

Followup Evangelism

By Richard C. Hobbs



**Laborers in the Harvest Series
Church Ministry**

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Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Arthur Blessitt, the man who carried the cross around the world and to every nation, for spending so many hours of his time to share his heart with me. The burden that Arthur has for this world and the love he has for all the people has touched my heart in such a way that I will never be the same. Arthur has taken time to be a friend and a motivating force in my life.

Most of all, the Holy Spirit has quickened my heart and has given me love for all people. I love people and enjoy the opportunity to share the gospel. Also, the Holy Spirit has opened the doors for our ministry to train laborers in the harvest all over the world. For the love, favor, and mercy the Lord has given me, I give Him my life to train laborers in the harvest and share the gospel to the lost.

I am thankful for the many intercessors that pray for our ministry daily. They have spent many long hours and many tears praying for us in the streets and for the lost. Only God knows what their cries and prayers have accomplished.

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me with the many tasks that needed to be completed. My family has shared the call the Lord has on my life and has been part of this ministry since its beginning.

Introduction

Following up on the lives that God has entrusted to us is more than a process but must be part of our very nature in Him. Our Lord seeks to continue His work in a life and He is looking for someone that would help Him with this ministry. He sees more than a person when He looks into this world, but He sees His creation that may never know Him without your laborers.

It is my prayer that you will volunteer through your local church to follow-up on lives that have received Christ and others that have attended church for the very first time.

Chapter One

Why Must We Followup?

Each week people are waiting in expectation for someone to show a genuine interest in them through friendship and concern. People will visit a church and be met by greeters in the lobby, welcomed by the pastor, and meet several who reach out to greet them in the sanctuary; however, time has not occurred to establish friendships. Many times the visitors wait in expectation all week to see if they will receive a visit by someone from the church, a call, or even just a card from the pastor.

Everyone needs friendship and Christian fellowship. Our role is to be an extension of the congregation and take their care outside the walls of the church into someone's home. Visitation helps the church to complete the cycle of concern for visitors.

Acts 14

19 *And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.*

20 *Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe.*

21 *And when they had preached the gospel to that*

city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

22 *Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

Paul had such an overwhelming compassion for the souls that he had ministered to in Lystra that he returned although he had been stoned there. He placed so much value on the souls of believers that he was compelled to follow up on them. Each of us has had someone who showed concern for us. Visitors will need the same care.

Matthew 9

36 *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

The very heart of Christ is filled with compassion for those that need help along the journey. This same heart is in every believer who has invited Him to be their Lord and Saviour. We must allow this compassion to flow through us and yield our whole vessel to Him. Christ is searching for access into this world and seeking every opportunity to help others.

I remember one day when I was going door to door with a church we were training in Sallisaw,

Oklahoma. We knocked on the door of an elderly couple's home and a gentleman greeted us at the door and asked us to come in. He said, "What took you so long to visit? My wife and I heard you were visiting every house in the city and knew you would come soon." I was humbled by their hearts and pleased to lead both to Christ. Somehow their hearts were already prepared in advance of our visit. Several years later, we visited the same church and the couple was still faithfully attending. I will always remember this couple and hope this same expectation for someone to visit will be at the next door we come to. When the visitor returns to church again and again the visitation cycle is complete and discipleship can begin.

When I look for an example in ministry I often look to Christ. He showed us on many occasions in the Bible that He visited people in their homes. He said to the tax collector, "*Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.*" The work that began in the heart of Zacchaeus had placed him in a position to see Christ even from a tree. Knowing that the work must be completed in his life, Christ took time to visit his house, expounded on the Scriptures and placed more of His life in Zacchaeus. What an example we have in these Scriptures where Jesus said, "*I must abide at thy house.*"

While in Judaea the Scriptures record, "*He must needs go through Samaria.*" You see, there was a

lady that had a work started in her heart. She knew that the Messiah would come someday. He walked a several days journey to sow the Words of living water into her heart, and she met the Messiah. His work had been completed and she was changed along with many in her city as she shared her heart with them.

We must followup on souls that know Him but need to learn more of Him and complete the cycle of discipleship. Through followup visitation we can move a heart from awareness to fellowship in the Body of Christ. One word, one smile, or one visit may bridge the gap helping them to find a congregation where they feel welcome and become disciples. A church that cares with their heart and their actions demonstrates their love through the One who first loved them. Our Lord Jesus!

I remember one Sunday morning when I was teaching an adult Sunday School class. I was sharing about the need for our church to be evangelistic and make people feel welcome. I said, "I don't care if someone comes in with a Mohawk haircut. You need to welcome them." I told them that so many times I meet young people in the streets that are not interested in attending church any longer because they were judged by someone regarding their dress or length of hair.

I did not realize until the sanctuary doors opened that morning that my words were prophetic and

challenging. In came a young man with a Mohawk haircut and before he could find a seat he was hugged, welcomed, and found many people that cared for him. I was so proud of the people for their effort to reach out to someone regardless of how they looked. This young man continued attending the church for many years and became part of the congregation. By his own decision the Mohawk went away one day but I am not sure anyone really noticed. Let these simple words be a challenge to you and seek to look at the heart and not the appearance. I believe God loved this young man so much that He prepared the congregation to receive him. God hopes that you would do the same for all.

The followup process begins when visitors arrive at the door of the church, walk past the greeters, and into the sanctuary. The church staff must obtain visitor names and contact information to allow the opportunity for teams to visit them. When someone responds to the message of salvation we have an even greater obligation to spend quality time with them to expound on the Scriptures and give them additional information.

There are times in everyone's life that their heart will begin to search the things of God. They will come to church searching for something to fulfill the need for Christian fellowship. Others may be convicted of the need to be back in church. It is at times like these that we need to help them find a church home and place for Christian growth and

fellowship.

An Ethiopian Eunuch was traveling from Jerusalem to Ethiopia and Philip found him reading the Scriptures. The Eunuch was in need of help to understand the Scripture references that testified of Christ. This visit by Philip brought the Eunuch understanding, salvation, and follow through in water baptism. We must ask ourselves what would have been the fate of this man had Philip not taken time to be obedient to the Holy Spirit and follow through to visit with the Eunuch.

Acts 8

27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,

28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.

29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.

30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?

31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.

32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:

33 *In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.*

34 *And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?*

35 *Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.*

36 *And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?*

37 *And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.*

There is an interesting reference recorded in the Book of John where Jesus took time to followup on someone that He had ministered to. He had opened the eyes of a young man who had been blind since birth. The Pharisees sought after this young man to criticize him and his parents. They refused to accept the miracle that he had received and cast him away from them. When Jesus heard about this, He came back to this young man to open his spiritual eyes. Jesus revealed Himself to him and the young man accepted Him as his Lord. While this young man had met Christ, felt His touch, and heard His voice, he had not known who He truly was. This second visit from Christ gave him a destiny with Him when he met eternity. What an example that Christ has shown us as He returned to help this young man find the kingdom of God through faith in Christ.

John 9

34 *They answered and said unto him, Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us? And they cast him out.*

35 *Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God?*

36 *He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?*

37 *And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee.*

38 *And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him.*

There are many more examples in the Bible where followup was essential to the life of a soul. We must search our own heart to ask ourselves and our Lord what is our responsibility in helping others to find Him and follow Him.

Acts 5

42 *And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*

One evening, a pastor called me to go with him to a home to visit a man who was dying of cancer. On the way to the home I was told that he had denied God his whole life and will not accept Christ. As we entered the home I was so sad to see a home with an interior wrapped with cardboard to keep the home warm. He was laying in a bed and gasping for air and you could see the look on his face that death had

nearly taken him.

I opened my Bible and shared from the Book of Romans as the Holy Spirit led. He said, "Now, I believe," as I read from a verse in Romans 10:8. The Scripture says, "*But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;*" These words exploded in the heart of this man and immediately produced faith for salvation. Interestingly, the next two scriptures expounded on how to become saved. How beautiful to see this man so happily pray and find Christ as His Lord! He held my hand for awhile as tears came forth. He was ready to be received by His Saviour.

Again, each of us must ask what would have been the fate of this man had we not gone to visit him in his home. A few days later, I learned that he had passed away. I thought about the cold house and cardboard walls that surrounded him as he died. I was so sad to think that he died in total poverty and yet glad to know that our Lord promised him a place in heaven.

James 1

27 Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Accept the challenge to visit and followup on others!

Chapter Two

Principles of Followup Evangelism

During visitation there are several key concepts that should occur that can increase the effectiveness of your visit. While concepts are important, we must trust upon the Holy Spirit and allow the compassion we feel for others to genuinely be felt. All of us have met someone that we could immediately sense was annoyed, distracted, or simply had no interest in having a conversation with us. So often it is not the words that we say but other things that determine if someone trusts us or feels friendship. Our expressions, interest, and tone of voice can determine if words are even heard.

Listening

A key concept is to listen. How we listen is valued more than what we say by the person we are visiting. Let the conversation just begin spontaneously during the visitation and allow the person to discuss what is important to them. As we listen and show interest, we are saying without words, "I care about you and you are important." Even families don't take time to listen as family members try to express themselves. When others speak we can listen with our heart for areas of spiritual need and ways we can share a few simple words that would remain with them. Being distracted or looking away often is

simply communicating that they are not listening. Don't just listen but stay tuned in and look at the person you are speaking to.

Early one Saturday morning, I was in a public park and saw a man going through the trash barrels in search of aluminum cans. He was not interested in what I had to say and said that many had tried to lead him to Christ. So I just talked to him as a friend and he told me about his family and where he lived. We talked for awhile and mostly he led the conversation. After awhile, he said, "You're different." All I was doing was listening. I finally did have an opportunity to share the gospel with him and he came to Christ. Also, I found a friend that day. This was an important lesson as I saw the value in listening.

Take the time to listen during visitation and you will be more effective in your ministry.

Remember You Are a Guest

When visiting someone's home you are a guest. They may think that you will probe into their church life and are only interested if they will return to your church. They may be embarrassed by what is on their television or what is in their home. You must not ask them to turn off the television and do not look at things that you disagree with or judge them. Our goal is to see a changed heart and not to tell someone how they are to live. Over time, God will cause the person to bring change into their home and

their desires. So many times, I have met people who have been asked to leave churches they just started attending because they were living with each other and not married. How are they to change unless they have time to hear the Word and repent as God deals with their heart? The streets are full of people that I have met who have been condemned by pastors and church members. We must minister to the heart of the person and they will respond as long as they accept your friendship and fellowship of the church. I have seen changes in hearts greater than any expectation that I had for them.

The goal is to make the visit brief and the people feel comfortable while developing friendships in hopes they will return to church or find Christ fullness during your visit.

Value the Person

Take time to talk about the things they enjoy and through this show that you value them. What is important to others is themselves. Yes, we all want to be liked and accepted just as we are. All of us are more comfortable with conversations we understand and can participate in. Don't have a religious visit about doctrine or complex interpretations of scriptures. Keep the conversation simple and allow them to help lead you while you share with them in the midst of your visit.

Preparation

Be sure to use visitor cards so they can select if they want someone to followup with a phone call or a visit to their home. If they chose to have a visitor to their home then seek to call ahead to ensure the person is ready for your visit. People appreciate the opportunity to have options and to schedule the visit with you.

Be sure to wear appropriate dress for your visit. Business casual would be appropriate dress for home visitation. I would not recommend wearing suits or other formal dress to ensure people feel comfortable with your visit.

Take something to give them. Some churches give out cookies or other complimentary gifts while others give away information on their church or music. I love to take items to give children. If you can win the child's heart over with a toy, you have an opportunity to win the mother's heart over to Christ. Be prepared to close with a prayer and ask if they have any specific requests. I use this opportunity to lead the family to Christ.

Chapter Three

Everyone Can Participate in Friendship Evangelism

Everyone can evangelize through the most effective process available today termed friendship evangelism or lifestyle evangelism. Over ninety percent of the church congregations today have been established through friendship evangelism. Let your heart be known to others through your friendship and love.

Philippians 4

5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

NKJV

The Opportunity

In 1988, a Gallup survey of over 2,000 unchurched Americans revealed that the unchurched is receptive to what most churches have to offer yet they do not attend due to inconvenience. Over seventy percent pray to God and sixty-three percent believe the Bible is the word of God. Astoundingly, over fifty percent see themselves as becoming active in a church and are open to an invitation. What an opportunity we have in our communities to reach people for Christ.

Principles

Friendship evangelism can occur in the midst of the congregation when people reach out and make every visitor that attends welcomed. As people come from the community they feel a sense of welcome and remain as a vital member of the congregation. Many find their way to the church through inviting their friends and people they meet or know. This is a vital component of friendship evangelism. All of us have a circle of influence with family, friends, and others we meet. Let your life be a witness and make friends with all you meet remembering that your actions testify to our Lord Jesus Christ and those around us. A simple church invitation can lead to a whole family accepting Christ as their Lord and becoming disciplined through regular church attendance.

Philip was a new convert in Christ and told Nathaniel of the Scriptures that testify of Christ and introduced Philip to Christ.

John 1

45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

46 And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

We should have the same zeal that Philip had and introduce our friends to Christ and invite them to worship with us in church.

It is my prayer that God will use you to followup on the lives of others. You are not alone when you minister as the Holy Spirit will be with you as promised in God's written Word. May God bless you in all that you do for Him.

Richard C. Hobbs M.Div., is founder of Mercy Street Ministries, a ministry devoted to training laborers in the harvest and church ministry. He has spent thousands of hours training churches to share Christ in all situations. He hopes that this book will help others to bring comfort and assurance to those in need.

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