



Follow-up?

Kurt von Schleicher

The Holy Spirit, without a doubt, does the best follow-up work in evangelism, but we also want to cooperate with Him and follow Christ in helping baby Christians become established in the faith. Our prayer is that they walk close with Jesus all the way home. The Apostle Paul used to check back to see how the new and seasoned converts were doing. He had a heart to feed, to nurture and to properly tend to new converts. Paul had a humble servant's heart just like we all should have.

In fact, Paul following up on the welfare of new and old converts is what necessitated and resulted in his second and third missionary journeys. Paul didn't want to see any miss the grace of God, go beyond what was written in the Scriptures, or make shipwreck of their faith. He prayed for those he led to Jesus so they wouldn't become distracted and turn away from their pure devotion to Christ ...back to idols. He was motivated to do what he could—short of sinning—to see them all mature in the faith rather than grow lukewarm, worldly, or carnal.

Hey, you and I wouldn't dream of leaving a little infant out in the cold weather overnight without the right food or covering. Well, that's how our heavenly Father's feels. His heart is so practical and He really cares for each one that willing trusts His sinless Son. Our earnest desire is to be used by God in building up the Church—edifying every Christian we can with the truth.

Jesus said, ***"I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my Word, he will never see death"*** (Jn. 8:51). Sure Christ made it clear that His followers would experience difficult trials, tribulation and suffering. He said, ***"All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved"*** (Matt. 10:22). Yes there is a clear promise in the Bible to those who endure to the end with Jesus as Lord—they shall be saved. But the Bible remains silent for those who do not. If a so called Christian is doubting and comes to me for prayer ...and they are living in fornication or some other sin, I never try to help them find assurance of their salvation, because the Bible says four times that they will not inherit the Kingdom of God ...unless they repent. I simply tell them to stop it, but I'm not talking about that.

Jesus said, ***"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness."*** Do you know of any unbelievers who are hungering and thirsting inside after righteousness? I don't. In fact the Bible says, ***"There is none who seek after God"*** (Rom. 3:11). The Bible says non-Christians love the darkness, they hate the light; neither will they come to the light lest their deeds be exposed (Jn. 3:19–20). They want to party like there is no tomorrow and get sauced on iniquity (Job 15:16). I remember the Thursday evening in 1977 when I was convicted of my sins in Turtlerock California when I turned to Christ. That was when I first started to hunger and thirst for righteousness. It was like the law of the Lord that I had heard just dumped salt all over my tongue. It was my schoolmaster to bring me to repentance and to Christ. No Christian did any follow-up with me. The Holy Spirit did. I couldn't keep away from Christian Bible studies where Jesus was magnified and others were getting saved by Him.

Am I opposed to follow-up? Don't get me wrong, I don't want to be spiritually negligent or disobedient. I believe in lovingly discipling Christians with the Word if they hunger for this ministry. But I don't ever want to act negatively paternalistic, intrusive, obnoxious or pushy, like a nagging mama or some stocker who is following him or her where they go. That's not right and I can't find that type of thing happening in the Scriptures.

It would appear that the Ethiopian eunuch—a new convert—was somewhat ditched by the evangelist and wasn't at all sad about that. But how could he survive out there in the harsh cruel world? Well, we all need fellowship, so God somehow provided that for him. He had God and His grace. He had the Scriptures and a calling. Think about this guy for a minute, after Phil led him Christ in a remote area and then baptized him, he was left without any organized human follow-up. Yup, he and Phil both emerged from the water, and suddenly ***"the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away, so that the eunuch saw him no more; and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus"*** (Act 8:39-40). We are to serve where we can, but we also must trust the Lord to perfect that which He has begun in them.

We must have confidence in the keeping power of God in our Message. If they were regenerated by God, then God is more than able to keep them. If He's begun a good work in them, He'll complete it to that day (Phil. 1:6); if He's the Author of their faith, then He will be the Finisher of their faith (Heb. 12:2). The Bible tell us the Lord is able to save to the uttermost them that come to God by Him (Heb. 7:25). Jesus is able to keep them from falling and present them faultless before the presence and glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24). Jesus said, ***"No one will pluck you from my father's hand"*** (Jn. 10:29). The sinner basically needs to hear the voice of the Son of God and be resurrected from the dead, or there is no life in that dead guy.

The law works to open the ear of the sinner to the Savior (Ps. 19:7) and then God makes that person into a new creature in Christ as they turn and receive Him by faith for ***"as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"*** (Jn. 1:12-13). And that is when old things pass away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

Be the Right Soil

Personally, we try to always use terms like *“responder,” “inquirer,”* or say *“those who made a profession of faith”* when referring to people who appear sincere when they pray some sort of a sinners prayer with us. We don't call people that respond and come forward in an altar call or on the streets *“new converts”* because only God knows their true inner spiritual condition. People don't always get saved when they come forward in altar call moments, because maybe there was not true repentance and faith expressed to God. We know that time will tell if they are a real Christian or a poser ...or what kind of soil they really are.

Some people hear the Gospel and respond, others hear it and put the decision off, and others reject this opportunity to get right with God outright. But it's important that we understand the different reactions to the bad news (of all having sinned and what the wages are for that...) and the Good News that we share with people. We can certainly gain a lot by closely examining the Parable of the Sower (which I think should be titled The Parable of the Soil Types...that sounds more clunky huh).

Anyways, like all parables, this one is filled with profound truth and good insights for our personal evangelism efforts. It can give us an important opportunity to check up on our own spiritual condition. Are you hardhearted or open to the working of the Spirit? Have you received the implanted Word of God yet?

Jesus said, ***“But other seed fell on good ground and yielded a crop that sprang up, increased and produced: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred”*** (Mk. 4:8).

God expects faithfulness and fruitfulness from all Christians. Your heart (and I don't mean the actual muscle inside) is like receptive soil if you will ...to the seed of the Word of God. Jesus used this analogy in the *Parable of the Sower* (see [Mark 4:3–20](#)). In the parable, the soil that the seed fell on clearly represents four different categories of hearers' hearts when it comes to the Gospel presentation. There are four different reactions to the Word of God. There is the hard heart, the shallow heart, the over-crowded heart, and the fruitful heart. Where are you spiritually?

First, there is the hard heart, the seed that falls along the roadside. Any of us could have our heart grown hard and cold if we allow this. But this represents people who hear the Word of God, but never really turn and believe.

Then there is the shallow heart. That is the seed that falls on stony ground where there isn't much room for any roots to explore and find sustenance or moisture. This signifies the people who hear the Gospel and receive it with joy, but because there is no deep root to sustain them through all kinds of weather or other conditions, they simply wither.

Then, there is what we have come to recognize as the over-crowded heart. That's the seed that falls on the ground where lots of wicked weeds pop us and choke out its

growth. Gradually, these individuals, busy with the cares and the riches of the world, just lose interest in the things of the Lord.

Lastly, there is the fruitful heart that receives the Word. This seed falls on good ground and the plants that come up here grow, come to fruition and then produce a rich harvest (with varying degrees of spiritual productivity depending on the plant and its specific make up).

We are the ones who determine what kind of soil our hearts will be. We decide whether we will have a hard heart, a shallow heart, a crowded heart, or a receptive heart. This is exactly what James meant when he said, ***“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls”*** (Jam. 1:21).

The Word of God cannot work in our lives unless we have receptive hearts. Do you have a good appetite for the things of God? It has been said that more people have been killed by food than by poison.

The second best can often be the worst enemy of the best. That is what Jesus was talking about in the Parable of the Sower when He said, ***“Now the ones that fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity”*** (Luke 8:14 NKJV).

This is someone who appears to have made a decision for Christ and seems to be changing. But then slowly but surely, it becomes apparent that he or she doesn't really want to follow Christ. Other things become more important, although they're not necessarily bad things in and of themselves. This isn't someone who deliberately refuses to pray or read the Bible or go to church. In fact, this is a person who feels these are very good things. It is his or her intention to do these things eventually, when there is time in that busy schedule. Other pursuits eventually crowd out the things of God, and gradually the physical becomes more important than the spiritual. TV becomes more important than the Bible, movies are more appealing than church, parties are more important than prayer, and things on Earth are more important than treasures in heaven.

Is this happening to you? Do you find that the things of God just don't have the appeal they once did? Now that you have been at this for awhile, are you not as into it as you once were? This isn't a good sign.

If you are not feeling well and go to see the doctor, one of the first things he or she will ask you is, “How is your appetite?” A hungry person is a healthy person. So if you don't have a hunger for the Word of God and the things of God, this would indicate that you are not strong spiritually.

As you look at the early church, the church that turned their world upside-down, the Bible says of them, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42 NKJV). The Bible doesn't

say they just went to church, read the Bible, and prayed. It says they continued steadfastly. What does that mean? It means they did so with passion, with dedication, and with commitment. And that is the way we need to come to the Word of God and to the things of God. It is attention with intention.

The church in Germany where I was privileged to pastor for about four years, *Christus Zentrum Augsburg*, was literally built upon the rubble of World War II. It was built on rock, stone, brick, wood and destruction. I'm sure that when it was being constructed, there were extra measures taken to make sure the area could actually handle a good foundation for the large building that John Dorrrough, me, Armin Salzmann, Bible School students and the flock painted pink and salmon colors (really... our German friends really wanted it to look like a building in Miami Beach, and it turned out OK). It took a lot of sanding, painting, carpeting work to prepare this building for worshippers. I learned that the preparation work that Germans do before finishing out a building, is far more extensive than that of what Americans typically do. And the soil work for the foundation was of course by far the most important labor though.

In the same way, God takes careful thorough measures to insure that the foundation in our lives will be able to handle what He wants built there in a quality way. In fact God is more gründlich (thorough) than my German friends. He loves to clean up and properly pack the soil of our lives just right ...in advance so there will be less likelihood of any collapsing or tipping over sideways later. Sometimes God even wants to bring in large tractors or explosives so to speak ...to break up the fallow ground and do some heavy duty soil-work. It simply depends on the needs of the person. Yes, some guys need a lot of heavy duty work just to prepare their hearts for the seed of the Word of God. There are some wild rascally girls like that too. There could be a big boulder of sin under the surface. There might be some ugly trees, shrubs or weeds of rebellion. Or it might be a stump of disobedience. God needs to remove that perpetual sin that has had a stranglehold on our lives for years so our hearts can be receptive soil for what He wants to do. That is what will determine whether our conversion is real. It is the test of time and the presence of spiritual fruit.

The real test of whether our commitment is genuine is not how large a Bible we carry. It is not how often we attend church. It is not how loudly we sing. It is not how much we give in the offering. Though all of these things have their place, here is what it comes down to: if we are true believers, there will be fruit, or evidence, in our lives to show that. Can others look at you and see the changes in your life? Can they see changes in your character, in your outlook, in your motivation, and in what drives you? That is how people will know. God sees our heart, but people see our works.