

Successful Evangelistic Follow Up: Overview

“After individuals have been converted to the truth, they need to be looked after These **newly converted ones need nursing,--watchful attention, help, and encouragement. These should not be left alone,** a prey to Satan's most powerful temptations; they need to be educated God's Spirit convicts sinners of the truth, and He places them in the arms of the church. The ministers may do their part, but they can never perform the work that the church should do. God requires His church to nurse those who are young in faith and experience, to go to them, not for the purpose of gossiping with them, but to pray, to speak unto them words that are "like apples of gold in pictures of silver." (*Evangelism*, pg 352)

1. Plans for follow up really need to be made long before the evangelistic meeting begins.
2. What should you do with people who have not yet been baptised during campaign?
 - a. Continue to visit them.
 - b. Arrange Bible studies where possible.
 - c. Help them with issues you were not able to help them with during the campaign or that they were not ready to deal with at the time, such as overcoming smoking or working on the Sabbath.
 - d. Treat these unbaptised people just as you treat your newly baptised:
 - Invite them to church.
 - If they miss church, someone should visit them and encourage them to keep coming
 - Involve them in small groups.
 - Invite them to the church's social events.
 - Have a special Sabbath School class for them where you can go over the message once again.
3. The 3 phases of the new believer's growth
 - a. Phase 1: *Honeymoon Phase*
 - People in the church are generally friendly and accepting.
 - Adventist truths appear to be vital and self evident.
 - New believer has victory over sins they have been struggling with.
 - New believer wants to do everything in the church.

b. Phase 2: *Disillusion Phase*

- New believer discovers politics in the church.
- New believer experiences guilt over “sins” in his/her life.
- Family members raise serious questions about new found faith.
- Friends outside the church reject the new believer’s faith.
- Friends inside the church are hard to come by.
- New believer is only occasionally involved in church programmes.
- New believer discovers that not all Adventists believe and practice doctrinal beliefs.
- New believer discovers Bible texts and questions that are troubling.

c. Phase 3: *Integration*

- Believer becomes part of the relationship networks of the church.
- Believer learns assurance of salvation while still struggling with sin.
- Believer distinguishes between what people practice and what the church believes.
- Believer becomes mature in the approach to spiritual matters and learns to be an ongoing student of the Word.
- Believer is a partner and participant in the church’s mission.
- Believer actively but sensitively shares his/her faith with others.

4. Keys elements in **integrating** new members (general principles)

a. Integrating the new believer into a network of friendship within the church

- **Discipleship Ministry Team (Follow Up Committee)**
 - Ensures that new members are *deliberately* made part of the church.
 - It does not do all the work but engages the church membership. It assigns people various tasks and makes certain it happens. E.g., if a spiritual mentor has not been able to connect with the new member, the committee quickly assigns someone else to that person.
 - Orders necessary resources
 - Keeps a record of where new members are in their journey
- **Small Groups**
 - New members rarely, if ever, leave the church if they get into a small group.
 - It is one of the best platforms for people to get to know each other (The goal is for new members to get 7 friends in 6 months in order to establish them in

the church. It is difficult for this goal to be reached if new members only associate with church members once a week on Sabbaths only).

- Some churches plan a small group ministry that kicks in as soon as the evangelistic meetings end. Those small groups start the week after the evangelistic meetings end.
- Home groups provide the perfect platform to share testimonies, pray, encourage one another, deal with practical issues from Scripture (how to overcome temptation, anger, etc), do social activities (hikes, outings, picnics, etc), invite unbelieving family and friends, etc.

- **Socials**

- Social activities have a great way of strengthening relationships.
- Plan **regular** fun activities which can be enjoyed by everyone: picnics, hikes, etc.
- It is best to avoid competitive sports.

b. Helping the new believer experience a vital and living relationship with God.

- **Devotional Exercises**

- Teach new members Spiritual Disciplines: Bible study, prayer, fasting, meditation, Scripture memorisation.
- These should be made simple and practical.

c. Providing a mentoring environment where they can ask questions.

- **Spiritual Mentors**

- Pair people according to age, gender or interests (male with male, female with female, or female/male with a couple)
- If the new person has been brought into the church by a friend, then that friend is to be the spiritual mentor.
- What does a mentor do?
 - Answer new person's questions.
 - Invite them to special events.
 - Help them get into a small group or ministry.
 - *Main purpose of spiritual mentor:* to be their friend and help them develop other new friends in the church.
- A spiritual mentor should sign the following pledge:
 - "I understand what is expected of a Spiritual Mentor/Friend and accept the important ministry of

loving and nurturing this new member as a special act of love for Jesus. I will unselfishly give of my time and energy to carry out the various ministry activities. I will keep my Discipleship Ministry Leader (DML) informed, on a weekly basis, of my progress with the new believer. If in a two-week period, I am unable to fulfill my commitment, I will contact the DML or pastor for an immediate replacement.”

d. Visiting new members

- **New Member Visitation**

- Don't stop visiting them now that the campaign is over. They may feel that you don't care anymore.
- **Suggestion: Visit new members once a week for the first month after baptism, and then once a month for the first year.**
- Who should visit? Get as many lay people to visit as possible. It is not only the responsibility of the Spiritual Mentor to do the visitation.
- Church members who visit new members will need some instruction. They should be taught to be non-condemnatory toward the new people. The Adventist lifestyle is learned over time, and people need space to grow in an accepting environment.

e. Discipling the believer into a holistic Adventist lifestyle and practice.

- **Some examples:**

- Conduct a health seminar.
- Run a vegetarian cooking school.
- Do a stewardship seminar.

f. Providing the believer with skills and knowledge to witness for their faith.

- **Witnessing**

- The witnessing potential of new members is best during the first 3 years that they are in the church. During that time they still have multiple contacts outside the church. After that most of their friends tend to be in the church and their witnessing potential begins to dry up. It is therefore crucial to show new members how to immediately and effectively share their faith with their friends.

- Involve new members in the next evangelistic activity of the church. Hearing the message again will help cement them to the church and provide an opportunity for them to invite their friends to attend.
- g. Involving the new believer in church activities.
- **Spiritual Gifts Seminar**
 - Until people are contributing to the life of an organisation, they do not consider that they belong.
 - Conducting a Spiritual Gifts Seminar (it is best to do it over a few weeks, either as a Sabbath School class or afternoon programme) is therefore very important. This will help them find a place of ministry in harmony with their giftedness.
 - This does not mean that you are giving them top church positions overnight (such as elders, head deacons or personal ministries directors). There are however many other places they could fit in.
- h. Helping the new believer to come to a mature understanding of biblical, theological and church issues.
- **Repeat the message a second time**
 - “After the first efforts have been made in a place by giving a course of lectures, there is really **greater necessity for a second course** than for the first. The truth is new and startling, and the people need to have the same presented the second time, to get the points distinct and the ideas fixed in the mind” (*Evangelism*, 334).
 - One possible way to accomplish the above is to run a Bible class every Sabbath during lesson study time or do a Bible marking plan over a few Sabbath afternoons.
- i. Counting the sheep
- **Parable of Lost Sheep (Luke 15:4)**
 - How did the shepherd know one sheep was missing since it is very difficult to differentiate between 100 sheep and 99 sheep? He obviously had to count his sheep. Here are 3 practical examples used by Ps. Mark Finley to retain new members after his evangelistic campaigns:
 - In one of his churches, he gave a list of the newly baptised members to the organist (who could see the congregation clearly from where she sat at the organ) and she would tick off those who were present from Sabbath to Sabbath. The ones who were absent were called

after lunch. If, during the call, it was discovered that the new member was experiencing spiritual trouble, he or she would be visited that very evening.

- Every person who missed church would get a bulletin mailed to them on which a personal note was written.
- If they missed church the following Sabbath (i.e. 2 weeks in a row), an elder or deacon would visit them in their home.

5. Here are some sample activities you can do with and for a new believer (both mentor and general church members):

- a. Make **weekly visits** or phone calls.
- b. **Send a text message** or note to indicate that they are in your thoughts.
- c. **Invite new members home for Sabbath lunch** once a month. Include other members who may have things in common with the new members. This will help the new member become acquainted with more people in the church.
- d. During the week, invite the new member to **meet you for lunch at a restaurant** or plan to have supper together.
- e. **Do social activities together.** If you are planning a day of recreation, include your new member friends. Train yourself to think in terms of including new members in all these activities.
- f. **Sit together** at church, fellowship lunches, church activities, etc.

6. Some Don'ts

- a. Don't preach at your new friend or criticise them for views they hold or things they do.
- b. Don't always answer their questions with "Ellen White says..." Answering questions is two thirds listening.
- c. Don't be shocked at new members who make suggestions or remarks not in harmony with the faith. They will grow in time as you give them love and understanding coupled with sound Biblical teaching. Be careful not to take new members too fast too soon in areas of diet, reform, etc.
- d. Don't act superior or condescending because you've been a member longer.
- e. Don't overload the person with reading material all at once. Don't push your own peculiar brand of theology or hobbyhorse.
- f. Don't share church problems or gossip with the new member.
- g. Don't downgrade other denominations.

7. Some Do's

- a. Do verbally express your love and appreciation to the new member often.
- b. Do keep the Discipleship Ministry Leader up to date. Great commitment is needed to nurture souls for Christ.
- c. Do greet members at all church services and programmes. Invite them to stay for fellowship lunches and to sit with you.
- d. Do look for ways to involve the new members in church programmes or activities
- e. Do introduce the new members to other members at every activity.
- f. Do speak in only positive terms regarding the church, the pastor, the Conference, etc.

Sources used:

1. Russill Burrill, *Reaping the Harvest*, California: Hart Books, 2007.
2. Mark Finley, *Reclaiming Former Adventists*, DVD – produced by LIFE, Orlando.
3. Mark Finley, *Light Your World for God*, California: Hart Books, 2002.
4. 'Follow Up' PowerPoint presentation by Amazing Facts.

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