the passage and look for opportunities to put them into practice.

Encourage him to keep a notebook to write down what he has learnt each day. Let him know that he should be **regular**, systematic and disciplined. You can introduce some bible reading guides to him e.g. Daily bread, Everyday with Jesus, scripture union notes or direct Him to study a specific book of the bible.

Apart from this, we must hold bible studies with him on various topics like: Separation from sins; Victory over sin, fruit of the flesh and fruit of the spirit, the use of our tongues, the second coming of Jesus, faith, prayer and fasting e.t.c.

(4) Learning to Pray

A prayer less Christian is usually a powerless Christian; a prayer less Christian is easily defeated and tramped upon by the evil. Hence the need to explain the importance of consistent prayer life to our converts. Jesus said men ought always to pray and not to faint (Lk. 18:1) Give him the example of our Lord Jesus Christ in Mark 1:35, the bible says that in the morning a great while before day, he rose and set out to pray in a lonely place, He did this several times, he is to do likewise,

Jesus taught us how to pray in Lk. 9-11:3, share this with him. Refer him to Eph, 6:18, where brother Paul admonished us to pray at all times in the spirit with all prayer and supplication. Haggai (1986) in his book. "Lead on", stressed that Christ bathed his ministry in prayer as he prayed for the need of others and Himself. Let him know that it is not only when he is at home that he can pray, because God is with him and He is everywhere, he can pray inwardly while walking. In fact, prayer should become his life style.

Tell him that prayer helps to develop relationship with God; it will be possible to talk to God, pour out his heart to Him and also hear from God. The pattern of prayer to be followed can be summarized under the word CATS:-

- C ----- Confession
- A ----- Adoration
- T ----- Thanks giving
- S ----- Supplication

Stress the importance of allowing the Holy Spirit to lead the prayer, Rom.8: 26. The believer who will matter this end - time is he who is led by the Holy Spirit (Oyedepo 1992) tell him to be specific and persistent. LK. 18:1. Let him know the things that can inhibit his prayers (hindrances) e.g.

- (1) Lack of faith-Jas. 1:5-8
- (2) Not really asking - Jas4: 3
- (3) Asking for wrong purposes - Jas. 4:3
- (4) Unconfessed sins - Ps. 66:18

Finally pray for him and let him also pray for you and the needs of the church. Show him how to be systematic e.g. the use of prayer list.

(5) Putting Christ First.

The new convert must be taught to put Christ first in all things. Start by explaining to him what it means to put Christ first: -

- (a) Christ as the Master - Matt. 6:24
- (b) Christ before parents and children Matt. 10:37
- (c) Christ before self LK. 9:23
- (d) Christ's kingdom and righteousness before daily needs Matt. 6:33 (sleep - prayer).
- (e) Resting in Christ Matt. 11:28- 30

He should strive to know God's will, see it as being perfect and acceptable and submit readily to it in love and not out of compulsion. The study of the bible will help him to discover God's will for his life. Discuss with him areas which require perfect obedience e.g. prayer, bible study, witnessing, money, life-partner, use of time, priorities, church involvement etc.

Finally, ask him to prayerfully consider how he/she can put Christ first in the areas identified above.

(6) Walking In the spirit.

Jesus said, without me you can do nothing' the new believer should be made to know that God the spirit lives in him and without him he cannot do anything that pleases God. He must be ready to cooperate and walk in the spirit, let him know the role of the Holy Spirit. These are as follows: -

- (a) He convicts of sin - Js. 16: 8
- (b) He is a Counselor - Jn. 14:16-17
- (c) He glorifies Christ - Js 16:13-14
- (d) He transforms the believer - 2Cor.3: 18
- (e) He empowers witnesses Act. 11: 8-2 Tun. 1:7
- (f) He equips believers Rom. 8:14
- (g) He guides believers Rm. 8:14
- (h) He intercedes Rom. 8:26

Tell him about the baptism of the Holy Spirit and how he can receive this through repentance, obedience and faith in God the baptizer. Jesus told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem until they were fully baptized in the Holy Spirit, He fulfilled his promise to them and He is very ready to baptize those who are His today.

When he is ready for this you can bring him to the church to be prayed for or in you are led you can personally minister to him. For him to effectively walk in the spirit put him through Gal.5: 16-26 and take note of the following verses:

V. 16 - The command (walk by the spirit)

V. 17 - The conflict between flesh and spirit (they are oppose to each other)

V. 18 - The contrast (when you walk in the spirit you are not under the law)

Vs 19-24 - The work of the flesh.

Vs.24 - The crucifixion with Christ what it means (having crucified the flesh with its passions & desires)

Vs. 25 - living and walking by the spirit (if we live by the spirit, we should also walk by the spirit)

Finally, tell him that when next you see him you will want him to state instances where the Holy Spirit has helped him in his life.

(7) Sharing with God's People.

Fellowshipping with other believers is a must for a new believer (for all Christians) He must be encouraged to attend a bible teaching church (Heb, 10:25.) You have to explain to him what the church is, let him know that it is not the physical building that makes the church, but the body of Christ with many believers, members, who worship, serve God and caring for one other.

Also let him know why the church is needed: -

- (a) Fellowship
- (b) Teaching
- (c) Worship

Explain why we must meet with God's people by making reference to the example of the early Christians in Act 2:42 (they worshipped, and shared things together in common).

Suggest ways by which believers can share with other brethren:

- (a) Fellowship
- (b) Sharing Gal. 6:6-10 Believers are to share with the teacher of the word (pastors) and those who are of the house hold of faith.
- (c) Giving - 2 Cor. 9:6-8 He should be ready to give to the Lord. He who gives sparingly will reap sparingly and who ever gives bountifully will reap bountifully, he must realize this. He should also pay his tithes and offering and give to support other church programmes.

(8) Witnessing to others

All believers are called out to call others to Christ, the new believer should be made to realize this fact and be encouraged to tell others about Christ. You can put him through by sharing the following passages which emphasizes God's desire to save sinners: -

Rev. 5:20 - Anybody's name that is not.....Lake of fire.

Rev. 12:11 - "Overcoming the devil by the blood of the Lamb"

Act. 9:20 - "Paul proclaimed the message immediately after his conversion.

John. 3:16 - "God loves sinners".

Tell him that we are called and commanded to preach the gospel Act. 1:8;

Matt. 28:19 Tell him about the power needed for success: -

- (a) The Holy Spirit
- (b) Act. 1:9; 2Tm. 1:7
- (c) Prayer - Eph 6:18 - 20
- (d) Spiritual weapons - 2 Cor. 10:3-5; Eph. 6:10-18.

Tell him about the manner - It should be by our life style, remember God says we are the salt and the light of the world. Where he lives others should be able to read Christ in him, he should also share the word of God with them, love should also be demonstrated to others around him. His personal Testimony is equally very important He should be encouraged to publicly give testimonies concerning his life before meeting Christ, how he met Christ, and his life after meeting Christ Act. 22: 3- 15 (Paul's example).

Finally, let him prayerfully consider someone to whom he could witness and tell him how to go about it (Go with tracts to offer, tell him God loves him but hates sin, and that God wants him to repent of his sin and turn to Him in order to enjoy heaven with God).

Living a Victorious Christian Life

This should be the goal of every Christian and we should desire this for our converts. Teach him how he can live victoriously. Start by helping him to understand what temptations are: -

- (a) They are not sin - Jas. 1:14-15
- (b) They can be death with 1 Cor. 10:13.

Identify sources of temptations:

- a) The world 1 Jn.2: 15

- b) The flesh Gal. 5:16
- c) The devil Matt. 4: 1-11

Let him know how to deal with temptations by:

- a) Being alert - 1 Cor. 16: 13; 1 Pet. 5:8
- b) Resisting the devil - 1 Pet. 5:9; Jas. 4:7
- c) Being filled with the Holy Spirit always - Eph. 5:18
- d) Be quick Gen. 39:12 (Joseph)
- e) God's provision of a way of escape 1 Cor. 10:13
- f) Pray for victory - Matt. 26:41 (watch & pray)
- g) Use the word - Matt. 4: 1 - 11
- h) Share with him to claim God's promise at all time

Finally, pray with him over any temptations which he finds difficult to overcome and courage him to keep a notebook of escapes from temptations which he might experience.

(10) Dealing with Problems

Our convert, like every other believer will have to face diverse problems. The world is full of troubles and believers must be ready to swim through. Let him expect the following: -

- a) Possible opposition from parents (Muslim) friends colleagues etc.
- b) God may decide to test him, He loves whom He loves Heb.12: 10-11
(genuineness of our faith must be tested, and this will further reform us).

Work pressure can become a barrier to his spiritual growth. You have to encourage him to persevere in prayers and to study the bible even if it is not possible to do so very fervently. He should look for free time when he can enjoy deep fellowship with the Lord.

Every available time must be used. This is because it is not always easy to have free time. Political pressure cannot be ruled out, things of Caesar and things of God, a clash may come, he is to give unto Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. However he should always be ready to obey God rather than men. He should be faithful unto death, when facing pressures that are against God's desire.

He should put off the world and old habits. We must stress that repentance involves changes in one's life style (Matt. 6:19) and encourage him to rely on the Holy Spirit. Intellectual doubts and problems may also confront him, encourage him to face them honestly remembering the greater wisdom of God.

Having done these, encourage him to seek baptism and to be a faithful worshipper of God by attending the church regularly. You must continue the follow-up until the new convert is witnessing and bearing fruit.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the afore-mentioned steps have shown that the importance of follow-up cannot be under estimated. As a result of this, the 'touch and go' method that we have always adopted in establishing our covets must be discarded especially at this end-time when the coming of the lord is at hand and the devil is doing everything possible to snatch as many people as possible to hell.

We must wake up and make ourselves available whenever the church calls for evangelism, we must preach to people at work, in our neighbourhood and go out either alone or with other believers in order to win them to Christ. Don't neglect them after their conversion, take the steps already discussed and systematically lead them and help them to mature in the Lord. Your reward will be great before the father.

Remember we are called to make disciples, this is a task conferred on us by God which must be done. My beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain. I Cor. 15: 58.

REFERENCES

Foreman, J. B. et al. (1960). **Collins West Ministry Dictionary**. Collins London and Glasgow.

Dioceses of Sabah and Singapore Law Training Module, (1987), Thoded 2nd Edition.

Haggai John (1986) **Leed on**. America World Publishing.

Oyedepo O. D. (1992), **Understanding Vision**. Lagos: Dominion House.

Popoola M. R. (1988) **Personal Witnessing Made Easy**. Ilorin: Nato Publicity and Printing Co.

Phillipine Association of Christian Education (1988), **Women you can be Leaders**. Phillipine.