

Follow-Up

by John Advocaat

The sermon emphasizes the critical role of follow-up in discipleship, modeled by Jesus and Paul, as essential for spiritual growth and maturity in Christ.

Duration: 58:47

Scripture: Genesis 3:9, Exodus 33:11, Psalm 105:4, Lamentations 3:25, John 4:23

Topics: "Follow-Up"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the process of follow-up in teaching the word of God. He outlines five steps: telling them why, showing them how, getting them started, keeping them going, and encouraging them to pass it on to others. The speaker emphasizes the importance of prayer and incorporating specific verses into the lives of those being taught. He also highlights the significance of spending time together, engaging in activities like Bible study, prayer, and recreation. The sermon concludes with the encouragement to share the teachings with others, multiplying the ministry.

Transcript

The Navigators is an international, interdenominational Christian organization whose objective is to help fulfill Christ's commission to make disciples of all nations. They individually teach the basics of the Christian life to new believers, who then teach others. They work on campuses, military bases, and among lay men and women on every continent.

Although the word follow-up does not occur in the Bible, when one looks at the Great Commission, the life of Christ, the life of Paul, the occasion and the purpose of the writings of the New Testament books, it is immediately obvious that follow-up is as essential to the purposes of God as getting the gospel out. Please turn with me, first of all, then to Matthew 28, 19, and 20. And here we see the Matthew version of the Great Commission.

Here Jesus commands his disciples to go, therefore, and make disciples in all nations. Jesus commands his disciples to go, therefore, and make disciples in all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the earth. In this version of the Great Commission, it's obvious that the purposes of God include not just getting the gospel out, bringing people to Christ, but making disciples.

In fact, I understand that in the Greek, there's only one imperative in this verse, and that is make disciples. All the other verbs are subordinate, and all these other actions are merely a part of the main action, or the main imperative, to make disciples. In this process of making disciples, Jesus gives us a clue as to what we are to do.

We're to teach them to obey all things whatsoever I have commanded you. This is so well worded, because there's a principle called, telling is not teaching, and listening is not learning. Jesus said, teach them to obey.

This is not just a matter of developing a school with a curriculum composed of the things that Jesus taught, because what Jesus taught his disciples is practical. It applies to the way you live, day by day, moment by moment. It doesn't just involve knowing, but doing, living.

And this is, of course, what our Master did as soon as he found a band of faithful men. He began to concentrate on these men more and more. In Mark 3:14, he ordained 12, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.

Jesus Christ was concerned in following up on these men, and as we study the life of Christ, we can see very clearly that he concentrated his time, not just on evangelism, but on follow-up. Follow-up was very much a part of Jesus Christ's master plan for getting the life, the gospel, that he has to impart to men, spread around the world. So too, it's very obvious as we look at Paul's life, that he was concerned not just with getting the gospel out, but imparting the whole counsel of God.

In Acts 20 verses 19 and 20, he says, serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews, and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and taught you publicly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. And farther on down, in verses 25 and 26, he says, and now behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. Wherefore, I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.

Paul was concerned with teaching the new Christians everything that he possibly could to give them the whole counsel of God. In Colossians 1, 28 and 29, he says, Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature or perfect in Christ. Whereunto I also labor, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily.

Paul did everything that he possibly could to bring these new Christians to full maturity in Christ. In 1 Thessalonians 2, verses 7 through 12, by the way, if you haven't ever done an in-depth study on this chapter, I highly recommend it, because there's a great wealth of information on the subject of follow-up in this chapter. We don't have time here to go into every facet of it, but let me read this portion of scripture for you and just make a few comments.

1 Thessalonians 2, verses 7 through 13, But we were gentle among you, even as an earth cherisheth her children. So being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because you were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail, for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God.

Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily, and justly, and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe. 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. It's amazing how Paul gave himself to people, and not just groups, but individuals, because here in verse 11 it says that he encouraged, or comforted, and charged each one of these Thessalonians as a father does his children.

We can't go into every one of the principles there in this chapter. However, I think it's clear that Paul was very much concerned with bringing the new Christians that he encountered to full maturity in Christ. Finally, let's take a look at some of the New Testament books, the purpose, the occasion of their writing.

Some were written to individuals. Some were written to churches. Some were written to the people of God in general.

But I think it's obvious that all of them were written for the purpose of follow-up. You might just look at the first couple verses in the book of Luke and the first couple verses in the book of Acts, and you'll notice that 52 chapters of the New Testament were written to just one man. Do you know his name? Probably most of you don't even know his name.

But this one man was so valuable that Luke wrote 52 chapters to follow him up. You notice that the book of Timothy, 1 and 2 Timothy, 1 and 2 Titus, Philemon, were also written to just one individual. Books like Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians were written to churches to help follow them up.

And books like Matthew, Mark, John, the general epistles and revelations were written to churches, several churches, to the people of God in general to help establish them in the faith. And this is the purpose of the Bible, so that we might grow up the full maturity in Christ. I'd like to go on and present two absolute prerequisites to successful follow-up.

The first, I believe, is a personal conviction that God wants you to make disciples. And I'd like to go back to Matthew 28, 19, and 20, because I believe when Christ gave this command to his disciples, he very definitely intended it to be passed on to every generation of Christians. Our Lord commands his disciples to make disciples.

And in the process, he expects them to teach them everything that he taught them, including the last commandment to go and make disciples, teaching them everything that he taught the original eleven. And so the process goes on until it gets to the 20th century. And the Lord's command still is to go and make disciples and teach these disciples everything that the Lord taught his original eleven disciples.

Now the question is, have you heard his voice? The Bible says, he who has ears to hear, let him hear. And I'm afraid many Christians do not clearly understand what their purpose is as a Christian. But I believe Christ leaves us with a very clear imperative, go make disciples.

Secondly, in John 12, 24, the Bible says, truly, truly, unless a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it remains alone. But if it dies, it brings forth much fruit. Another way to say this is total commitment.

The grain of wheat has got to give itself. It's got to go for broke. Think for a minute with me.

How many people are you acquainted with that have a consuming, burning passion that completely controls them and directs their lives? Paul was this kind of a man. Not that he didn't have weaknesses. He had many.

But in Philippians 3, 10, he states his consuming desire that I might know him and the fellowship of his sufferings being made conformable unto his death. It's interesting that this desire of Paul's to know Christ leads him to a knowledge of Christ's love, which constrains him. 1 Corinthians 9, 14, Paul says, the love of Christ constrains me.

Do you know that constraining love of Christ? Paul knew it in such a way that he made a statement like 1 Corinthians 9, 19, though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all that I might gain the more. Paul was not satisfied with just winning a few people to Christ or making a couple of disciples. He was consumed with this burning desire so that he gave himself as a servant to all men that he might gain the more.

1 Thessalonians 2, 8, he says, so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls. Paul was so compelled by the love of Christ that he was willing to give his own soul to the people. In the book of Romans, he mentions how he would rather that his own name be blot out of the book of life so that the names of his brethren, the Jews, might be written therein.

Not only was Paul so consumed to give himself, but this desire, this passion of his, caused him to pray, and to pray without ceasing for his converts. 1 Thessalonians 1, 2, and 3, he mentions how he prays for them constantly, and it causes him also to hold back nothing in his teaching and exhorting, as we saw verses 19 and 20. It may be that as you listen to me, you say, I'm just not that committed.

I'm not on fire, and I know it. What do I do? How do I get committed? How do I get so dedicated? And I believe that the first step is to commit yourself totally to Christ and to getting to know him. And as you get to know Christ, as you get near him, I tell you, he'll motivate you.

He'll put a fire in your heart. He'll put a passion, a drive, that will control you. And this is really essentially what it means to be filled with the Spirit, to be controlled by God, by the desires that are in his heart, by his objectives.

Many Christians get frustrated in their attempts at follow-up, but you know it's not necessary. Follow-up is easy enough so that everyone is a candidate. I don't know of anybody that isn't capable of making disciples, if they're only willing to pay the price.

At the same time, follow-up is very difficult. It's difficult enough to eliminate the proud. It's difficult enough to eliminate the wise, the half-hearted.

Isaiah 66 verse 2 says, that this is the man to whom I will look, he that is humble and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word. If we're that kind of a man, the kind of man who responds to God, to his commands, who obeys the voice of the Lord when he says, go and make disciples, who depends on God, who falls into the earth and dies, is willing to give of himself completely and totally, then God is going to greatly use us, and we'll find that we're capable, we're able to follow up new Christians. In 1903, Lenin met with a handful of communists in London, and at this particular conference, he outlined for these men the four totals of communism.

I'm not sure I've got them worded exactly, but essentially they go like this. Total acceptance of the cause. Secondly, total commitment to the cause.

Thirdly, total discipline for the cause. And fourthly, total action for the cause. You know, this caused me to think when I heard that Lenin had spelled out those four totals, because this handful of men have really made an impact on this world of ours.

Understand that today they control approximately a fourth of the world's population. I believe that Jesus Christ demands no less of the Christian, and that he also has a few totals that he wants to impart to us. And as I've thought about it, I believe there are essentially three totals that Christ asks of us.

First, total commitment to the lordship of Christ. Apart from this, Luke 14 says you cannot be a disciple. Secondly, total dependence on the sufficiency of John 15.5. Apart from me, ye can do nothing.

Thirdly, total dedication to the cause of Christ. And we've just been talking about that. You know, my friends, if this is true of your life, if you're totally committed, I believe that you'll be absolutely astounded.

Because God will bring into your life so many people who will be healthy, young, eager Christians. And they'll be so desirous of getting your help, of being followed up, that you'll have to really work at keeping up with them. It'll stretch you.

And of course, this is just exactly what he promised in Isaiah 43, 4 through 8. Since thou is precious in my sight, thou has been honorable, and I have loved thee. Therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life. Fear not, for I am with thee.

I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west. I will say to the north, give up, and to the south, keep not back. Bring my sons from afar, and my daughters from the ends of the earth, even every one that is called by my name.

For I have created him for my glory. I have formed him, yea, I have made him. Bring forth the blind people that have eyes, and the deaf that have ears.

It's a tremendous promise. And in the Bible, it says very clearly that all the promises of God are yea and amen in Jesus Christ. And we have the privilege of claiming this promise for our lives.

But the condition is also very clear. God will give us people in exchange for our lives. First of all, we have got to give our lives to him, and then he'll give people in exchange for our lives.

In the first message, I mentioned that there were two absolute prerequisites for successful follow-up. Actually, there are three. A person must have a plan.

The Bible is very clear on this. In Matthew 28, verse 20, remember, it mentions the things that I have commanded you. Jesus Christ had specific content in mind when he told his disciples to go and make disciples in all nations.

He told them to teach them all things that I have commanded you. First Thessalonians 4, 2, Paul says, For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. In 2 Timothy 2, 2, he says to Timothy, 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.

The things, it was clear, simple, and passionable. And Timothy was actually able to do it. In 1 Corinthians 4, 16, and 17, Paul says to the Corinthians, I urge you then, be imitators of me.

Therefore I send to you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. Paul had taught Timothy these clear, simple, passionable things concerning his ways in Christ. And this was the same material that he presented everywhere in every church.

It was definite. It wasn't something random or hit and miss. There's one more passage on this in 1 Corinthians 3, 9. It mentions that ye are God's building.

By the way, an in-depth study on 1 Corinthians 3 is an absolute must. And if you haven't really studied this matter of building, spiritual building, I suggest that you take this chapter and draw the principles regarding building. It mentions here that you are God's building.

Have you ever tried putting up a building without a plan? It's clear, isn't it? Paul had a plan involving specific content of that which he wanted to see built into the lives of his followers. Webster says a plan is an orderly arrangement of the parts of an overall design or objective. Imagine just using hit and miss techniques and putting up a building.

It's impossible. You've got to have some kind of a definite plan. I don't know what your experience has been with this matter of planning follow-up, but for me, I think it's been one of the major frustrations of my life.

If I had a dollar for every follow-up plan that I've scrapped, I think I'd be one of the richest men in the world today. That's a bit of an exaggeration. But you get the point.

I've made many, many follow-up plans, and it seems as though my follow-up plans never were practical. It never fit the situation. Somehow every new Christian that I attempted to follow up never exactly fitted into the plan.

And I just about came to the conclusion that it was impossible to come up with any kind of a definite follow-up plan. So I began to think, what do these passages of Scripture actually mean? Is it possible to have a plan, or is follow-up something we just have to play by ear? About three years ago, through studying passages like John 15, 2 Peter chapter 1, I came to a much better understanding of what Christian growth really is. And I'd like to share just a summary of what I've learned, because I feel it is essential to coming up with meaningful, useful follow-up plans.

In John 15, we very clearly see that the Christian life is a relationship. Christianity is not a religion, in the sense that it is not a system of activity by which man can obtain the new life. Rather, it is a dynamic relationship with the living God, whereby His life and His character are transmitted to us.

So Christianity, then, is a matter of growing in a relationship. And Christian growth has to do with our relationship with God, and this relationship growing. I'd like all of you, for a minute, to think about the person that you have the best relationship with.

If you're married, it's probably your husband, or your wife. Maybe for some of you, it's a member of your family, or a good friend. Now, ask yourself, how did this relationship develop, so that today, this relationship is better than any of my other relationships? Of course, there are many factors involved.

Let me list what I think some of the key ones are. We're going to build a relationship. First of all, we've got to communicate.

This involves sharing what I'm thinking, what I'm doing with somebody else. And, of course, hearing and understanding what the other person is doing. Communication, it's got to be two ways.

Secondly, I think association is very important. It's impossible to build a good relationship with somebody apart from spending time together. And so we've got to associate, spend time.

Thirdly, it seems essential that there would be some kind of a mutual love, or commitment, one to the other. Also, I think it's pretty important that we'd have common goals, also common interests and activities. Apart from this, it'd be pretty difficult for our lives to really get intermeshed.

Sixthly, I think trust is important. We don't trust another individual. It's hard for us to really get close to them, or if they don't trust us.

But trust is an essential. And finally, I think it's very important that we have some kind of agreement, harmony, that we can agree on things. I'm sure we could go on and list many more, but this will suffice.

And I think most of you are familiar with what we in the Navs call the basics. And what we've just listed are the basics. And I think in order for you to understand why I refer to this list as the basics, I'm going to have to translate.

And possibly, if you're taking notes, you can just make a second column. Communication for a Christian with Christ means the word, hearing, his word, and prayer, talking to Christ. Christ talks to us through the word.

We talk to him through prayer. We have association. What's association? Well, for the Christian, we associate with Christ through our devotional life by spending time with him in the morning and then associating with him all day long.

He said he will never leave us nor forsake us, so he's with us all day long, and we can associate with him. Thirdly, mutual love or commitment is basically lordship. Christ commits himself to us, and he made a very total commitment to us when he died for us on the cross.

He's committed to giving us all things that we possibly could want or need. But we've got to commit ourselves to him, and this is called lordship. Fourthly, common goals.

For the Christian, they have common goals with Christ. It involves witnessing and follow-up, essentially the great commission. These are the things that are really on the heart of God.

Fifthly, common interests and activity. What is God primarily interested in? His people. And so, we need to develop friends and friendships and associate with the people that God is associated with.

And this is generally called fellowship, fellowshiping with other Christians. And then trust. Well, trust is basically faith.

And finally, agreement. Agreement, another word for that, is obedience. And these eight things that we've just listed, I believe, are the basics, the essentials of the Christian life.

And now, why do we refer to these items as basics? It's because they're basic to our growth in Christ, to the growth of our relationship with him. And this is what growth really is, isn't it? Growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ. Now, what do you suppose happens when a person develops a relationship with God? There are many things that result, many things that happen.

And you might make a third column on the right. One of the first things that I have observed that happens when a person develops an intimate relationship with Christ is a change in attitude. And then also, changes in motives, changes in goals, changes in value, changes in character.

And of course, the fruits of the Spirit begin to appear in the life of a person who is so vitally associated with Christ, as Galatians 5.22 and 23 spells out. And these results, I believe, are absolutely inevitable as a person grows in his relationship with Jesus Christ. I've titled column 3, Results.

And I think it's very important that we see column 3 as results and that 1 and 2 are basically the means for growing in our relationship with Jesus Christ. The only difference between column 1 and 2 is they're different terms, but it's the same thing. Same thing, just different language.

Column 3 are results. And it's very important to realize this because in 1 Corinthians 3, verse 6, it says that God gives the increase. In the process of building into the life of a person, it's God who gives the increase.

In other words, God changes the person's life. Now we can talk to a person about changing his attitude or changing some aspect of his character, and this is good. But if the person is not vitally hooked up with God and knows how to draw on Jesus Christ for the strength, for the grace to make the appropriate changes, what we are talking about is merely moral rearmament, pulling yourself up by your own bootstraps.

And therefore, it's very essential in follow-up that we concern ourselves with helping new Christians become established in their relationship with God. If we challenge their attitude on different things, or some aspect of their character, and do it in such a way that the individual interacts with God regarding the matter, then we will see significant growth, real Christian growth. And we want a person to learn to be able to interact with God regarding different aspects of his personal life, to become sensitive to God, so that God can deal directly with him.

And for this reason, it is important that we ourselves become sensitive to God and to what God is doing in the lives of the people that we are helping. I'm afraid that too frequently the situation occurs where God is speaking to an individual through his daily devotional life or through the circumstances of his life. God is trying to communicate to him.

And then we come along and change the subject. We've got to learn what 1 Corinthians 3.9 says, what it means to be co-laborers with God. The verse actually says, for we are laborers together with God.

I'd like to give another illustration, and hopefully this will stress three things. First, is that God gives us people in exchange for our lives. It's a very subtle trick of the devil to get our thinking concentrating totally on methods.

Ian Bounds said, men are looking for better methods, but God is looking for better men. Those of you who are going to depend on the method outlined in these messages, rather than on God's promise in Isaiah 43.4, are going to fail. But I want to be sure that you don't put your faith in the method, but in the promise of God.

Secondly, the importance of thinking for yourself. Some of you will want me to tell you everything from A to Z. To do so would be to violate being co-laborers with God. We have got to develop discernment in order to be able to do the right thing at the right time.

Thirdly, we want to be prepared as possible for this matter of follow-up. This, of course, involves planning. But it also involves walking with God in such a way that our life is an example to others.

And, it involves having a practical grasp on the word of God so that we can effectively minister to others. If we don't have a practical grasp on the word of God, and the know-how as to how to pass it on to others, then essentially we are unavailable to God. And He can't use us to help other people.

We can cry out to God asking Him to use us, but He says, I can't. Unless you take the time, first of all, to get a good practical grasp on my word. Because I have decided to use only those people that use my word.

Isaiah 66, verse 2. I hope to make it clear how we can achieve a practical grasp on the word as we look at a basic framework for follow-up. Essentially, four parts. The first is our objective, where we want to head.

Secondly, there's the content, that which we would like to impart and see in the life of the person that we're following up. And thirdly, how we impart the content in such a way to accomplish our objective. And then fourthly, evaluation.

How do we tell when we have accomplished our objective? Okay, first of all then, the objective. I believe it's essential for us to get a clear picture of what we want to accomplish. A profile of a person who is followed up.

You might ask yourself, when I'm finished following up on a person, what do I want to see in this person's life? Jesus told us to make disciples. So we want to look in the Bible and get a clear picture of what qualities should be obvious in the life of a disciple. What's been a tremendous help to me in the last couple of years is the profile of a disciple.

I've taken this profile and broken it down so that I have 10 specific topics that I can really get my fingers on. Until you know where you're going, it's impossible to plan on how you're going to get there. Secondly, the content.

And we can ask ourselves, what must we provide for the young Christian in order for them to be followed up? I believe there are four main things. The first is we must pray. And if you've never studied the intercessory prayers of Christ or Paul, I suggest this because it'd be very helpful and very practical for you in knowing how to pray effectively for the new Christian that you're helping.

Secondly, we've got to provide an example. Christ, of course, told his men to follow me. Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.

When we look farther in the New Testament and we see Paul saying the same thing. For example, I already mentioned 1 Corinthians 4, 16. There Paul says, I urge you then to be imitators of me.

He says it again to the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 1, 6. He says it to the Philippians. This is essential that we provide an example for the new Christian. Thirdly, we must provide fellowship, the proper environment.

Again, as you look through the New Testament, you can see how important it is for Christians to get together in fellowship. In Acts chapter 2, the first example that we see in the book of Acts of people being led to Christ. What's the first thing that we find happening? That is Acts 2, 42.

That these people are together in fellowship around the word and prayer, sharing very generously, sharing what they have. And fourthly, we must provide instruction. We must feed and teach the new Christian.

We must train him so that he will be able to continue to grow in his relationship with Christ on his own. Now, thirdly, that takes us to the how. How are we going to impart this content in such a way that it will accomplish our objectives? And again, I want to go back over the four things that I mentioned on content.

First of all, prayer. Jot down specific verses for each person that I'm helping and ask God in prayer to build these verses, these truths, to incorporate them into the life of this person that I'm helping. An example, Christ ordained 12 that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach.

It's important for us to spend time together with those that we're following up, to do things together, to have quiet times together, to pray together, to do Bible study together, to recreate together, or maybe work together. Capitalize on every opportunity that we have to be together with those that we're attempting to follow up. Thirdly, fellowship.

I think it's important to introduce a new Christian immediately to your Christian friends. What I like to do is introduce them and then ask a new Christian to share with my friend what he just did. And this helps a new Christian to explain what he did in accepting Christ.

And it helps to seal it in his heart as he shares with another person. And then also, after he has shared this very intimate thing that he has just done, it helps bring him into a relationship with these other Christians. But as we do this, it's also important for us to remember that a lot of people experience a tremendous culture shock when they first are introduced to the Christian community.

The best I can say here is be sensitive and try your best to make this culture shock as gradual as possible. And also, I might suggest that you study Romans 14 through chapter 15 verse 7 and not apply any non-essential regulations or laws to the new Christian. Fourthly, we're responsible to provide training and instruction.

How do you instruct a new Christian? And what instructions do you give? Just as the basis for our prayer and for our example and for our fellowship should be the Word of God, so too with our instruction. Our textbook, you might say, is the Bible. This is our infallible guidebook for life.

And it's the Bible that helps us to grow up in Christ. Acts 20 verse 32, Paul says, And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up. Remember, I mentioned that it's important to have our objective clearly spelled out.

And I mentioned that we have this profile, and I've taken that profile and studied it and tried to digest it. And in the process, I came up with 10 specific topics that I want to work on in following up a new Christian. What I've done is taken each one of these topics and carefully studied the Bible in each subject.

And once we've done these studies, it gives us the basic subject matter for instruction. So we can teach what the Bible says about the devotional life or about prayer. So how are we going to pass on what we've learned in our study? We can lecture.

Secondly, we can do it with them. For example, prayer again, we can pray with the person. Thirdly, we can give the person a Bible study assignment.

Give them five or six or ten verses and say, look, why don't you look these up, study them, and draw the practical principles and see how you can apply that to your life. We can give the person an action assignment. For example, we're trying to train the person to witness.

We can tell them this week, I'd like you to share your testimony with four other Christians here in this community and have them critique you. Fifthly, we could have the person read a booklet or a book or listen to a tape on the subject. We can take them to a conference.

Seventh, we can expose them to a pace setter. It may be again on this subject of prayer that you may say, hey listen, why don't you get together with George the next four or five mornings and pray with him. Eighth, we can share verses with a person and have them meditate on these during the day.

This is something that I've done a whole lot of. For example, again on this subject of prayer, give a person a verse such as 1 John 5, 14 and 15 and say, now listen, today when you're at work and your mind is free, why don't you meditate on this verse? Give them a verse on prayer every day for maybe a week so they can learn some things about prayer. Ninth, I can share my personal testimony.

I can share what I have experienced on the subject of prayer and this will again give them greater insight to the practical applications of what the Bible has to say about prayer. And then last, I can just simply preach at them and attempt by preaching at them to motivate them and stimulate them to action on this subject of prayer. Now these are methods, techniques that we can use on any subject at any time.

Give a couple of verses at a time or when we see a person or call them on the phone, we can give them a couple of verses. And this is all follow-up. It doesn't necessarily need a period of time where you're together for a couple of hours and you're formally teaching the person.

We want to learn how we can weave this teaching and this instruction into part of our general routine on this matter of how in follow-up. There are five basic things that we want to do. We want to tell them why, we want to show them how, we want to get them started, we want to keep them going, and we want them to pass it on to somebody else.

These basically, you might say, are five steps in this process of follow-up. Now it's not that simple that we can go one, two, three, four, five, but basically this is what we want to do in showing them how. Fourthly, we have the matter of evaluation.

How do I know when I've accomplished my objective? This we have to very carefully sit down and think about in order to come up with some actual means of evaluating. And we'll have more to say about this matter of evaluation. I'd like to take you through the various phases of preparing a follow-up plan.

I gave you four steps. First, set your objectives. Secondly, study your Bible.

Thirdly, prepare to teach. Fourthly, think through on evaluation. I'm sure that all of you would agree that a follow-up person ought to have a consistent daily devotional life.

So we have an objective now. We're going to study our Bible to see what the Bible says about the devotional life. The Bible does talk about the devotional life, and I've picked this particular subject because

I think you'll find it difficult to do your own personal study on the devotional life.

However, I'd like to just share some texts with you so that you can look these texts up, study them, draw out the principles and the truths, take you through the steps of teaching these truths so that we can help a person come to the point where he has a consistent daily devotional life. Okay, what does the Bible say about the devotional life? First, it talks about a specific time set aside each day for communication with God. We see that in verses such as Mark 1.35, where Jesus goes out to a lonely place and prays.

Daniel 6.10, we see it. Psalm 145, 1 and 2. Genesis 19, 27. Genesis 24, 63.

Proverbs 8, 30 and 34. Psalm 88, verse 9. Exodus 16, verse 4. Luke 5, 16. And these particular passages that I gave you not only talk about a specific time, but it gives us some examples of people actually setting aside time to communicate with God.

And also, it gives us an idea of the frequency with which we should do it, and when is the best time that we should set aside for this particular activity. Also, the Bible gives us some indication as to where. Mark 1.35, again.

Psalm 46.10. Psalm 63.2. Daniel 6.10. Matthew 6.6. Psalm 33.7. And then the Bible also gives us a little bit about why we should have a devotional life. Job 23.12, for nourishment, to get to know Christ better. Philippians 3.10, for fellowship with God.

1 Corinthians 1.9. This, by the way, is a very significant verse. God has called us into fellowship with himself. Fantastic that God wants fellowship with us.

But it's true. Genesis 3.9. Exodus 33.11. John 4.23. There are some promises in the Bible that are related to a devotional life. Psalm 105.4. Lamentations 3.25-26. Psalm 143.8. And then, I'd like to give you some verses that contain principles.

Psalm 119.18. Here, David prays that God would open his eyes so that he might behold wondrous things out of his law. Psalm 139.23-24. Again, David prays that God would search and try his heart. The way God does that is with his word.

Proverbs 8.34. And Psalm 62.5. Teach us to wait on God with expectancy. Isaiah 1.18. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord. And this means we need to learn to interact with God, to be responsive to him, and to share what's on our hearts, and to interact with God regarding these things that are on our heart, and regarding the things that are on his heart, and to keep short accounts with God.

Psalm 27.4. And Jeremiah 29.13. Teach us that we should be wholehearted in seeking God. It's very important that we apply ourselves at some time during the day to totally concentrating on fellowshiping with God. Psalm 42.1. And Psalm 63.1. Talk about thirsting for God.

Psalm 37.7. And Psalm 42.10. Talk about waiting on God. Isaiah 6.3. Talks about striving to know God. John 4.23. Tells us that we should worship God in spirit and in truth.

Psalm 91 verses 1 and 2. Talk about interacting with God all day long. And also regarding that matter of interacting with God all day long, I'd like to refer you also to John 15 and the illustration there of the vine and the branches. I'd like you to take those verses now and study them and organize them as to the principles that we can learn and draw out of these verses.

What is God teaching? That will take us then to the next step, the third step, that is how do we take this content and impart it to the new Christian in such a way that he will be motivated and desirous to have a consistent daily devotional life. That's our objective, remember, a consistent daily devotional life. What I like to do is talk to the new Christian immediately about this particular subject.

And if possible, immediately after he made his decision. And what I like to do first of all is share with him a very simple little illustration that communicates something about our relationship with Christ. And then five specific verses that will help him to understand why and how he can begin this devotional life.

Okay, the illustration, what I say is something like this. Now that you've accepted Christ, one of the things that I'd like to point out to you is that this is just the beginning. Four years ago, I got married.

At the time that we got married, my wife and I exchanged some vows and we put rings on each other's fingers and we made a commitment to each other. And this is what you have done in inviting Jesus Christ into your life. You have started a new relationship.

Just as when I got married, I started a new relationship with Nancy, my wife. A marriage relationship. Now suppose that the moment after the pastor proclaimed us husband and wife, I shook hands with Nancy and said, I'm really glad for this day and it's great being your husband.

The ceremony was terrific and all that good stuff. And said, now I wonder, Nancy, would it be possible for me to get together with you an hour or so next week, make an appointment and come back then the following week and spend an hour with her. And after that hour say, hey, look, I wonder if we could make this a weekly affair where we get together for an hour every week.

You don't have to be much of a marriage counselor to tell me that that's no way to carry on a marriage relationship. And of course, I have no intention of carrying on my marriage relationship that way. I think Nancy's great.

She thinks I'm great. And our objective when we got married was to become as intimate as possible. And just as the Bible says that when a man and a woman get married, they are to become one.

That's exactly what we wanted. We wanted our lives to become so intimate and so intertwined that we would be one. And we want to grow in this relationship.

And so that day when we celebrated our wedding, that was just a first step. When you made this decision to accept Christ, it was just a first step. Now that you've got this relationship with Christ, what you want to do is get to know Him better and really have your life and His life intermesh so that you are one with Christ completely.

And let me share with you a few passages of scripture that are related to this. And this may amaze you, but it's true. In 1 Corinthians 1.9, God says that He has called us into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ.

God's calling for our lives is that we might have fellowship with Jesus Christ. Isn't that a fantastic calling? We are able to communicate with Christ, to talk with Him, to have fellowship with Him. Let me share Psalm 5.3. Here David says, O Lord, in the morning thou dost hear my voice.

In the morning I prepare sacrifice for thee, and look up. Here we see that David is talking with God. And it's possible for us now that you've got this new relationship to talk with God.

In Psalm 143.8, David says that in the morning he expects to hear God's voice. Isn't that interesting? David speaks to God and God speaks to him. That's communication, isn't it? And this is exactly the privilege that we have as Christians.

We can communicate with God. In Mark 8.34, it says, Happy is the man who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my door. This particular verse, we see three things.

First of all, that when we have this kind of a relationship with God, we're happy. And secondly, that we can daily do this. And thirdly, that God wants to speak to us.

And then Mark 1.35, we see that Christ Himself got up early in the morning and went out to pray. Now note that three of the five verses talk about fellowship with God in the morning. One of the verses indicates that happiness results from daily contact with God.

And it just seems to me that the thing that you may want to do now is set aside 15 minutes each morning for an appointment with God. Now, what I'd like to do is explain how Joe can spend those 15 minutes. But before I do that, I want to just mention something else about those five verses.

If Joe and I had time and we weren't rushed, what I would do is I'd say, Joe, let's look at a couple of passages of scripture. And I'd have him get his Bible and have him look up these passages and maybe ask him a question or two about the verses. But basically have Joe discover these truths that I've just shared from these verses for himself.

Because essentially what that does is it teaches Joe, first of all, that he can get meaningful truths from the scripture that God can speak to him. And then when we're all through, we can say, okay, now Joe, what has God told you? And he can list some specific things that God has told him through these five passages of scripture. Okay, now what's Joe going to do with the 15 minutes? He's never had a quiet time before, but this is essentially what we're going to call it, a quiet time, a little time in the morning so that he can fellowship with God.

I help him to come up with a plan. First of all, I tell Joe to pick a specific spot, a place, because that's what Jesus did. That's what some of the other people did.

They had a specific place where they were alone, where they would be undisturbed. And so I have Joe think about a place and decide on a good spot. And then after that, I'll tell Joe to pick a time and to really get this clearly in his mind.

And then thirdly, I'll tell him how to use the 15 minutes. Basically what I do is I tell him to, first of all, pray. And in praying to use 1 John 1.9 to confess his sins, to thank God for something, 1 Thessalonians 5.18, and to pray Psalm 119, 17, and 18 prior to reading the Bible.

And I tell him, read the Bible for 5 to 10 minutes and maybe read 10, 15 verses and analyze the passage. Just kind of meditate over it. And then think over one specific verse a little bit longer that specifically talks to him.

And then thirdly, to write out what his response to what God said. Then I suggest that he spend the last 2 to 5 minutes in prayer. First of all, pray over the verse that spoke to him.

Then secondly, to pray over things that concern his life, the events of that day. And then to pray for other people that he knows. And the thing that I have found is that it's best to do it with him.

And if at all possible, after I've given him these instructions, then I'll make an appointment with him the next morning so that we can have a quiet time together. Now, what we have essentially done here is we've told him why, we've showed him how, and we've gotten him started. The next thing that we want to do is keep him going.

And what I've done here is I've picked out passages of scripture that I feel will stimulate greater desire. And I've got a list of, oh, 10 passages. And you can pick out your own list of passages.

When I feel that maybe Joe doesn't have as much desire as he should in order to be consistent and faithful in his quiet time, then what I do is I share these with him in one way or another. Maybe I preach them to him. Maybe I lecture to him.

Maybe I have him read these verses and study them on his own and come up with ways that he can apply this to his own quiet time. Then I've got some passages of scripture that I like to share with him that will give him greater breadth and greater depth in fellowshiping with God, to equip him for more meaningful fellowship with God. And this can help stimulate him to grow in his communication, in his fellowship with God, in his devotional life.

And then I've got a list of ways that I feel I can help a young Christian develop greater skills in just the mechanics of having a quiet time, such as using a hymnal, maybe taking a few minutes to review some meaningful verses, or maybe doing a little Bible study during his quiet time, ways of varying his quiet time, how he can keep his mind from wandering by keeping a little notepad next to him and jotting down those things that keep sidetracking him. Maybe he's sleepy, keeps falling asleep during his quiet time. And I suggest, well, pick up your Bible and walk around and pray while walking or standing.

I don't know too many people that fall asleep while walking. And then maybe I'll give him some hints on how to meditate on the Word and how to interact with God all day long. Also, periodically, I'll ask him to share with other people what he's getting out of his quiet time.

Ask him to have quiet times with other people so that he can learn and grow. And I believe that if Joe has vital contact with God in this quiet time, that's going to be a stimulus in itself, because that fellowship with God meets his needs. It really satisfies.

It's wonderful. It's beautiful. It's a thing that he's going to long for.

And that thirst, that desire is going to be there so that he will have a consistent, daily devotional life. And I want to be very careful also if he's not growing in this desire to figure out why and see if I can't eliminate those particular things that are dampening his enthusiasm, his desire for his devotional life. Finally, I want to think through on how I can evaluate this.

And as far as a devotional life is concerned, I evaluate it by asking several questions. First, does he have a daily quiet time? Secondly, I ask myself, does he have meaningful contact with God? And the way I try to discern that is, first of all, what does he share about what God is telling him? And does he get encouraged

and stimulated by his quiet times? Is it obvious that his quiet time, his fellowship with God, is really meeting needs in his life? I can see the effects of this. It was obvious to the Pharisees that the disciples had been with Jesus.

And so too, when Joe is meeting with Jesus, it's obvious. There's ways of detecting this. You can see it on his countenance, just the way he smiles, the way he carries himself.

You can tell he's really meeting with God. And also, if I have quiet times with him, frequently I can tell just how meaningful his relationship is with God. And here's a real significant one, and that is, does he try to stimulate other people to have quiet times? Does he talk to other people about the devotional life? Is it something that he is obviously sold on and thinks that this would really benefit other people? Another question, does his quiet time set the tone of his day? In other words, if he has a good quiet time, does he frequently have a good day? And does he go up and down kind of with a quiet time? This is an indication that he's really meeting with God.

And then, also, I want to try to evaluate whether or not he's really fellowshiping with God all through the day. Frequently, what I will do here is I'll just ask a person, hey, tell me, what interaction have you had with God since noon? And that may take them off guard for a minute, but hopefully you'll be able to tell me several significant interactions that he's had with God since noon, the last few hours. This gives us a pretty good indication that the person has learned to interact with God.

Well, I trust that this example will make it clear to you and that you'll be able, with the information that is given here, to make your own follow-up plans. I really trust that God will use each one of you in helping other people become disciples. Thank you for allowing us the privilege of ministering to you by way of this cassette.

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