

## LESSON 11

### HELPING NEW CHRISTIANS TO GROW

Most of this study guide has been devoted to training Christians to become disciples. The Great Commission is only partially fulfilled when Christians share their faith and the lost are converted. Jesus commissioned His followers to teach new disciples to observe all things He had commanded.

The Apostle Paul expressed his concern for one area of his work in the words, "We warn everyone, we meet, and we teach everyone we can all that we know about Him, so that, if possible, we may bring every man up to his full maturity in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28b, Phillips). Paul continued in his letter to the Colossians to express the desire that "you will have the rich experience of knowing Christ with real certainty and clear understanding" (Col. 2:2b, LNT). Paul did not expect the spiritual development of the Colossians to be easy. He stated that he struggled in prayer for them and laboured for them, "striving with all of the energy which he mightily inspires within me" (Col. 1:29b, RSV). Paul spent more time helping Christians to mature than in winning the lost.

Helping new Christians to grow takes great effort. Churches have used most of their evangelistic efforts to train Christians how to witness. Little attention has been given to training Christians how to follow up professions of faith and to guide the new converts in spiritual growth. Two questions regarding follow-up are: How can the results of our evangelistic work be conserved, and are we willing to put forth the effort required for thorough follow-up with new members? Many people who make decisions for Christ are not enlisted in His service to help win the world. The Christian Church continues to struggle for survival while a great potential of manpower needed for success remains unenlisted and untrained. The task of evangelism is not completed until the new converts become informed and involved as witnesses.

Children would never grow into mature persons without training. Much of the time of parents and teachers is devoted to helping the child to develop into full maturity and to become a useful citizen of his nation. Such attention is as important for new Christians as for babies. There is no effortless way to spiritual maturity and Christ-likeness.

Most of the letters of the New Testament were written to help those who were new in faith or had not matured as Christians. The Apostle Paul spoke of the pastor-teacher as having the responsibility of fully equipping the saints for the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11ff.). The modern Sunday School classes and sermons do not give sufficient instruction for the development of new Christians. As a result, most Christians neglect to pray, to read the Bible, to worship regularly, to become involved in stewardship and missions, and to witness.

Parental care must be given to the new converts. They have spiritual needs which they do not know how to meet themselves. The person who wins another to Christ has the responsibility of a parent to the new Christian (1 Cor. 4:15). Some new believers, who have been neglected and left as orphans, need "foster parents" to guide them in their spiritual growth.

The Great Commission of Christ commands His followers to \_\_\_\_\_ their \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the new believers.

(share, faith, teach)

New Christians need guidance for spiritual \_\_\_\_\_.

(growth)

New converts should be trained to become involved as \_\_\_\_\_.

(witnesses)

Most of the New Testament letters were written to teach and train new \_\_\_\_\_ or those who had not \_\_\_\_\_ as Christians.

(converts, grown)

Read Ephesians 4:11.  
The responsibility for teaching and training is ultimately upon the \_\_\_\_\_.

(pastor)

## Areas Needing Follow-up

Waylon B. Moore uses the analogy of the responsibility of parents for children in describing the nurturing of new Christians.<sup>1</sup> He suggests that parents are responsible for loving, feeding, protecting, and training their children until they reach maturity. The church becomes the spiritual parent of new Christians and is responsible for providing for the needs of new Christians.

*Love.*—Love is a concern for the welfare of the person in need. It is more than a feeling. Love is not complete as an attitude of concern; it must be expressed in action. God's love for us was expressed in actions suitable for meeting our most urgent needs. Our need was redemption which could be provided only by the death of Christ on the cross. In meeting that need, God gave his Son as a sacrifice.

The new Christian has entered into a relationship with God in response to God's love which is offered as God's gift to sinful man. Every person needs to know that someone is interested in him and cares about him. The lost person burdened with guilt responds in repentance and faith to God's offer of forgiveness and love. Since God is invisible, his love must be manifested through the church. The new Christian is a stranger to the group of believers and needs to feel wanted and accepted. Concern for others expressed in action is the way God's love is manifested in the world. The church must express that love to new believers. Frequently, Christians who have already established themselves in a church may be insensitive to the insecure feelings of new converts. If new Christians conclude that they are not wanted in the church fellowship, the normal reaction is similar to that of children who feel unwanted by their parents. Healthy spiritual development is impossible apart from love.

*Spiritual food.*—Jesus instructed Peter to feed His sheep and His lambs. Spiritual food consists of the Word of God which is explained by the pastor-teacher who is guided by the Spirit of truth. According to Hebrews 5:15, a milk diet is proper for newly born Christians. Apparently, that diet consists of the following basic biblical teachings (Heb. 6:1f.):

- The foundation of repentance
- The impossibility of being saved by good works
- The need of faith in God
- The meaning of baptism and spiritual gifts
- The hope of resurrection from the grave
- The nature of eternal judgement

Three further teachings may be added to those found in Hebrews:

- The meaning of the Lord's supper
- The importance of stewardship
- The nature and importance of the church

The doctrines of salvation are usually presented before a person is converted, but he needs further instruction after conversion to give him assurance and to enable him to become a witness.

New Christians need to be taught how to read the Bible and how to trust God's promises. Bible study requires hard work; therefore, new believers need constant encouragement and

Love is an attitude of concern expressed in \_\_\_\_\_.

(action)

Healthy spiritual development is impossible without \_\_\_\_\_.

(love)

Basic biblical teachings for a new Christian are found in \_\_\_\_\_.

They are: 1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Three teachings for new Christians in addition to those in Hebrews are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

<sup>1</sup> *New Testament Follow-Up* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Company, 1963), pp. 24-26.

guidance. Prayer is a spiritual exercise which is often neglected. When a Christian fails to speak daily with his heavenly Father, he likely becomes cold and indifferent concerning spiritual matters.

*Spiritual protection.*—As a mature Christian, Paul expressed concern that he might become a castaway (1 Cor. 9:27). Peter warned that the faith of Christians would be tried. He said, “Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8, RSV). Moore points out that sex, security, and success are the major areas of temptation in which Satan attempts to ensnare the believer.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps these are vulnerable areas of temptation because of the attitudes of pride and selfishness. John warned believers that Satan attempts to ensnare them through “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16).

Temptation can only be withstood by faith which is the means whereby God’s grace and power become accessible. The Christian is not prepared to stand until he understands the fullness of salvation which has been provided through Jesus Christ. He must learn the promises of God concerning victory over temptation, and he must learn how to walk daily in the power of the Spirit if he is to gain victory over sin.

*Spiritual training.*—Parents are not only responsible for providing food and clothing for their children, but they are also responsible for training their children for adulthood. When the child is no longer under the supervision of the parents, he must make his own decisions concerning his life. A new Christian needs to learn principles that will enable him to make correct decisions concerning every area of life. His life is no longer oriented to the material but to Christ and the will of God. His family, social, economic, and political life are all affected by basic Christian principles.

A new Christian needs to be trained to share his faith. Christ stated that we did not choose Him, but He chose us to bear fruit (John 15:16). The Christian life can never reach maturity apart from witnessing. Most Christians do not witness because they have never been trained for this service. This neglect robs them of many spiritual joys. In a recent school of evangelism, five new Christians shared their faith and saw people come to Christ. This experience brought a new depth and richness to their Christian life. This story is repeated every time new Christians are guided to share their faith in Christ.

Christians also need to be trained in other areas. They need to learn how to use their Bibles, how to pray, how to find God’s will, how to apply Christianity to their family and business lives, and how to live in the presence of Christ.

The training of the new Christian cannot be accomplished in a few days. Parents have a child approximately sixteen years for training. Although the spiritual life should mature more rapidly than the physical, disaster results if training is stopped before maturity is reached. Mature Christians are able to win others to Christ and help them grow in the knowledge of the Bible. Their family, social, economic, and political relations are controlled by Christ and are expressed in love.

### Opportunities for Spiritual Nourishment

When a person is introduced to Christ as Saviour, he needs immediately to begin studying the Bible. He is not likely to get

A new Christian loses his spiritual fervour when he neglects \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

(Bible reading, prayer)

1 Peter 5:8 warns that a Christian’s faith will be tried often by his adversary, the \_\_\_\_\_.

(devil)

A Christian can overcome temptation when he learns to walk daily in the power of the \_\_\_\_\_.

(Spirit)

A Christian cannot ever reach spiritual maturity without \_\_\_\_\_.

(witnessing)

Areas in which Christians need training are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ study
2. P \_\_\_\_\_
3. Finding \_\_\_\_\_
4. Applying Christianity to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ lives.

(Bible, Prayer, God’s will, family, business)

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

much from his Bible reading unless he has some guidance. To most people, the Bible is a strange book, written in a language difficult to understand and to a people of a different culture of another age. The new Christian should be encouraged in his study of the Bible to use a modern translation of the New Testament which is easier to understand than the King James Version.

Within 24 to 48 hours after making profession of faith, the new believer should be visited and encouraged to become involved in a Bible study group. This group may be scheduled to meet in homes or at the church building once each week.

#### A class for new Christians and inquirers

An evangelistic church should keep a class in progress for new Christians and for those who are interested in the teachings of the church. The class needs to meet at least an hour each week at a time most convenient for those interested in attending. Either the pastor or a trained layman should be faithful in leading the class.

A small enrollment in the class is desirable. If a large number of people are interested in study at the same time, perhaps another qualified teacher could be enlisted for a second class. As the teacher and students meet, the teacher might begin by asking, "How have things been going this week?" The class should be small and informal enough for each member to feel a personal relation to the teacher and to feel free to share his needs. The teacher might share with the small group how God has worked in his life and in the lives of other Christians. This will help new Christians to see how faith in Christ relates to every day living.

The approach in teaching should be to encourage participation rather than formal lectures. After a Scripture is read, those present should be encouraged to express what they think it means. The skilled teacher will be able to guide the discussion to the selected goals without completely dominating the conversation. Students learn more when they are involved. The teacher who uses only the lecture approach may be talking "above the heads" of the class, or he may be presenting material which fails to interest and meet the needs of those present.

The subjects which need to be covered in the new Christian study group are:

1. *Assurance of salvation.* An understanding of repentance and salvation by faith instead of by good works.
2. *How to live the Christian life.* Some helpful Christian growth booklets in the WIN series are: *Jesus Is Lord, The Devotional Life, The Witness Within You, The New Community, The Witnessing Life,* and *The Romance of Christian Living.* Also helpful is the pamphlet "Have You Made the Wonderful Discovery of the Spirit-filled Life?"<sup>3</sup>
3. *The nature and purpose of the church.* The church is a fellowship of believers who meet together in common worship to express gratitude to God, to seek His will, and to encourage mutually one another through prayer and sharing.
4. *The meaning of the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper.* Symbols which depict the basic doctrines of the Christian faith.

<sup>3</sup> The WIN materials were published by Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, TN.

A new believer should be \_\_\_\_\_ ,  
provided a \_\_\_\_\_ translation of the New  
Testament, encouraged to become involved in a  
\_\_\_\_\_ group.

(visited, modern, Bible study)

Underline the ideal characteristics of a new  
Christians' class.

large, small  
formal teaching, sharing time  
lecture session, group participation

(Underline *small, sharing time, group participation*)

List several subjects which should be studied in a new  
Christians' class.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

5. *How to pray.* A study of the promises of prayer and the conditions for the answering of prayer.
6. *How to read the Bible.* Where to begin in a study of the Bible and how to read it devotionally.
7. *Christian stewardship.* The importance of the Christian's influence and his responsibility in carrying on the work of the Kingdom.
8. *The Lordship of Christ.* The study of this subject may be postponed until the new Christian is guided to the study of the book of John.

The new Christian should be ready for baptism after the study of the Scriptures on the nature of the church and the meaning of baptism. He should be encouraged to enter the membership of the church and to worship and serve Christ through the church.

### Home study groups

Sometimes there is value in having Bible study groups meeting in the informal setting of a home. Christians can learn much about the Bible by studying together, and lost neighbours can often be reached for Christ. Although meeting in home has not been widely practised in recent centuries, this was the common practice in New testament times. Some people who do not attend church services will respond favourable to an invitation to join their neighbours in a home fellowship and Bible study.

Even trained leaders need prepared material for guiding home study groups. Bible study leaflets placed in the hands of the students increase the effectiveness of the study. The study can follow either the topical plan, following the subjects outlined for classes for new Christians, or a book of the Bible. A study of the Gospel of Mark or John, emphasizing the basic principles of the Christian life, would be helpful. The leader may focus attention upon a passage of Scripture and invite those present to tell what they think it means. The Bible interpretation books in this series on *Ministerial Training by Guided Study* could be used by the leader in preparing for the study.

A church leader may invite neighbours to come to his home on a particular night during the week to study the Bible. Non-Christians as well as Christians may be invited. When the invitation is given, a definite limit to the number of nights for the study should be indicated. The group can decide later to continue the study if interest and progress are good. If lost people attend the Bible study group, a booklet on salvation may be distributed in connexion with studying the meaning of repentance and faith. After the booklet has been read, those present may be invited to bow their heads and ask Christ to come into their lives. Suggest that those who make decisions remain after the meeting is dismissed for further counsel.

Those who are interested in the home study groups should be encouraged to become involved in the church programme. Home study groups should not compete with nor attempt to replace the Bible study of the church, but they may serve to reach people who are hesitant to attend church. Once the participants become acquainted with some of the members and gain some knowledge about the Bible, perhaps their timidity will no longer prevent their participation in a church.

### Individual study in the home

The one who wins a lost person to Christ is responsible for getting him started in the study of the Bible. If no class for new Christians or home study group is in progress at the time of his decision, the witness must give personal guidance and encouragement to the new Christian. He should visit him within 48 hours of

Christians can learn much from the Bible in \_\_\_\_\_.

Home study groups provide a good way to reach lost \_\_\_\_\_.

(home study groups ; neighbours)

In beginning a home Bible study, both \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ may be invited.

(non-Christians, Christians)

True or False  
 \_\_\_\_\_ A Christian witness is responsible for getting a person he wins to Christ started in Bible study.

(True)

his decision and take him a copy of the New Testament in modern English. After visiting for a few minutes, the discussion should be directed towards his faith.

Perhaps the question could be used, "How are things going?" Give the new convert opportunity to express his feelings, especially the joy of his experience in Christ. Invite him to ask any questions or express any doubts or temptation which may be bothering him. Plan the first session to centre on the assurance of salvation. The Scriptures used in witnessing may be reviewed, pointing out the fact that God has provided for our salvation as a gift and we must receive it by faith, not by works. Emphasize that faith is trusting the promises of God who cannot lie. Explain the adequacy of salvation in Christ Jesus by making reference to 1 John 2:1f., and Hebrews 7:25. Christ is presently at the right hand of the Father making intercession for those who belong to Him.

At the conclusion of the first visit with the new convert, leave a study leaflet and instruct him to use his Bible to answer the questions. Set a time within a week when you can meet with him again. Join with him in prayer and pledge to pray for him daily; ask him to pray for you. Invite him to go visiting with you as you share your faith with someone else or a friend whom he would like to see receive Jesus Christ as Saviour. Allow the new Christian to tell what happened to his life; one of the greatest joys of a new Christian is helping someone else to be saved.

#### Personal Involvement Follow-Up

Materials, techniques, and Bible study classes can be profitably used in helping new Christians, but they will not adequately replace personal contact. Personal visits by the witness to the home of the convert will perhaps be the most significant element in his growth. Jesus recognized the value of taking His disciples with Him when He ministered to people. He chose the Twelve to accompany Him for two reasons: to have companions for fellowship and to have disciples to train for ministering. Both contributed to their spiritual growth. No activity will be more meaningful for the new Christian than to accompany the witness on a soul-winning visit.

From association with mature Christians, new Christians will learn to make Jesus the Lord of all of life. This truth is better learnt from observing the life of a dedicated servant of the Lord than from study in a class. The observation of Jesus in daily submission to His heavenly Father made a lasting impression upon the lives of the disciples.

#### Training Laymen for Follow-Up

Since thorough follow-up takes much time with each individual, it is impossible for the pastor to do all of it. The task can only be accomplished if the pastor spends his time in *training* lay ministers who will in turn train others.

Only mature Christians are qualified to help new Christians grow to maturity, for they know how to study their Bibles and how to handle problems in connexion with the Word of God. A mature Christian prays consistently and effectively, practises walking daily in the Spirit, and witnesses. The last three activities have been discussed extensively in this study guide.

The pastor should work several months with a few laymen, not more than six at a time, until they are qualified as mature leaders. They will be able then to guide others to Christian maturity. Soon several will be trained to work with new Christians in spiritual growth.

One of the greatest joys of a new Christian is helping someone else be \_\_\_\_\_.

(saved)

Jesus invited His disciples to accompany Him in order to have \_\_\_\_\_ and train them for \_\_\_\_\_.

(fellowship, ministering)

Training in witnessing and follow-up can be accomplished only if the \_\_\_\_\_ trains \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ who in turn will train others.

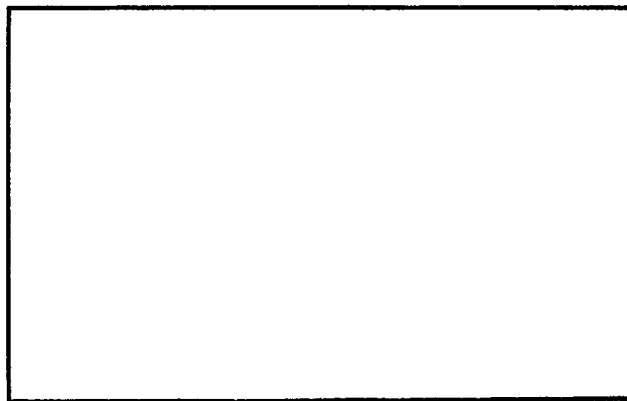
(Compare your answer with the text.)

A mature Christian knows how to do the following five things:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

(Compare your answer with the text.)

Teaching the Bible with reference to the above areas is important, but success in helping Christians mature usually is limited because of the failure to involve them in the various areas of service and study. Training in prayer could be done by the pastor inviting laymen to join him in intercessory prayer for church members and for the unsaved. Would not laymen also learn by joining the pastor in visits with the sick, bereaved, and those with problems? By sharing his life and ministry with a layman, the pastor trains a disciple or minister who passes on what he has learnt. In addition, the life and ministry of the pastor are strengthened and multiplied as a result of mutual sharing with laymen.



### Home Study Exercise

**Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3).** After reading the comments in the study guide, do the following exercise.

1. Name two requirements set forth in the Great Commission for Christians. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the relation of follow-up to winning the world to Christ? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. To what is the major part of the New Testament epistles devoted? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. According to Paul, what is the primary work of the pastor? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What is love, and why is it important to new Christians? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. List nine doctrines the new Christian needs to understand. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. What vital doctrines are seldom shared with new Christians? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Give two reasons for the need of spiritual protection. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. List four important areas in which Christians need training. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. What should a witness do for a person who has professed faith in Christ? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
11. Give three principles for a new Christians' class. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
12. What subjects should be studied in a new Christians' class? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
13. Give two purposes of a home study group. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
14. How can a home Bible study be started? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
15. How does individual home study differ from group study? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
16. Give two reasons Jesus invited the Twelve to be with Him. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
17. Give five things a mature Christian knows how to do. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Suggested supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3).** Read pages 30-69 in Waylon Moore, *New Testament Follow-Up*, and answer the following.

1. What are the four avenues of New Testament follow-up?
2. What are five facets of a pastor's ministry to others?
3. What characteristics should a pastor look for in the laymen he chooses to train?
4. Name the five steps in a practical teaching ministry for laymen.
5. List the five essentials of multiplication.

**Alternate supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3).** If Waylon Moore's book is not available, read pages 146–168 in James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*. Make a summary or brief outline of what you read, and be prepared to share the significant points in the seminar.

### **Seminar Discussion**

1. What is the relation between training new Christians and winning the world?
2. What are the areas in which new Christians need attention in follow-up?
3. List the doctrines (in order of priority) which should be taught to new Christians.
4. Would the Sunday School, a home study group, or a new Christian's class be most effective in your area for meeting the needs of new believers?
5. Why do churches not have effective follow-up programmes?
6. Which of the four avenues or methods of follow-up recommended in Waylon Moore's *New Testament Follow-Up* would be the most effective in your church?