

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Leadership 1
Ecclesiology 1
Week 5 – Follow-up

Introduction

Tonight we are going to discuss a key ministry we call “follow-up”, which flows naturally from our past two weeks discussing evangelism. In fact, we have already tipped our hat to this essential ministry several times. Tonight, we are going to focus the entire evening on it. We will see that warm evangelism cannot be done without a solid understanding and practice of follow-up, nor will discipleship, the topic of next week’s teaching, be possible without already being involved in follow-up.

Contrast “Day Care” vs. “Healthy Family”

Consider the workings of a day care center. What exists is a model where a few trained and mature individuals are responsible for the care of a much larger group of immature children. And that model is self-perpetuating. IE. The day care center does not pursue helping the children mature enough to take care of one another.

A healthy family is very different in this manner. Good parents strive to not only care for the immediate needs of their children, but to take a forward-looking view of how they want their children to grow up. They hope their child will become mature, capable of interacting with other people with kindness and other-centeredness versus selfishness. They want their child to become competent at handling activities of daily living as well as more complex tasks of life like education and job training. Parents know these things will lead to their children being able to simultaneously enjoy and bear fruit in their lives, as well as train THEIR children to do the same.

Therefore, it is a sign of health as you see an older child taking on the tasks and attitudes that include solid contributions to the household: helping with younger siblings in their development, with home care, responsible babysitting of younger siblings. We don’t want our children to be perpetually dependent on us the care-givers.

The Biblical model of the church is similar to a healthy family. It is NOT a few “at the top” perpetually dishing out service to the non-Christians and young believers.. It IS a picture the more mature perpetually helping the non-Christians and younger believers come to Christ and in turn grow in their maturity so that they will in turn do the same with others.

If you are here tonight, looking at your role in your home group and realize that you are still primarily on the receiving end – like a child in a day care center – and have not taken personal responsibility to help with the care and spiritual development of non-Christians and young believers, you are missing a great opportunity to deepen your relationship with God and live out the New Testament model of the church.

The Decision Continuum, which we handed out tonight in it’s entirety, can be applied to more decisions than just salvation; it can guide you in understanding how to help other Christians mature in their relationship with God.

It can also help you understand where you might be as we consider this and next week, key ministries which require a clear decision to lay your life down for Christ and worship him with your very self.

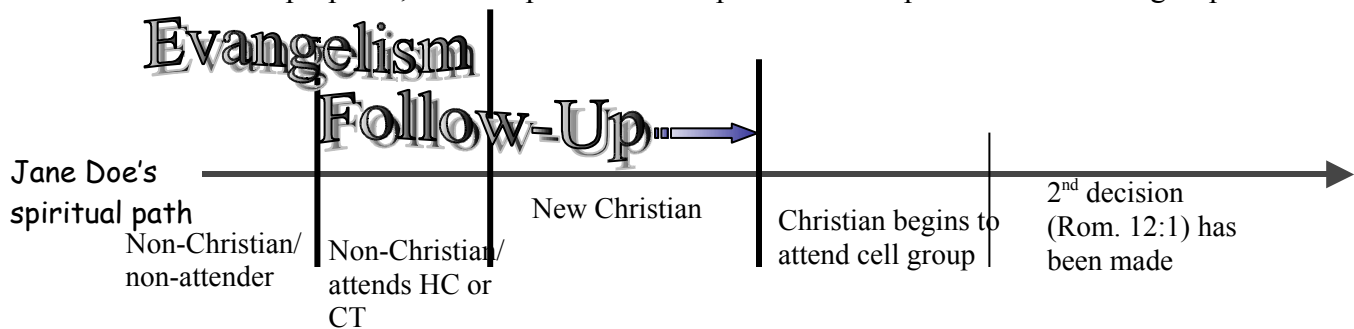
Definition of Follow-up

"Follow-Up" refers to **the process of on-going personal investment and communication of biblical truth that should occur after a new person has begun to attend home church or Central Teaching.**

The goal of the Christian worker in this situation is to make available the truths of Christianity in a way that is understandable, and that is suited to the progress of the investigator.

The Bible stresses the importance of "persuading men" of the truth (**2 Corinthians 5:11**); of "feeding the sheep" -- (i.e. those newly born into His kingdom, **John 21:15-17**); of fellowship (**Acts 2:44-47**); and of teaching (**Acts 5:42**).

The final goal of follow-up can best be stated in the words of the Bible, that *the new person would become "firmly rooted, built up in Him and established in...faith"* (**Colossians 2:5-7**). For our purposes, follow-up *ends* when a person is incorporated in to a cell group.



Importance of Follow-up

In prior weeks, we've pointed out that the Bible makes a strong case that God wants the church to grow quantitatively and qualitatively. Follow-up is an essential ministry to both aspects of growth.

Quantitative growth:

There is NO other area that a home group can consistently grow, than through the ministry of follow-up. There are really only 3 types of people in a group – the old member who's been there since before you planted this group, the first-time guest who is only that one time – the 1st week they come, and the 1st timer that comes back – or what we call "returning new" person. A home group that does evangelism can only grow by the return and incorporation of new people.

And the ministry of follow-up is a key part of what God uses in their lives to get them involved in the Body of Christ. The non-Christian experiences the love of Christ from a believer who is building a friendship with them, and the verbal witness of that Christian friend is our role in helping to lead them to a decision for Christ – that's what following-up a non-Christian is about.

Note these charts demonstrating a home group's growth. This group presently is seeing 1 out of ___ first-time guests coming back. One out of four is more appropriate – look at how that would affect this group's quantitative growth! Stats demonstrating only place a church can grow – IE – when Bible talks about quantitative growth of the church – this is what it is pointing toward.

Qualitative growth:

Most of us are sitting here today with different priorities in life, are actively serving in our home church, and have a more godly character in part because of the guidance we received from an (usually more than one) older Christian. It is likely that person purposefully initiated a relationship with us with the goal of helping us grow in our relationship with God.

That motive, to help another person come to Christ and then to get grounded in their relationship with him, is what protects us from having a “numbers mentality” – where *all that matters* is seeing quantitative growth so that our group can grow and plant a new group (again, not saying that isn’t also important).

The quantitative growth can’t happen without the qualitative changes in a person’s life, nor vice versa. This ministry is so important, it is essential that we approach our role in it seriously and deliberately, while never forgetting who causes the growth, and maintaining constant dependence on him to work through us.

6 Principles of effective Follow-up

The Christian Leadership 3 class presents more detail in how to lead follow-up ministry in a home group. Here we will acquaint you with key elements.

1. Each new person that comes to a home church or Central Teaching should be engaged.

The Christians in a home group should be genuinely excited about every new person God brings around to your group, and eager to be part of helping them experience the love of Christ.

If the Christians in your home group do not see or feel anything special about an evening where someone new is there, they are missing the point of what the church is here for.

If the Christians in your home group focus on hanging out with one another rather than helping the guest feel welcome and getting to know them, follow-up will fail.

2. The workers in the group should communicate and cooperate with one another.

Leaders should take the initiative to facilitate each new person being followed up. They should NOT take the initiative to DO the work itself. They are organizing to help insure needs are met, not controlling.

In a solid home group, this is an ongoing agenda item in leaders meetings.

Leaders should ask a point person to agree to follow-up the person.

This agreement with a Christian to “take the point” is essential. Some react to this idea by insisting: “that sounds really unspiritual; you aren’t allowing the Holy Spirit to lead if you purposefully work through who will follow-up a new person.” If you take that position, you will see the adage “everyone’s job is no one’s job” come true in spades in this ministry. You will see new people come in and out of your group like through a revolving door.

Leaders facilitate this because they are aware of the plant plans of the group and how a new person will be very confused and hurt at plant time if they have had workers from both sides of the plant equally investing in them.

Most often this is the Christian who invited the guest. It is unnatural for a Christian to have a friend whom they invite but then are not the one who is primarily involved in following up their guest. Sometimes new people come to the group through other

routes and aren't relationally attached. They may be a different sex, they may have been brought by a non-Christian, etc. (leadership class gets into these kind of details).

The leaders should be clear on what the worker is agreeing to: *to engage the person at meetings and to initiate with the person out of meetings as appropriate* (gets the phone number in appropriate way, invites out to a meal or other activities when appropriate).

THIS IS A SACRED TRUST. THIS IS A STEWARDSHIP FROM GOD. We may lose the person, but it should not be because we dropped the ball in this area – we need to be able to say “I was in there with the person.”

This is part of what your home group leaders should be looking for before giving you additional responsibilities in the church (teaching, leadership training by sitting in leaders meetings, etc.).

Qualification: On the other side of the coin, *having a point person does NOT mean that other people in the group aren't engaging that person and building friendships as well.* The subjective witness of the Body can't be accomplished by one person. There is no room for “possessiveness” in this ministry, although we want to avoid unnecessary confusion or hurt (plant plan considerations, etc.).

3. Personal Relationship Building is crucial to follow-up.

Church growth people say that if a person attends two or three meetings and does not meet anybody they will likely not come back. This is especially important at Central Teaching where there could be a number of new people who are checking things out but aren't there at the invitation of a home group member.

1 Thessalonians 2:5-12** For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed-- God is witness-- 6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. 7 But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. 8 Having thus a fond affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us,... 10 You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; 11 just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, 12 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

Look at the 3 aspects: 1) *he set an example*, 2) *nurtured*, and 3) *appropriately challenged*.

Look at how he cared for them – like a father & mother. Setting an example, but also challenging them to take steps.

How do we know Paul was personally involved with the Thessalonians? We see the effect their well-being had on them.

1 Thess. 3:5-9 For this reason, when I could endure it no longer, I also sent to find out about your faith, for fear that the tempter might have tempted you, and our labor should be in vain. 6 But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, 7 for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; 8 for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. 9 For what thanks can we render to God for you in return for all the joy with which we rejoice before our God on your account,

We should be taking this kind of joy in seeing our work in the Lord have this kind of affect on others. Does affecting others for Christ bring us this kind of joy? Are there other things in our life that holds our affections instead?

1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:2 But we, brethren, having been bereft of you for a short while-- in person, not in spirit-- were all the more eager with great desire to see your face. 18 For we wanted to come to you-- I, Paul, more than once-- and yet Satan thwarted us. 19 For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? 20 For you are our glory and joy. 3:1 Therefore when we could endure it no longer, we thought it best to be left behind at Athens alone; 2 and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's fellow worker in the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you as to your faith,

2 Cor. 11:29 Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

See Paul's level of care.

There will be a development in a relationship here; the follow-up relationship won't be as progressed as it will be in a discipling relationship where the friendship will be quite close, open, vulnerable with considerable common experience built over years often. Regardless, we must have genuine love for the person. And it is only going to be through the Holy Spirit's power.

There are three common barriers to genuine love:

1. **"Scalp Hunting"** - Seeing how many I can get. Bragging to others about my group's growth, "my" outreach, defensive when others talk to people they bring around, etc.
2. **"Self-need"** – The Christian worker is an emotional octopus, very needy, they have to have a friend rather than thinking in terms of *being* a friend of the new person.

The worker gets their feelings hurt easily by the person ("they don't return my calls"). This is co-dependency.

They might be a "groveler" – doing anything to get new people to come around. It's a view that underestimates the new person's need for Christ. The worker might be unwilling to stand up for God's truth, to challenge.

The mindset communicates that the church needs people or that I need a disciple, rather than what the person really needs is Christ. We should be representing Christ and His offer to them.

3. **"Affinity based relating"**- Affinity for someone usually means that we get along with them very easily; their personality and ours meshes in a way that conversation and activities are effortless and a lot of fun. Perhaps we have several hobbies in common. These are the new friends of whom we usually say, "I feel like we've been friends for years". There is certainly nothing wrong with this – in fact, it's a blessing when present!

On the other hand, there are people who are so different than us that conversing with them is usually awkward – we feel like we carry the burden of the conversation. We have few or no hobbies or interests in common. In fact, there are probably some idiosyncrasies that drive us crazy!

But, there is no room for the worldly, selfish view that "I can't follow-up this person because we just don't click." It's not about us – it's about them. Showing God's love isn't about how we feel about someone, it is a choice to love someone as he defines it and in his power regardless of our feelings.

Effective follow-up at meetings involves:

1. *We should be coming to home group and central teachings with this attitude of prepared to serve, in the Spirit, ready to "wash feet."* We should be looking for a new person and making

effort to get to know them, to make them feel comfortable, and hopefully allow them to experience Christ's love in the process. This is Heb.10:24 in its finest expression.

This requires the perspective of knowing the cost of missing a meeting: not only what feeding I do not get, but what opportunities to serve I have missed – there are people who are going to miss our contribution.

2. *We need to learn to how to get into people's lives, setting our interest in our lives aside.* This means when we are engaging a new person we should primarily *be a question asker*. We should learn to take joy in meeting people and getting to know about them.

On the other hand, we do not want to “love bomb” someone with a flock of Christians hovering around them at meetings and several of them calling the person to do things with them – that will be overwhelming and is why we ask a point person to agree to this work. The point is to feed them the Word, persuade of the message, not just “hang out” with the person.

We should be HORRIFIED if we see a newer person sitting w/o anyone talking. Be aware of your own tendencies, are you shy and reserved or overbearing?

We should be at the meeting, always knowing that the new person comes FIRST. Christians with a mindset on the needs of the newer people, usually don't engage older believers at meetings without knowing others are cared for first.

4. Prayer

We cannot do our role in follow-up without dependence on God. And dependence is impossible without prayer. Consider these passages:

Eph 1:16-19 do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; {17} that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. {18} I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, {19} and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

Col. 1:9-12 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, 10 so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously 12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

Eph 3:14-21 For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16 that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18 may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God. 20 Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, 21 to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

John White – Daring to Draw Near → Chapter: *Paul: praying for other Christians*

Some practical things to pray about:

- *Pray for discernment/ wisdom on where to go.*
- *Pray for protection of the person you are following-up.*
- *Pray for vision on how a person can be used by God.*

- *Pray for God's heart of love for the person* (especially needed in the non-affinity relationships).

In our corporate prayer, praying by name for those we are witnessing to and following-up helps others take on these burdens as well. Prayer is the foundation; only with it can we succeed in follow-up. The Lord gives us love and compassion for people when we pray.

The last two principles address what God will do in our character (if we cooperate with Him) as we attempt to serve in this ministry of follow-up.

5. Sacrifice

Loving others in the ministry of follow-up is part of laying our life down for God. Our sacrifices in this ministry will speak volumes about Christ's to the non-Christian or younger believer. In what areas will we need to sacrifice?

Time

It takes setting aside time in your schedule

Going to lunches, having people over to your house etc.

Reading, understanding the culture, what a person is into.

Doing activities that you aren't typically interested in (EG. You may not like art, but the person enjoys going to the Gallery Hop).

Money

Doing follow-up might mean spending your money to reach people for Christ! (parties, hosting people, going out for a beer) Luke 16:9

The challenge will be to lean against your materialistic tendencies, whether you like to hoard your money and hate to part with it, or like spending it on your own comforts and pursuits.

Thought Life

Col. 1:28,29 – to have this kind of impact on someone, we cannot only be flying by the seat of our pants. Requires thinking about the other person, Where do I go from here?, What are they struggling with?, What's the next step? What is God prioritizing in their life at this time?

Heb. 10:24

Phil. 1:9-11

6. Consistency (in prayer and sacrifice)

2 Timothy 2:6 is the picture of the hardworking farmer. The hard-working farmer ought to be the first to receive his share of the crops. It's a lifestyle.

Don't give up once you get someone to a meeting or when they get saved. Follow-up after teachings, other events. Too many Christians feel like "the job is done" when someone shows up to a meeting; time to move on, look for someone else to reach out to, etc. Considering our own experience in what it took to come to Christ and now the process of growing in him, we should know that this personal investment will need to continue.

I can tell you, as a leader, there is little more satisfying than looking at a younger believer in the group who has learned to be faithful to the Lord in this key ministry – this is solid gold.

Them working day in and day out so that he can reap the harvest; being consistent in prayer, time together with the person, and thought life.

We need to persevere. It could take 6 months to 1 year before someone makes a decision for Christ. It becomes more difficult as we get older and not one ounce less fulfilling.

We should anticipate opposition. The Evil One isn't dumb. You may see your boss asking for more time, projects, dangling more money if you just sacrifice for the business, instead of Christ. Temptation to sin in besetting areas particularly may go on the upswing. Be in prayer for protection for yourself as well as the person you are reaching.

We see the paradox of ministry as a means of our growth here: The very things they need from us to get incorporated into the Body of Christ – our sacrificial investment – is the very thing WE need to grow in the Lord (Jn. 13:17).

Now let's shift our focus to landmarks or goals we are trying to accomplish with the non or young believer. They are signs of progress in follow-up.

Practical Goals of Follow-up

We need to be intentional, but spiritually intentional. What is the Holy Spirit's plan for this person?

Having vision for where this person can be as they walk with God is essential. Prayerfully think through how God views them, how he may have gifted them, how they might be uniquely used by God in outreach and discipleship. In order to motivate someone, you must first try to "see this person through God's eyes" how this person will "look" as they mature (consider possible gifting, personality, etc.)

Planning is therefore necessary, but prayerful planning. We need to strategize like Paul In 1 Cor 9:26 he says, "Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air;" We must have a purpose and goal in our contact.

Knowing and acting on the Holy Spirit's plan for the person will include getting counsel from other Christian workers. Enlisting others' workers wisdom is key.

The following goals are in a general sequential order that we most commonly encourage. However, it is not rigid since we are looking to the Holy Spirit's plan, not ours.

- **Regular attendance at meetings.** This should be our first.

Even if a first-timer seems especially enthusiastic and might be willing to receive Christ or join cell group, they should probably just be encouraged to come back to home group. It is *usually* better to not call for more than this goal (consider the decision continuum).

Social involvement should be helpful especially after they have attended a meeting.

- **Once they are saved, encourage their involvement in the means of growth.**
- **Help people anticipate and counter dissonance. (Acts 14:22 – encouraging by warning)** You may need to guide them through the time of dissonance over whatever decisions they have made (for Christ, involvement in home group, cell etc.).

Warn them trials will come – EG. doubts when the buzz goes away, people giving them flak, they feel the lifestyle change and "miss" the old way.

Urge them to speak up when they begin to run into trials or doubts.

Need to get in there personally and understand and sympathize.

Teach them the Biblical perspective on responding to trials.

After they have gone through some dissonance we can assume a higher level of commitment.

- Once they are saved, **encourage their investment into others.**

Encourage them to speak up in meetings – encourage them when they do.

Help them to reach out to their friends.

Help people break the barrier of praying with someone else. Start one-on-one perhaps when getting together with them.

The sooner we can help them to break all three of these “sharing barriers” the better it will be for their walk.

- Once a Christian, **cultivate interest in cell group.**

Help them understand how God works in peoples’ lives through this group.

Unless your cells are for outreach, let them know it is for those committed to the home group meeting. Check out before committing.

Keep your eye on the “Big Picture”

The direction they are headed is a lot more important than how far they are. Probably 2 steps forward 1 step back. Focus on helping the person see how God can use them if they work through this issue.

We can’t invert Galatians 5:16.

Enlist the perspective of your other Christian worker friends. We can lose objectivity when we are so close to the situation.

Conclusion

In Xenos Christian Fellowship, we are trying to build an army of Christian workers (Eph. 4:11,12).

This ministry of follow-up is crucial to the Lord’s work and the qualities of this ministry are prized by the Lord – do we?

Memory Verse

1 Thessalonians 2:7-12** - 3 key components of follow-up

Assignment

1. Read Master Plan of Evangelism Chap 6 & 7 (“Delegation” & “Supervision”) and write a paragraph summary of content and a paragraph of personal application.
2. Write a one-page summary describing your present efforts in following someone up or someone’s past efforts toward you. What is the most difficult part of follow-up for you and what steps can you take to overcome this difficulty?

Key Points to Know for Exam

1. Know the definition of follow-up.
2. Know the 6 principles of effective follow-up.