

Introduction

Altar counselling is that intervention which is specific to the needs of persons who walk to the altar in response to the invitation to accept the Lordship of Jesus over their lives. Although the intervention is termed ‘altar counselling’, it is not to say that the counselling takes place at the altar per se. In fact, persons are usually ushered to a designated place where the counselling is done. Some of the principles mentioned in this manual are also applicable to the general ministry of leading a person to the Lord, regardless of where the decision to follow the Lord is made.

The ministry of altar counselling forms a pivotal part of the ongoing evangelistic efforts of the local church. As much as is possible, persons should be given the opportunity to respond to the gospel message and to invite the Lord Jesus into their lives at every church service. The decision of whether to give ones life to the Lord Jesus is one of “life or death”. Altar counselling should therefore be treated with diligence, utmost care, a prayerful attitude, and the correct approach.

Some believers hesitate to be involved in the ministry of altar counselling for a number of reasons. There are those who think that altar counselling is ‘not their thing’. And then there are those who simply feel inadequate for the task. This area of ministry is, however, not the responsibility of only the pastor, leaders or favoured few of the church. Every church member should equip him/herself and be prepared to engage in altar counselling. There are times when an abundance of persons respond positively to the gospel message (as in the case of large gospel crusades or open-air meetings). This creates the need for several altar counsellors at the given time.

Every believer should consider him/herself to be a partner, a fellow worker together with God in the ministry of reconciliation (*2 Corinthians 5:20; 6:1*) and be committed to the cause. It becomes the responsibility of the church to impress upon members the importance of the ministry of altar counselling. However, it should not be taken for granted that believers know what to do in the process. It therefore behooves the church to ensure that its members are

systematically and sufficiently trained to serve as altar counsellors. Believers themselves should take the time to learn the principles that will guide them in the process of meeting the needs of those standing at the altar.

Another area that is often overlooked is that of follow-up. Persons will have given their lives to the Lord during the altar counselling process, but very little help is given to take them along the journey as they make their first steps into the new life. It is no wonder then that some persons soon return to their former life.

This manual for altar counsellors and persons involved in the follow-up process was prepared by the Christian Education Department of the Missionary Church (Ja.) in collaboration with the Evangelism and Missions Department. The intention is to advance the importance of altar counselling and follow-up; to encourage believers to embrace these areas of ministry; to provide those who would become involved with helpful guidelines. The manual may be used by individuals desiring to prepare themselves for altar counselling and follow-up ministries or as a training tool by trainers seeking to prepare others to be involved in these particular areas of ministry.

The word *inquirer* is used with reference to those who respond to the gospel message and the invitation to accept Jesus as Lord of their lives. *Altar counsellor* is used with reference to the person who is trained to 'work' with those at the altar as they respond to the gospel message. The term is used interchangeably with *altar worker* or *counsellor* in this manual. The term *discipler* is used with reference to those engaged in the follow-up process.

The Department pauses to acknowledge the work of several sources on which various sections of the manual relied: the late Reverend O. Beckles, Jamaica Child Evangelism Fellowship, Reverend Rennard White, *2nd Vice President, Missionary Church Association (Ja.)*, Reverend Oliver Edwards, *Pastor of the Emmanuel Missionary Church*, Mrs. Blossom White, *Director, Evangelism & Missions Department, Missionary Church Association (Ja.)* and Zoe Simpson, *Chairperson, Christian Education Department, Missionary Church Association (Ja.)*.

Scripture verses used throughout the manual are quoted from the New International Version unless otherwise stated. The included graphics are taken from Broderbund Print Shop software.

The manual is presented in four sections. Section I focuses on altar counseling, Section II presents the follow-up process. Section III recommends training activities, and section IV has a list of Appendices. It is hoped that the manual will serve a worthwhile purpose to the work of altar counselling and follow-up. It is also hoped that the church's evangelistic efforts will be advanced through effective altar counselling and follow-up activities.

Section I

Altar

Counselling

The Purpose Of Altar Counselling

The fundamental purpose of altar counselling is to assist the person(s) under conviction to find a satisfying, personal relationship with God through the forgiveness of sins, the cleansing of heart by the blood of Jesus Christ, and the beginning of a new life.

In the natural, the service of a skilled health-care provider ensures the safe delivery of a baby into the world. In the spiritual, the birthing of a soul into the Kingdom of God is best aided by ‘spiritual care-givers’. The process of altar counselling is a ‘birthing’ process that often requires the assistance of skilled workers. Persons may be desirous of giving their lives to the Lord and so enter the Kingdom of God, but may not know how. The process of altar counselling answers the ‘how’ question and shows the inquirer the way to the Lord. It assures the inquirer of the love of God, and His ability and willingness to forgive sins. Altar counselling enables the inquirer to breathe his/her first breath of spiritual life.

Every Christian should:

1. regard this ministry as a means of serving the Lord
2. become involved in this ministry
3. develop the “know how” of the process
4. grasp the opportunities to engage in the ministry

Altar Counsellors

Individuals who would serve as altar counsellors should recognize the worth of the ministry and make every effort to prepare themselves in a holistic way.

Spiritually

The following should be true of persons involved in altar counselling:

1. They must have a genuine Christian experience. Altar counsellors must have accepted the Lordship of Jesus Christ and be living under the control of the Holy Spirit.
2. They must have assurance of salvation. They must be sure of their own forgiveness on the basis of God's word and be able to help the inquirer to have this same assurance of salvation.
3. It is important that altar counsellors are in right relationship with God. Their relationship with God should be meaningful and maintained on a daily basis.
4. Altar counsellors must be given to prayer and must be prayerful. There are several areas that must be constantly supported in prayer: the church family, the various church services and involvements, the pastor, the lay leaders, the other altar counsellors, the inquirers, unbelievers, and the church community at large.
5. They must be dedicated to the cause of the gospel of Christ. They must be consumed by the desire to respond to the Lord's mandate to take the gospel to all and be desirous of seeing others come to the Lord.

6. Their knowledge of the word of God should be adequate. Invariably, altar counsellors will need to use the word of God to show the inquirer the basis of the faith.
7. Effective altar counsellors depend on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They are willing to follow the Spirit's direction throughout the process. Altar counsellors must therefore develop the habit of being always in touch with God so that they may receive divine guidance as they minister.
8. They must have a servant's heart. This renders them able to follow instructions and work along with others as a team.
9. Altar counsellors must consistently live a clean life. Their own lives will be under the scrutiny of others and faulty lifestyle will discredit their witness.

Socially

The social standing of altar counsellors is also fundamentally critical to the effectiveness of their ministry.

1. It is important that altar counsellors are in right relationship with others. Every effort should be made to make right whenever there are interpersonal conflicts.
2. They should also have a love for people and be willing to help them find solutions for their problems. This interest and love will be evident in their approach to the counselling process and in their response to the inquirer.
3. Altar counsellors should be effective communicators. The process of altar counselling involves much verbal communication between altar counsellors and inquirers. The success of the process will depend largely on the altar counsellors' ability to

communicate the gospel message to the inquirers in a way that is understood.

4. They should be good listeners. Inquirers may have several questions for which they need answers. Some may even come with issues with which they are struggling. The inquirer will therefore need a sympathetic and understanding person with whom he/she can speak. Altar counsellors should listen well in order to understand and appreciate the problems shared and supply adequate answers.
5. Altar counsellors should be alert, tactful, and courteous. Lack of courtesy will only serve to defeat the efforts of the counselling process.
6. They should have a winsome and approachable personality that endears others to them.
7. It is important that their personality exemplifies the excellent qualities of spirit, which Christ brings to the life of the believer: humility, patience, love, gentleness, etc.
8. Altar counsellors should strive towards growth and development in the social areas of their lives.

Physically

This is an often overlooked area but one that is just as important as the other areas of preparation.

1. Altar counsellors should pay careful attention to and practice proper hygiene (especially oral hygiene). They should be careful not to be offensive with breath or body odour. Harsh smelling perfume can also be a turnoff to some persons.
2. They should present a general picture of cleanliness. This will help in establishing the counselling relationship. Persons will less likely want to listen to someone who appears

to be unclean and unkempt.

3. Altar counsellors should practice healthy habits and be generally healthy.

Mentally

The nature of the work of altar counselling demands that attention be paid to the mental capacity of the counsellors.

1. Persons serving as altar counsellors should be literate. This will be important since the counsellors will be expected to read the Scriptures with the inquirers throughout the process. They will also be required to record information about the inquirers on the decision cards.

Having made this point however, those who are unable to read and write should not be denied the privilege of involvement in this ministry since they may be allowed to work alongside another altar counsellor who is literate.

2. Altar counsellors should be mentally alert and able to respond when needed. Various situations which require swift response may occur during the service or during the counselling session.
3. They should be knowledgeable of the word of God and be skillful in using it to present the gospel message to others. Scripture memorization is also pivotal to the process of altar counselling.



'Fishers of men' must be well developed in every area of their lives.

The Process Of Altar Counselling

Let it be understood that altar counselling is a process. Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus defines a process as being a continuing development involving many changes, requiring a particular method, and involving a number of steps.¹ As a process, altar counselling requires time, careful planning, careful attention, and methodical execution. It includes and involves activities that will occur prior to, during, and after the gospel service/crusade. These activities and their associated constants will greatly determine the outcome of the overall process.

Prayer

Prayer is pivotal to the process of altar counselling. Altar counsellors should be conscious of the importance of prayer to the overall success of this ministry. It would be helpful for counsellors to meet periodically for prayer. In any event, prayer should take place prior to the gospel meeting/crusade, during the gospel meeting/crusade and during the actual counselling session.

Prior to the Service

It is important to note that the work of altar counselling begins long before a person walks to the altar. It is no wonder that altar counsellors should be given to prayer.

- ◆ They are praying for the gospel meeting and the crusade.
- ◆ They are praying for the speaker(s) and all who will be involved in the service.
- ◆ They are praying for those in need of salvation.
- ◆ They are praying for themselves, for cleansing, wisdom, and spiritual insight.

¹ Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus. Accent Software International. Macmillan Publishers, 1998.

- ◆ They are praying for the other altar counsellors.

During The Service

The counsellors must be in prayer throughout the service.

Be praying that:

1. the word of God will go forth with clarity.
2. the Word of God will pierce the hearts of individuals.
3. the Holy Spirit will help persons to understand and accept the word of God.
4. the Holy Spirit will convict individuals of their sins.
5. individuals will see their need to invite Jesus in their lives.
6. individuals will open their hearts and accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord of their lives.
7. the Lord will use the counsellors to adequately share with those who respond to the word of God.

The Altar Call Session

This is a very important time for altar counsellors. The word of God has gone forth and is taking effect on the lives of the listeners. The counsellors should be sensitive to what is happening around them during this time. They should be attuned to the effect that the word of God is having on the various persons. Quite often it will be noticed that there are persons in the pew who are struggling to make a decision. In this case, altar counsellors should:

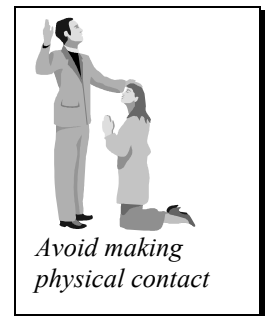
The altar call session is a very important time during the service.

- ◆ say a special prayer for such persons.
- ◆ volunteer to free a parent of a young child so that he/she may walk forward (if he/she so desires).
- ◆ volunteer to walk to the altar with the person who presumably needs this kind of support.

Individuals may begin to make their way to the altar once the altar call is given. Altar counsellors should be ready to rise to the occasion. The counsellors should take their Bible in hand and proceed to stand behind the person who has walked forward. Standing behind an individual allows the counsellors to give prayerful support to the person at the altar.

Ideally, there should be one counsellor per inquirer. Attention should be given to the following:

- ◆ Select the inquirer closest to your own age group.
- ◆ Stand behind the inquirer of the same sex.
- ◆ Be in prayer for the persons at the altar particular the one behind whom you stand.
- ◆ Be sensitive to what is happening to the person.
- ◆ Avoid laying hands on the individual.
- ◆ Avoid speaking with the individual since,
 - a) he/she may be praying.
 - b) the service leader may be addressing those at the altar.
 - c) the congregation may be singing; your talking at the same time may be confusing.
- ◆ At the appropriate time, lead the individual to the prescribed counselling area.



The Advisor/Coordinator

Some churches assign one (or more than one) individual(s) to coordinate the counselling activity.

This person is referred to as the **advisor/coordinator/leader**. He/she is responsible to:

1. ensure that the counseling room is adequately prepared.
2. ensure smooth operations of the post gospel message activities.

3. ensure that each inquirer has a counsellor.
4. ensure counsellor/inquirer compatibility.
5. ensure that the decision cards are adequately completed and collected.
6. work with the pastor to ensure that the inquirers are suitably placed with the members of the church for follow-up.
7. work along with the pastor to monitor the efforts of those engaged in the follow-up activity.
8. engage the altar workers and those involved in follow-up in continued training and development.

The Counselling Room

The room in which persons will be counselled should be arranged before the counselling session.

1. The coordinator should ensure that the room is suitable for the purpose.
2. The room should be spacious and allow for adequate seating of inquirers and altar counsellors.
3. It should be well lit and adequately ventilated.
4. The room should allow for a fair measure of privacy.
5. The room should also be free from undue distractions.

Seating:

Ideally, chairs should be placed in pairs; one for the counsellor and another for the inquirer. As the altar counsellors enter the counselling room, they should quickly select a pair of chairs and be seated. They may select an inquirer and begin counselling. Or, they may wait to be assigned an inquirer by the advisor/coordinator.

The Counselling Session

Counsellor and inquirer are both seated and the counselling session begins. There are some recommended steps that the counsellor should follow:

Recommended Steps:

1. Introduce yourself and get acquainted with the individual.
2. Ask the inquirer to explain the nature of his/her response. The counsellor may simply ask, “why did you go forward?” Usually, the response is for one of the following:
 - a) Acceptance of Christ as Saviour
 - b) Assurance of salvation
 - c) Restoration
 - d) Dedication/re-dedication
 - e) Other (prayer, curiosity)
3. Meet the need as defined.
 - a) Lead him/her to Christ if the need is for salvation (*see proceeding section on how to lead a person to the Lord*).



- b) Reassure him/her of salvation where he/she doubts his/her salvation experience.
 - c) Show him/her the way back to God if he/she is a backslider.
 - d) Pray with him/her if prayer is all that is requested. It would be helpful to ascertain the area or matter for which prayer is requested.
4. Where a decision is made to accept Christ, lead the inquirer in praying the “sinners prayer” (*see appendix 1 for sample prayer*).
 5. Assure the inquirer of God’s forgiveness.
 6. Explain the importance of the word of God to the believer’s life.
 7. See that the inquirer relies on the word of God for assurance and not on feelings.
 8. Welcome the inquirer into the family of God and highlight his/her decision to accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord of his/her life.
 9. Complete the decision card.
 10. Give the decision card to the coordinator.

The case may arise wherein the counsellor is unable to effectively communicate with the inquirer. There may be barriers created by language, social class, or personality issues. Where incompatibility is evident, the counsellor should quickly and quietly communicate this to the advisor/coordinator who will discretely and sensitively arrange for a change. In this event, care must be taken to delimit any measure of rejection on the part of the inquirer. The counsellor should explain to the inquirer that his/her needs would be better met by another counsellor who is more qualified to do so. This kind of explanation shifts the blame for the incompatibility from the inquirer to the counsellor.

Important Principles

1. Ensure that you have the inquirer's attention and communicate courteously with the inquirer throughout the counselling session.
2. Avoid intellectualism and the use of church jargon that is meaningless to the inquirer.
3. Speak in accordance with the age level and intellectual development of the inquirer.
4. Let him/her talk and answer his/her questions appropriately. Be honest with your answers.
5. Keep the explanations simple and brief. Avoid unnecessary discussion.
6. Do not insist that the individual read the Scripture verses if he/she seems unwilling to do so. The individual may not be literate and this could cause undue embarrassment. If the inquirer is literate, let him/her read the Scripture passages.
7. Ask directly whether the inquirer wants to invite Jesus into his/her life at that point in time.
8. Do not push for a decision. Let the individual wait if he/she is not ready.
9. Do not get emotional or force the inquirer to make a decision.
10. Do not probe into private matters.



Do not push for a decision

11. Do not force the individual to attend your church.

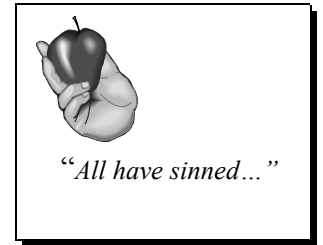
12. Do not detain the individual unnecessarily. He/she may need to leave promptly.

Approaches To Leading A Person To Christ

There are various approaches that may be taken to lead a person to Christ. Some of the most frequently used approaches are shared here.

The ABC Approach

This is a rather simple approach that was developed by renowned evangelist Billy Graham and is widely used in Altar Counselling.



A - Admit that you are a sinner.

"For all have sinned and fall short of God's glory." (Romans 3:23). "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5).

B - Believe that Christ can save you.

“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (Acts 16:31). “It is with your heart that you believe and are justified...” (Romans 10:10). “For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (St. John 3:16)

C - Confess your sins to the Lord.

“...It is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” (Romans 10:10). “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The Roman Road Approach

This approach uses the book of Romans to present the Gospel message.

Romans 3:23. We are all sinners. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*

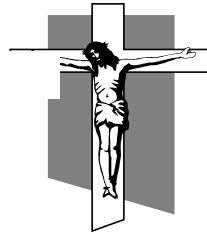
Romans 6:23 Sin must be punished. *“For the wages of sin is death...”*

Romans 5:8. Jesus took our punishment. *“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”*

Romans 8:1 We have assurance of salvation. *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”*

Romans 5:1 We have assurance of salvation. *“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ...”*

“I love you this much”



The Creation Story Approach

This approach uses the creation story as a basis to show God’s intention for rightful relationship with mankind, how the relationship was broken when mankind sinned, God’s desire to have the relationship restored, and the sacrificial death of Jesus (the 2nd Adam) that restored the relationship between God and mankind.

- ◆ **God/Man Relation** – Mankind was created to have a relationship with God. This is seen in the fact that God communed with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (*Genesis 1::27-30; Genesis 2:15, 16*). This is also seen in the fact that God seemed to have been in the habit of visiting mankind in the garden (*Genesis 3:8*). Genesis 3:8-13 relates a lengthy conversation that God had with both Adam and Eve.
- ◆ **Separation** – Because of mankind’s sin, this relationship was broken and mankind was separated from God. God looked for Adam and Eve in the Garden when they sinned (*Genesis 3:9; Genesis 3:23,24; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22*)
- ◆ **Restoration** – God made provision for this broken relationship to be restored through the sacrificial death of His Son, Jesus Christ. This fact shows the love that God

had for mankind. (*Genesis 3:15; Romans 5:15, 19; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22*)

- ◆ **Appropriation** – Mankind has only to accept Jesus’ sacrifice for sin and ask Jesus to forgive and take away his/her sin. (*St. John 6:40; Romans 5:21*)
- ◆ **Salvation** - Mankind is made righteous before God through Jesus, the Son of God. (*Romans 5:19*)

The Sin Problem Approach

This approach shows:

- ◆ The **Problem of sin** that plaques mankind. *“All have sinned...” (Romans 3:23)*
- ◆ The **Penalty for sin** that must be paid. *“For the wages of sin is death....” (Romans 6:23)*
- ◆ The **Provision for sin** that God made through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son...” (St. John 3:16; Romans 5:21)*
- ◆ The **Prayer** of confession admitting our sinfulness and accepting the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. *“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)*
- ◆ God’s **Promise** - God promised to forgive our sins and give us eternal life. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins...(1 John 1:9)*

“For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life and I will raise Him up at the last day.” (St. John 6:40)

General Points of Emphases

1. **We cannot save ourselves.** *“He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.” (Titus 3:5)*
2. **Now is the time to accept Jesus as Saviour and Lord.** *“I tell you, now is the time of God’s favour, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Corinthians 6:2); “So, the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...’ (Hebrews 3:7-8)*
3. **Salvation only comes through Jesus.** *“I am the way and the truth and the life, no man comes to the father except through me.” (St. John 14:6) “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)*
4. **Salvation is received by faith** as we believe on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith is believing that Jesus died for the forgiveness of our sins. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus and you shall be saved...” (Acts 16:31)*
5. **There is no sin too “big” for God to forgive.** *“And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” (Acts 2:21)*

6. **The blood of Jesus Christ makes us clean.** *“The blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)*

Note:

1. Each altar counsellor should select the approach that he/she is most comfortable using.
2. It is helpful to be familiar with more than one approach.
3. Practice the approach to ensure competence and confidence in using the approach. The person being counselled can often tell when the counsellor lacks confidence.
4. Speak with confidence and conviction about the love of God for mankind.
5. Emphasize the point that Jesus is the only way back to rightful relationship with God. It will be necessary to clarify the point that good works cannot save us.
6. Respect the individual’s decision even if it is not to accept the Lord at that time. In fact, it is often helpful for persons to “count the cost” before making a decision to follow the Lord.
7. There is no need to feel rejected if a decision to accept the Lord was not made. Remember you cannot force the individual to make a decision to follow the Lord. Jesus never did.
8. Avoid the temptation to tell the enquirer that his/her problems will be solved if he/she makes the decision to follow the Lord.

Counselling Children

Children need the Lord as much as adults do. Further, the Lord is definitely concerned about the spiritual well being of children. We should resist the temptation to belittle the children's response to the gospel message. The child's desire to ask Jesus in his/her heart should be treated with as much seriousness as for an adult. Children are just as sincere as adults. Consider Jesus' response to the disciples who sought to turn away children who were brought to the Lord for Him to bless them - *"Let the little children come to me ..."* (St. Mark 10:14)

Specially trained persons should be used to counsel with children. These persons should:

- ◆ be aware of the characteristics of the children.
- ◆ have a passion to see children come to know Jesus as the Lord and Saviour of their lives.
- ◆ be able to communicate effectively to children using language they can understand.
- ◆ be warm, friendly, and gentle in personality.

Counselling A Child For Salvation

Counsel with children using one of the approaches considered for adults. However, modify the approach and the method of presentation in ways that are suitable for use with children. Those counselling with children for salvation should pay attention to the following:

1. Use simple language that children can understand.
2. Allow the child to see the need for salvation. The child needs to know that no one is good in him/herself to go to heaven.



3. Explain as best as you can concepts as “*sin*”, “*Jesus living in your heart*” and “*cleansed by His blood*” since children conceptualize things literally. You may use the fact that we bear traits of our parents (colour of skin, etc.) to explain that we inherit the sin of the father of mankind, Adam. (*Romans 5:17*) It will be adequate to explain that sin is whatever we do to displease God. Let the children give examples of the various things that they do that displease God.

Use the fact that our parents punish us whenever we do wrong to carefully explain that mankind had also to be punished for the sin committed against God. Help the children understand that whereas we should be punished for our sin, Jesus took our punishment when He died on the cross. Now, when we ask Jesus to forgive us, He takes away our sin and makes us His children.

4. Be patient with children and answer whatever questions they may ask.
5. Show the children that Jesus is very interested in them and loves them dearly.
6. Make use of pictures, stories, and material that involve the senses in the presentation.

Child Evangelism Fellowship International has a number of visual aids that may be used in leading a child to Christ: the **Wordless Book**, the **Gospel Flipper Flapper**, and the **Good News Glove**. Persons so desiring may contact that organization to acquire these aids. See *Appendix 2 for description of some of these tools and the address of the organization.*

Simple everyday stories and local material may also be used as relevant aids.

The **ABC approach** mentioned earlier may be used with children who will readily relate to the first three letters of the alphabet. The simplicity of the approach also renders it suitable for use with children. Again, carefully explain the concepts involved: *admit, confess, believe.*

The **Creation Story approach** also lends itself for use with children. This approach may be readily presented in story form and accompanied by pictures. Regardless of the approach used with children, the counsellor should be careful to emphasize the love of God for children.

The use of songs in the process of leading children to Christ is also appropriate. Most adults and children will be familiar with the following songs, the words of which are given in Appendix 3.

(1) *“Jesus loves me this I know”*

(2) *“Jesus loves the little children”*

(3) *“Come into my heart Lord Jesus”.*

It may be helpful to include children and young people in the process of leading children to the Lord. Their own simple use of language will render simple explanations of the salvation story. They can also draw on their own experiences. Children may more easily believe someone within their own age group.

Involving children and youth in this process should not be difficult if they are adequately prepared for the purpose. An adult should of course, accompany them throughout the process and they need not do the entire session.

Counselling Backsliders

Backsliders, in the traditional sense, are persons who had previously given their lives to the Lord, but, along the way, left off from following the Lord, and returned to their former lifestyle. The Lord however is willing to restore backsliders and calls them to repentance.

Counselling with backsliders will be somewhat different from counselling with new inquirers. Bear in mind though, that the one-to-one counselling process may begin as with new inquirers since the individuals may only reveal their spiritual status as the session progresses. Be sure to address the matter of the backslidden condition as soon as it is revealed.

1. **Identify the Backslider's need**

Talk with backsliders to discover the root cause of their backslidden state. Although the reasons will vary from person to person, an area of weakness may become apparent. Make a note of this on the Decision Card. Backsliders will need to be helped to overcome their weaknesses during the follow-up period.

Do not however take it for granted that backsliders will want to return to the Lord during the counselling session. Therefore, as in the case of new inquirers, ask backsliders what it is that they want the Lord to do for them.

2. **Assure backsliders of God's willingness forgive and to restore them.**

This is of utmost importance as, quite often, backsliders are riddled with guilt and embarrassment for having left off from following the Lord. Read the following Scriptures with the backslider, and have him/her insert his/her own name.

"Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the Lord."

"Though your sins be as scarlet, they will be as white as snow." (Isaiah 1:18 KJV)

“I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud and your sins like a heavy mist.”

(Isaiah 44:22 KJV)

“Return O faithless ones, I will heal your faithlessness.” (Jeremiah 31:2 KJV)

3. Lead backsliders to confessing their sins

Have them say a prayer of confession, asking God for restoration.

4. Show the need to forsake sin

He that covereth his sin shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh shall have mercy.” (Proverbs. 28:13 KJV)

5. Show the need for backsliders to forgive themselves

Backsliders sometimes find it hard to forgive themselves, even when God has forgiven them. Emphasize the point that since God forgives us, we should also forgive ourselves. Stressing God’s mercy that is extended to all of us may help backsliders in forgiving themselves. Join backsliders in expressing thanks for God’s mercy. *“... I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” (Jeremiah 31:34)*



Help the backslider to find the way back home

Counselling Persons Living In Common-Law Relationships

According to Dr. Vivian Panton, a common-law relationship is “the type of union in which partners live together in the same household and engage in what may be an exclusive sexual relationship but this union is without legal sanction.”² This type of relationship is also referred to as a concubinage relationship and is quite prevalent in our society. This relationship is one that the altar counsellor will inevitably encounter in the ministry of altar counselling.

The common-law relationship often presents a difficult tension between surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus and the realities of the relationship.

Let it be understood that this is a “stronghold” of the enemy that has a prohibitive effect on persons desiring to give their lives to the Lord. Quite often, persons want to surrender their lives to the Lord but feel hindered because of this particular lifestyle.

Children may be involved in these relationships. Where this is the case, it often becomes rather difficult for the one partner (usually the female) to make the decision to discontinue the relationship. The difficulty is compounded where the woman is dependent on the man for economic survival. It is usually heartrending to see persons struggle with the tension between surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus and the realities presented within a concubinage relationship.

Words of Caution

² Vivian Panton. The Church and Common-Law Union: A New Response. Kingston, Jamaica: Ebony Business Pr. Ltd. 1992.

1. **Do not disregard the individual's desire to give his/her life to the Lord.**

If the person so desires, lead him/her to Christ, as you would have done anyone else. God alone is Judge. Leave the judging to him. However, make a note of the situation on the decision card so that special follow-up (preferably by the pastor) will be done for these persons. This approach is preferred since there is no telling the implications that this point-in-time decision may have. This may be the last opportunity for the individual to give his/her life to the Lord. Do not deny him/her!

2. **Do not get caught up in a discussion about the relationship.**

This is neither the time nor place to do this. However, if the individual engages you in a discussion on the matter, assure him/her that God is interested in the situation and is still willing to forgive him/her.

3. **Do not suggest that the individual discontinue the relationship.**

Show him/her God's plan for marital relationships but leave that decision of separation to the individual. Again, persons equipped may address the intricacies of the relationship during the follow-up period.

4. **Do not suggest that the individual marry his/her partner.**

Remember that altar counselling specifically and primarily concerns itself with leading persons to the Lord. Where other matters present themselves, specialized counselling for the individual should be sought.

5. **Be sure to pray with the individual even if he/she is not ready to surrender to the Lordship of Christ Jesus.**

The major consideration in counselling with backsliders is that of restoration. There are special Scripture passages that should be borne in mind in counselling the person living in a common-law relationship.

1. *"Whoever comes to me I will never drive away." (St. John 6:37)*

2. *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in..” (Revelation 3:20)*
3. *“But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” (St. John 1:12)*

Hindrances To The Process

Following are some factors that may present as hindrances to the process of altar counseling. The list is not exhaustive but covers a wide range of possibilities.

1. **Doubt**

Some persons may think that the process presented is far too simple to be true. Others may be expecting a certain feeling or a dramatic experience. Emphasize that our salvation is based on the faith principle. *“Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved. (Acts 16:31).*

2. **An unforgiving spirit**

The counsellor may encounter an individual who is in malice with another person and has purposed in his/her heart never to make it right with the individual. Use the Scripture to show the individual the personal, spiritual, and emotional benefits in forgiving the individual. *“...if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.” (St.. Matthew 6:15)*

3. **Demons**

Leading a person to the Lord is in and of itself spiritual warfare. The devil has no intention of letting go of his followers. There may be persons who are out possessed with demons. This is a specialized case and the counsellor should not attempt to minister to the individual by him/herself. The help of the pastor and other believers should be sought

in this case.

4. Lack of preparation

The counsellor who is not prepared may do more harm than good to the process of altar counselling.

5. Lack of co-operation

Each counsellor should co-operate with the advisor (*where there is one*) and of course, with the other counsellors involved in this ministry. Lack of co-operation could lead to confusion. A spirit of unity should prevail among the counsellors.

6. Distractions

These may take various forms and may threaten the success of the process. Be aware of possible distractions (noisy children, disruptive persons, loud music, etc.), and be prepared to curb the situation as much as possible. An ideally located counselling room will delimit the extent of possible distractions.

7. Self-reliance

The counsellor relies completely on the Holy Spirit to convict inquirers of sin and to take them from darkness into “God’s marvelous light”. The counsellor also relies on the Holy Spirit for spiritual insight into how to handle the situations that present during the counselling session. It is important then, that the counsellor is in tuned with the Holy Spirit throughout the session.

8. Personal problems

Inquirers quite often come to the Lord with a gamut of problems, some of which will need long-term intervention. Quite often, these problems serve as hindrances to the process of leading the individuals to the Lord. The counsellors should be aware of their limitations in working with such situations. They should therefore focus on the individual’s need for salvation, and then refer the individual to the pastor for additional assistance.

The Decision Card

It is important for altar counsellors to complete a decision card at the end of the counselling session. (See *appendix 2* for sample decision card).

1. The card provides helpful information on the inquirer (*name, address, etc.*), which aids the follow-up process.
2. The card indicates matters of special interest, matters requiring specialized intervention, and matters that must be brought to the attention of the person doing the follow-up.

Guidelines:

1. The card should be filled out at the end of the counselling session. It could be source of distraction to do so during the counselling activity.
2. Write legibly; print, unless your writing is very legible. The information is of extreme value in the follow-up process and care should be taken to ensure that what is written can be read.
3. Do not force the inquirer to attend your own church as he/she may have another preference.
4. Indicate the inquirer's church preference, if there is one. This allows for referral to be made, especially if the inquirer is a student or visitor to the community.
5. Give the decision cards to the pastor or assigned person at the end of the session.

Section II

Follow-up

Reverend Rennard White (2nd Vice President, Missionary Church Ja.) is credited for most of the work presented in this section

Overview

Follow-up is the step that is pursued after the altar counselling exercise. It forms a critical part of the overall evangelistic efforts of the church. Our evangelistic efforts often fail because we fail to pay adequate attention to the follow-up process. It is through follow-up that we can be sure of the new believers' condition, spiritual growth and development. Despite the importance of follow-up, less than 1% of evangelical church members are involved in personal follow-up. The problem is worse than the low level of personal evangelism that takes place among believers.³

“The importance of conserving the ‘fruit of evangelism’ cannot be overemphasized. The church often boasts the number of individuals that responds to the Gospel message. But, for how many is the spiritual birthing process aborted for lack of spiritual caregivers? How many of those converts return to the former lifestyle for want of spiritual care? After all is said and done, the follow-up process remains a pivotal part of the evangelistic efforts of the church. Those who give their lives to the Lord Jesus Christ as a response to the presentation of the gospel message must now be nurtured onto spiritual maturity.”

Follow-up decreases the likelihood that the new believer will return to the former lifestyle.

This process of aiding the spiritual growth and development of the new convert (follow-up) is also referred to as discipleship. It is critical to the spiritual survival of the new believer. As one writer succinctly puts it, “the future state of the Christian’s soul and his/her effectiveness for Christ, depends on it.”⁴ Effective follow-up also opens up the means for continued growth of the church. New converts who have received effective follow-up, as they mature, are themselves able to become follow-up persons to other new converts. Hence, the follow-up cycle continues and the multiplication principle is put in place.

³ Reverend Rennard White. *Personal Follow-up*. September 2002.

⁴ **You Can Be A Soul Winner: Here’s How.** New Leaf Press, Inc., 1978.

In its broadest sense, follow-up may be achieved through three means:

1. Personal study
2. Structured church groups or classes
3. Personal follow-up⁵

Personal Study: New believers can engage in studying the Bible, reading other Christian literature, and praying, by themselves. There are those who will testify that they grew in the knowledge of the Lord and in their Christian walk without a systematic process of follow-up.

Structured Church Groups: Nurturing via church ministries. Usually, the pastor, elder or person assigned, meets with the new believers as a group during the gospel meeting/crusade and during weeks leading up to baptism and acceptance into church membership. Some churches also have special Sunday school classes for new believers. These group sessions should be considered differently from the complementary, individual follow-up that is also needed.

Personal follow-up: This is a most effective method of assisting new believers to progress in faith. Not everyone will be able to progress on his/her own. Not everyone is comfortable in a group setting. Personal follow-up is a unique means of taking the new believer beyond the point of initial acceptance of the Lordship of Jesus, into spiritual maturity and strengthened relationship with the Lord. Personal follow-up allows for the close, one to one relationship between the new believer and the person doing the follow-up. The new believer is afforded individualized spiritual care in those critical first steps of his/her journey with the Lord.

There is the sense in which all three means may have their respective importance and worth to the new believer. It will be incumbent on the new believer to take steps necessary for growth in Christ. The group sessions provide him/her with a sense of fellowship and the benefits of shared experiences of group members. Personal follow-up has its own set of advantages to the new believer. The considerations of this section of the manual will therefore focus on the systematic process of personal follow-up.

⁵ Ibid

Personal Follow-up

Definitions

1. Personal follow-up is a process of giving individualized, continued attention to new Christians until they are integrated in church, discover their place of service, develop full potential for Christ, and help in church building.
2. Personal follow-up is the spiritual work of grounding new believers in the faith.
3. Personal follow-up is the process which involves the assuming of a one-to-one relationship by a mature believer with a new believer, with a view to aiding the new Christian's spiritual nurture and growth.
4. Personal follow-up is a process aimed at helping spiritual babies to develop as in a parent-child relationship.

Hereon, the inquirer will be referred to as: the 'new believer', the new convert', or the 'disciple'. The terms may be used interchangeably throughout. There are many definitions of 'disciples' one of which is, *"one growing in conformity to Jesus Christ, achieving fruits in evangelism, and later himself doing follow-up."*⁶

The person involved in the process of personal follow-up is sometimes referred to as a discipler. He/she in fact 'walks' alongside the new believer as the new believer embarks on the new journey of faith in the Lord Jesus. The discipler engages the new believer in a relationship that fosters spiritual growth. The discipler invests him/herself in the life of the new believer. It is little wonder that the process is described as being the "with him" discipler process. Jesus employed this "with him" discipler multiplication principle while He ministered on earth. (St. Mark 3:14). Paul also employed the "with him" discipler principle (Acts 20:4). The believers

⁶ Ibid.

of the early church themselves engaged in this important activity.⁷ In much the same way, disciplers today, engage new believers in the “with him” personal follow-up process.

Presenting Problems

There are two major problems that confront Christians, as they consider engaging in personal follow-up.

- a) **Christians do not know what to say or how to say it.** This is often the case where persons have not taken the time to equip themselves for this particular ministry. Like any other area of ministry, personal follow-up must be carefully considered and those involved must take the time to adequately prepare themselves.

- b) **Christians are unwilling to give the time required.** Personal follow-up is a time-consuming activity. It requires that the individual engaged in the follow-up process purposefully sets aside blocks of time to help the new believer as he/she embarks on the new life in Christ and solidifies his/her relationship with the Lord. It is a personal sacrifice that is made in the interest of the new believer’s spiritual survival.

Aims of Personal Follow-up

New believers need help in order to apply some basic truths if they are to mature spiritually. Therefore, personal follow-up is aimed at:

1. helping the new believer to receive assurance of salvation.

2. helping the new believer to develop consistent devotional life.

3. helping the new believer to understand the basics of the abundant life.

4. helping the new believer to share his/her faith with others.

⁷ Ibid

Importance of Personal Follow-up

- ◆ Personal follow-up is the most effective way of producing disciples.
- ◆ Personal follow-up is an effective way of achieving spiritual multiplication. It determines whether churches are ‘adders’ or ‘multipliers’ (e.g. two converts having two follow-up persons (thus making it four new persons). At the end of the year, all four can follow-up four new converts each.
- ◆ Personal follow-up also allows the church to become aware of any difficulties that the new believer is encountering that may challenge his/her decision to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in newness of life.

Relevance To The New Believer

- ◆ The new believer is vulnerable – he/she is open to the doubts with which Satan will attack him/her. The individual may need to be reminded of God’s faithfulness to forgive.
- ◆ The new believer may need assurance of salvation and encouragement. The new believer will have questions to be answered and concerns for clarification.
- ◆ There is the potential for real change in the new believer. The follow-up person is a most helpful source in assisting this change. Lack of help may hinder growth; the new believer does not know what to “put off” and what to “put on” along the ‘journey’.
- ◆ This is a new life for the convert, and he/she will certainly need the help of a more mature believer as he/she takes this new step of faith.

The Discipler

Qualifications For Disciplers *(II Timothy 2:2)*

1. Disciplers must be born-again Christians, living in a growing relationship with Christ.
2. They should have a sense of ‘call’ to ministry. Personal follow-up is a ministry in itself.
3. They should see their spiritual gifts as including the gifts of teaching and/or exhortation.
4. They must have completed some form of discipleship training, one level higher than they will be teaching.
5. They must be faithfully committed to the life and growth of their local church.
6. They must be willing to be accountable to the Director of Discipleship/Pastor and give evidence of thorough preparation of their follow-up material.
7. They must love people and earnestly desire their growth and maturity in Christ. Disciplers must be willing and able to invest self and time to the life of a new believer.
8. They must be aware of the status of those whom they disciple.
9. They must be committed to the process. There will be times of discouragement and disappointment. A sense of commitment will aid perseverance.
10. Disciplers should be endowed with patience. Growth is never an ‘overnight’ occurrence. Growth requires both time and patience. Mistakes will be made. Growth may be slow.

Disciplers should patiently wait for growth to take place.

The Process Involved

Key Elements

1. Follow-up should begin soon after the decision is made for salvation.
2. The new believer should be paired with an individual of the same sex and within the same age group.
3. New believers should be assigned only to mature believers who have evidenced growth and development in their own spiritual life.

Considerations for Disciplers

The following pointers should be borne in mind by those engaged in the follow-up process.

1. Initiate contact with the new convert within twenty-four (24) hours of his/her conversion. Arrange a meeting with the convert as soon as possible. Agree on a time that best suits the schedule of both the person doing the follow-up and the new believer.
2. Establish a personal relationship with the individual. Express joy at the decision made to follow Christ. Let the individual know that you are available for him/her. Telephone numbers may be exchanged (optional) so as to maintain contact when necessary. The new believer may find him/herself in a situation that requires immediate help.

3. Begin regular weekly meetings as soon as possible. Endeavour to keep the appointment as much as is possible. Inform the new believer whenever you are unable to meet with him/her or where you are going to be late for the appointment. Also ask that he/she inform you if the appointment cannot be kept.
4. Follow a systematic approach to the sessions. The topics presented in the **Topics for Discussion** section (*page 44*) will prove useful.
5. Be prepared to answer the questions asked. Be honest about your answers. It is better to admit ignorance than to pretend to have the answer.
6. Read the Scripture with the individual but be careful to encourage the new believer to read the Bible for him/herself and to pray each day. You may need to teach him/her how to pray.
7. Explain the Scriptures adequately. The new believer may share his/her understanding of the Scriptures so that clarification be given where necessary. Explain the relevance of the Scripture and show how the Scriptures may be applied to everyday living.
8. Help the new convert to memorize the Scripture verses.
9. Encourage the new convert to begin attending the various church services. You may need to arrange transportation where it becomes difficult to access the church.
10. Encourage the convert to attend a group Bible study/class specially set up for new converts. See to it that the new convert attends. Take them if needs be.
11. Show interest in the new believer's overall life and not just his/her spiritual well being. The individual is encouraged when it is realized that you are aware of the things that bother him/her or that relate to his/her overall life, and that you are genuine in concern.

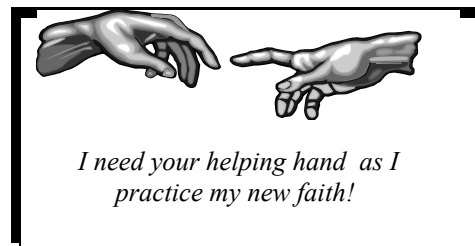
12. The new convert may need help with areas of personal difficulties. The discipler should not attempt to handle these personal issues by him/herself. Seek help where needed. Most situations are better handled by the mechanisms set up by the local church to handle such matters. Be careful not to encourage dependence.
13. Show respect for personal privacy. Do not pry into personal matters and do not force him/her to divulge information.
14. Allow the individual time to talk about his/her experiences, fears, etc. Like the altar counsellor, persons doing follow-up must be good listeners and possess effective communication skills.
15. Pray for the convert - ask him/her for prayer requests and pray join in prayer about the matters presented.

Time Frame

Personal follow-up begins soon after the enquirer has indicated a desire to accept the Lordship of Jesus over his/her life. The question asked is, what is the expected duration of the process? The discipler should be prepared to be engaged in the follow-up process for approximately one year. However, let it be understood that there really is no hard and fast timeframe that the follow-up period should cover. Persons mature at varying rates. Whereas one person may require a relatively short period of time to establish his/her 'footing', another may need a considerably long period of time to be established in the faith. The discipler should be aware of the new believer's level of readiness to be 'weaned'.

An important indicator of readiness should be the extent to which the individual has become comfortable with his/her new life and is growing towards spiritual maturity. The new believer would have been able to pray and conduct personal Bible study in a consistent devotional 'hour'. He/she would be able to simply share his/her faith/testimony with another person. Church

attendance will be regular and involvement will be evident. The new believer will be comfortable in his/her relationships with the other members of the wider church family. There will be testimonies of having overcome temptations. The discipler should remember to avoid cultivating dependency and should therefore be prepared to 'wean' the new believer.



Note: Persons who have not made decisions to follow the Lord during the altar counselling process should also be followed up after the crusade/gospel meeting. The issues presented during the altar call counselling session should be given attention. Quite often too, persons may not have made a decision during the gospel meeting or during the counselling period but may be ready to do so subsequently, having 'counted the cost'.

Topics For Discussion

It will be noticed that some of the topics used for personal follow-up are the same as those used in group follow-up classes (cf: **Teaching Manual for New Converts**, Missionary Church Association, 2005). The following must however be noted. **(a)** Personal follow-up is most likely to precede group follow-up. New believers will therefore need to benefit from the topics mentioned here for presentation. The methodology of presentation will vary in both settings. **(b)** Repetition is to the advantage of the new believer. **(c)** The topics presented in personal follow-up sessions will serve to clarify and reinforce the presentations of the group sessions.

- ◆ **The Gospel Message.** It is always helpful to review the gospel message with the new believer. There may be the need for clarification of some pertinent points. Ensure that the new believer understands the salvation process. Be careful to point out that “newness” of life will not be evident at once. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

- ◆ **Assurance of Salvation.** Doubt may begin to set in, and it is highly likely that the new believer will begin to question the merits of his/her decision to follow the Lord. He/she will greatly benefit from reassurance that he/she is a new person in Christ. (1 John 5:11; John 5:24; John 1:12)

- ◆ **The Christ-centered Life.** Point the new believer to the importance of making Christ the centre his/her life. Every matter should be presented to the Lord in prayer and His direction sought. (Galatians 2:20, John 15:5; Colossians 1:27) Emphasize that God yearns to be our Friend who is involved with every area of our lives. In fact, He wants to be included in every activity, every conversation, every problem, and even every thought.”⁸

⁸ Rick Warren. *The Purpose Driven Life*. Michigan, USA: Zondervan, 2002. p. 87.

Alert the new believer to the fact that there will be times when God seems distant from him/her; as though God has forsaken the individual. Show the individual from the word of God that he never leaves us. (Deuteronomy 31:6, 8; St. Matthew 28:20) This time of seeming abandonment is a test of faith; a test to see whether you will continue to love, trust, obey, and worship God, even when you have no sense of his presence or visible evidence of his work in your life.⁹ Emphasize the importance of faith and not feelings in our relationship with the Lord and the importance of trust in God to keep His promises.

◆ **Personal Devotions.** Discuss with the new believer the importance of having a personal quiet time with the Lord each day.

(1) God wants to meet with us each day (John 4:23).

(2) We develop a personal relationship with the Lord and get to know Him better as we fellowship with Him each day. (1 Corinthians 1:9)

(3) Spiritual strength is received from these personal times with God.

Help the new believer start and maintain a personal devotion time. Outline the activities that may be included in this time with the Lord: prayer, Bible reading, meditation, singing. It would be helpful to have a devotional time with him/her from which the approach may be learnt. Point out however, that our personal quiet time with the Lord should not be a mere habit or ritual.

◆ **Prayer.** Emphasize the importance of prayer in developing a close relationship with the Lord. Prayer is our means of communicating with God. (Matthew 7:7; Philippians 4:6, 7; John 15:7) Teach the new believer how to pray. (Matthew 6:5-14) Allow him/her to pray in your presence. Clarify misconceptions about prayer: there is no need for special language or tone when praying; we pray to the Lord anytime, in any position, and in any place. Prayer may be a short sentence expressing ourselves to the Lord.

⁹ Ibid. p. 109

Discuss the concept of “praying continually”. (1 Thessalonians 5:16) It is possible to carry on a continuous, open-ended conversation with the Lord throughout the day, talking with him about whatever you are doing or thinking *at that moment*. This way, we are conversing with God as we conduct the various activities of our day: shopping, driving, working, studying, etc.¹⁰

- ◆ **Bible Reading.** Encourage the new believer to obey and align his/her life in accordance with the word of God. Present the Bible as the word of God; as God’s means of speaking to mankind. (Joshua 1:8; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:16) Emphasize the importance of daily Bible study and Scripture memorization. “It is impossible to be God’s friend apart from knowing what he says. You can’t love God unless you know him, and you can’t know him without knowing his word.”¹¹

Encourage the new believer to meditate on the word of God throughout the day. “When you think about a problem over and over in your mind, that’s called worry. When you think about God’s Word over and over in your mind, that’s medication. If you know how to worry, you already know how to meditate! You just need to switch your attention from your problems to Bible verses. The more you meditate on God’s word, the less you will have to worry about.”¹²

- ◆ **Fellowship.** Church attendance allows believers to fellowship with each other. Use Scripture to highlight the importance of this fellowship. Show the new believer that he/she is now a part of God’s family. Use the fact that we all belong to a physical family to develop the point of the importance of God’s spiritual family. As family members, we benefit from each other. Each person plays a vital role in the family. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27); Romans 12:5) “Following Christ includes belonging, not just believing. If an organ is somehow severed from its body, it will shrivel and die. It cannot exist on its

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 87.

¹¹ Ibid. P. 90.

¹² Ibid.

own...’’¹³ Encourage the new believer to consistently attend and become involved in the general life of the church. (Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:24, 25; 1 John 1:3) Take the new believer to church and sit with him/her if possible. Help him/her settle and become comfortable in the church fellowship. Introduce the new believer to the other members of the church family and encourage involvement in the various activities

- ◆ **Witnessing.** Sharing our faith helps us grow in the Lord. The Lord commands us to tell others about Him. Others need to hear the good news of salvation. Encourage the new believer to tell others of his/her conversion and the new life in Christ. The home may be a good starting point. (Matthew 4:19; Romans 1:16; 1 Peter 3:15)

- ◆ **Temptation.** The enemy of our souls, the Devil, particularly tempts believers. He uses people and situations to get us to sin. Encourage the new convert to be on the look out for areas of temptation and to rely on the Lord for help in difficult situations. The new believer may be faced with ‘strongholds’ in his/her life that he/she just cannot seem to conquer. The ‘with him’ personal relationship that is established in the follow-up process should allow the new believer to trust the discipler enough to confess this area of difficulty to him/her. Present the merits of confessing areas of weaknesses with another person. (James 5:16) Encourage the new believer to seek the Lord’s forgiveness if mistakes are made. (1 John 1:9; 1 John 2:1)

- ◆ **The Spirit-filled Life.** Use the Scripture to show that the Holy Spirit is deposited in us at conversion. (Romans 8:9, 15) He resides in; us and helps us in every area of our lives. The believer lives under the control of the Holy Spirit and so is kept from sinning. (Galatians 5:18) Talk about the areas that the new convert finds particularly difficult. Point to dependence on the Holy Spirit to overcome these hurdles as we surrender to His will and ways.

¹³ Ibid. p. 131

Critical Thinking

1. Follow-up is a relationship with the new convert; it is not just methodology. It is transferring one's life into others. It is investing in that person (I Thessalonians. 2:8).
2. Follow-up is a commitment. It is a time-consuming process. Be prepared to continue for at least one year.
3. Follow-up demands concentration. One cannot work effectively with too many persons at once. The recommended maximum number of persons to whom a follow-up should be committed to is six.
4. Follow-up requires a spiritual environment which will greatly influence the new believers' growth.
5. The rewards of follow-up far outweigh the work. It can make the difference as to whether or not a new believer gets lost in the sea of confusion, or becomes integrated in the life of a local church.¹⁴

¹⁴ White.

Section II

Training

This section provides the Pastor or Christian Education Director with activities that may be used to conduct a training exercise as the church seeks to make its members aware of the important ministries of altar counselling and follow-up. Individual users of the manual will also find this section useful in equipping him/herself to engage in the respective ministries. The section mostly comprises questions that are presented under subheadings. The questions may be used to

stimulate thought. The graphical presentations may be transferred to transparencies for projection.

Exercises

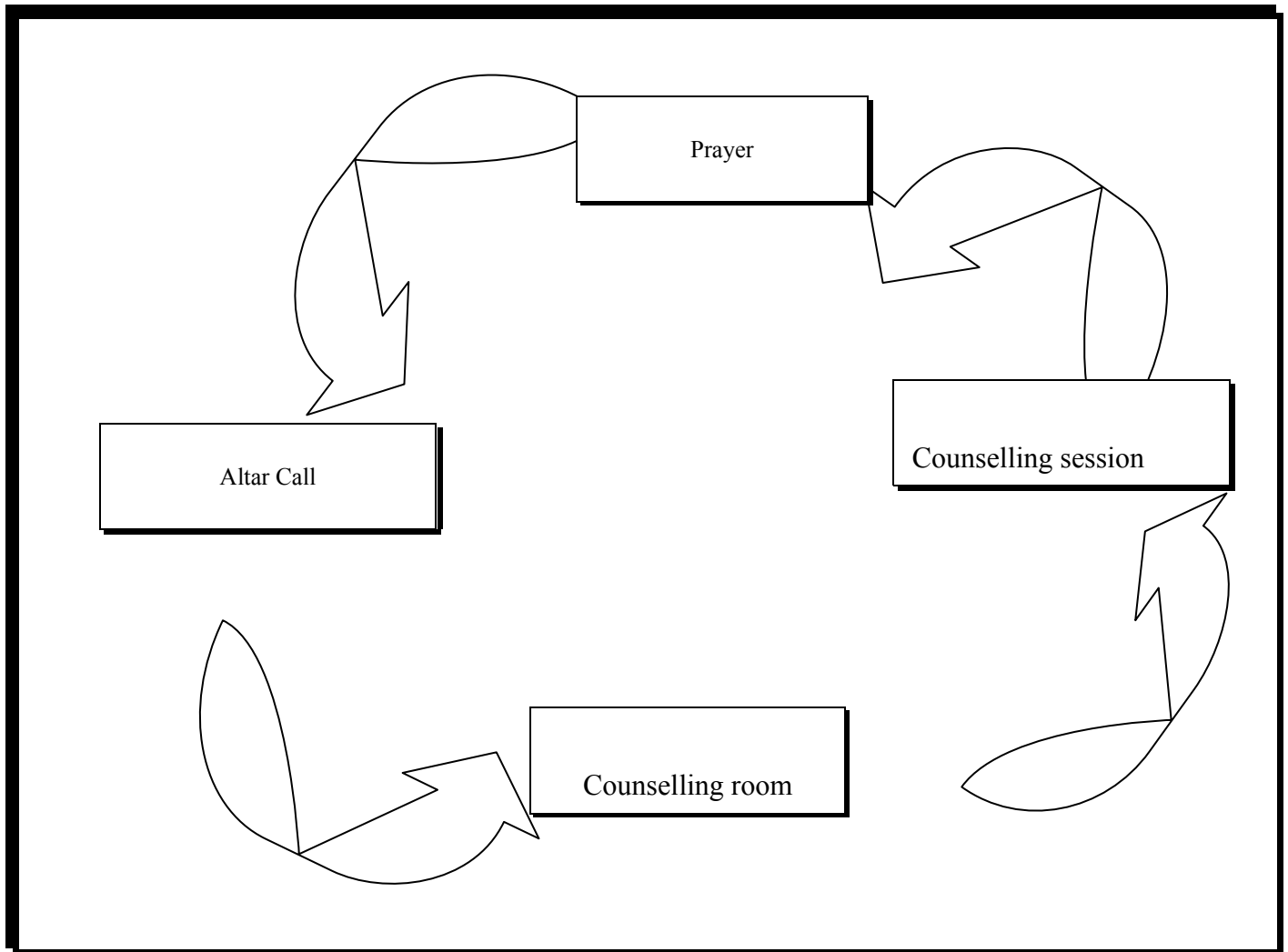
Preparing For Altar Counselling

1. Altar counselling is an essential ministry in the church. Discuss.
2. How might the church prepare believers for active involvement in the altar counselling process?
3. Devise a training programme that prepares believers to be involved in the ministry of altar counselling.
 - a) Who will be the trainer?
 - b) When will the sessions be held?
 - c) What will be the duration of the activity?
 - d) Who will be targeted to participate?
 - e) What will be the desired outcome?

Elements of the Counselling Process

1. Discuss the notion that altar counselling is a process.

2. Identify the critical elements of the process of altar counselling.
3. Discuss the interdependence of each element



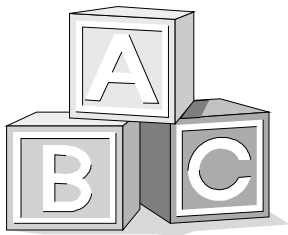
4. Discuss the benefits of prayer:
 - a) prior to the service
 - b) during the service

- c) throughout the counselling process
 - d) on a regular basis
5. Identify and make a list of some of the church jargons that are commonly used. Replace these words with ones that will be understood by the 'unchurched' person today.
 6. Identify some of the potential weaknesses of the counselling process. How might one overcome these?
 7. Identify some of the hindrances to the altar counselling process. Suggest ways to prevent or overcome these.

The Altar Counsellor

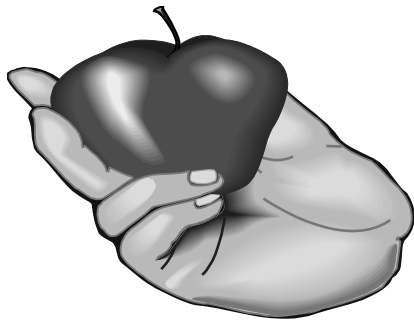
1. In what areas should the altar counsellor seek to prepare him/herself for altar counselling?
2. Discuss the importance of holistic preparation of altar counsellors.
3. Identify the benefits of involving youth and children in the process of altar counselling.
4. What factors should be borne in mind when involving youth and children in the process of altar counselling?

Approaches to Leading A Person to Christ



ABC Approach

Roman Road Approach



Sin Problem Approach



Creation Story Approach

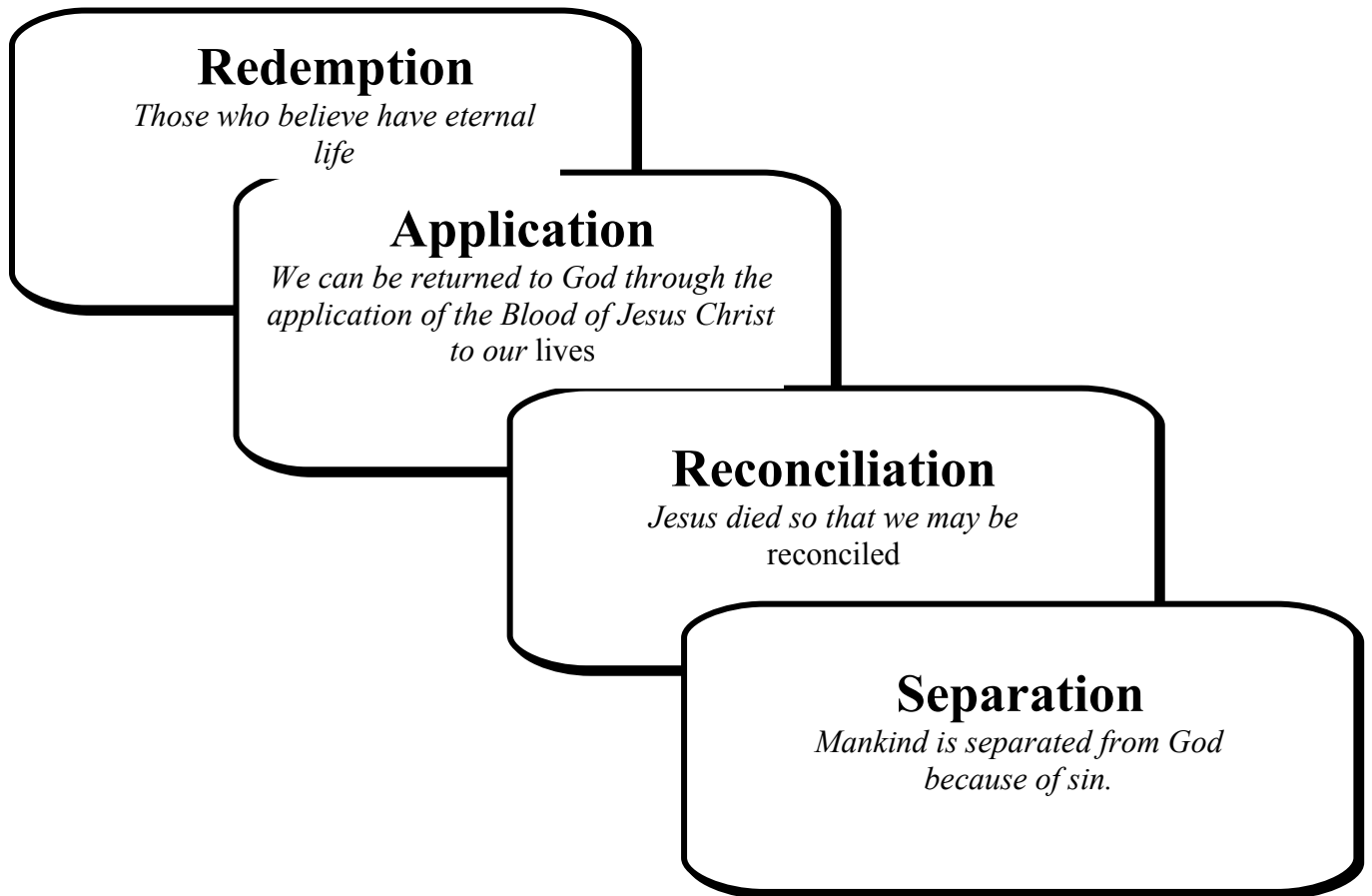
Questions:

1. Which, in your opinion, is the easiest approach that may be used in leading an individual to Christ? Why?
2. What are some factors to be borne in mind when counselling with each of the following groups:
 - a) Children
 - b) Backsliders
 - c) Persons in Common-Law relationships
3. Identify some of the characteristics of children that the counsellor should bear in mind when engaging a child in altar counselling.
4. Identify some of the tools that may be used in counselling children.
5. Never encourage the person living in a common-law relationship to leave the relationship. Why?
6. During an altar counselling session, you discover that the inquirer is living in a common-law relationship. How would you handle this situation?
7. Identify some of the complications that may be encountered in counselling persons living in common-law relationships.
8. What is the most difficult situation that may present itself when counselling the backslider?
9. Identify the various factors that may present as hindrances to the counselling process.
10. Suggest the best way(s) to avoid the things that may present as hindrances to the counselling process?

11. What situation would you **not** like to encounter during an altar counselling session?
12. Get a partner. Practice the approach that you are most comfortable using to lead an inquirer to the Lord. Switch roles being counsellor and inquirer.
13. Identify the commonalities of all the approaches that are used in leading a person to Christ.
14. The word of God assures the believer of salvation. Identify some Scriptures that may be used to help individuals have assurance of salvation.
15. Altar counselling and follow-up are critical to the overall evangelistic efforts of the local church. Discuss.

Common Ground

All the approaches basically highlight five (5) essential facts. These are:



The Counselling Session In A Nutshell

Ascertain what the inquirer wants

Give him/her what he/she wants

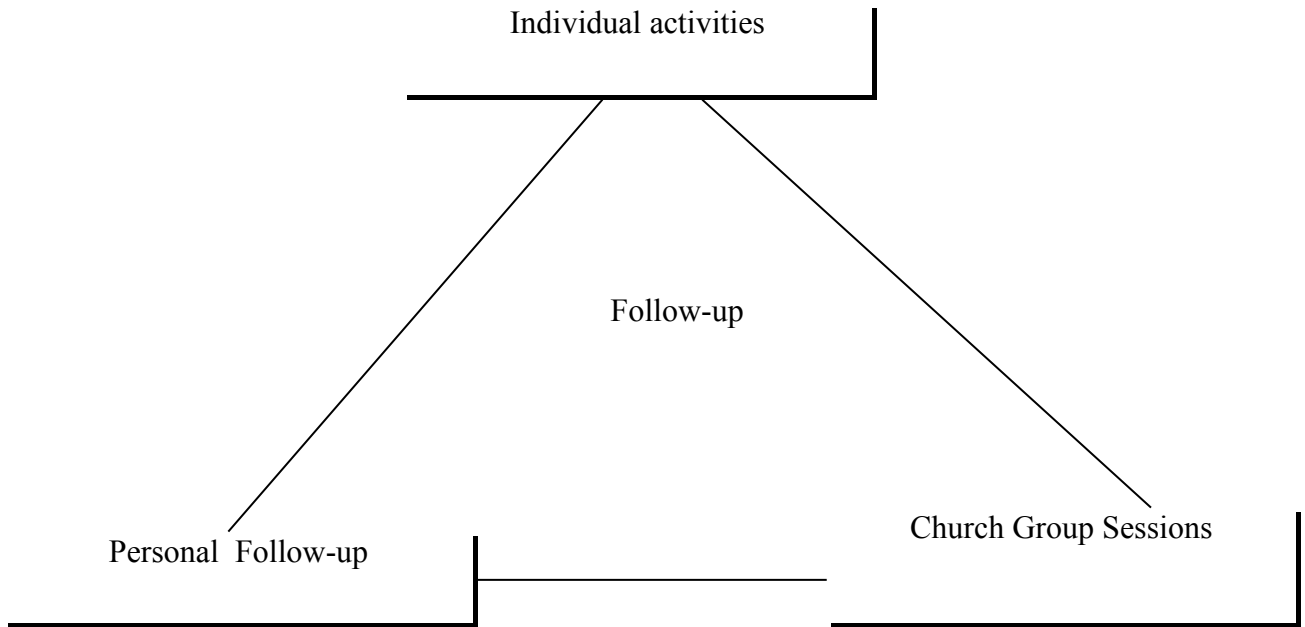
Assure him/her that he/she got what he/she wants

Record the decision

Follow-up

Means:

Identify the various means for follow-up with new believers.



Discuss the merits of each. Is any one more important than the other?
Why or why not?

Questions:

1. What contribution does the follow-up process make to the overall evangelistic efforts of the local church?
2. Compare and contrast personal follow-up with the other methods of follow-up.
3. Identify some of the advantages of personal follow-up
4. What accounts for the low involvement of believers in personal-follow-up? How might believers be encouraged to be involved in this ministry?
5. In what ways does the new believer benefit from personal follow-up?
6. Personal follow-up is a relationship that is established between the discipler and the new believer. Discuss.
7. You are a discipler. What strategies might you put in place to help you persevere in the process?
8. What topics do you think should be included in the personal follow-up process?

Section IV

Appendices

Appendix 1

Sample Prayers

The altar counsellor should lead the inquirer in a prayer for forgiveness. It needs not be lengthy and may follow a basic four-step outline:

1. Acknowledge sinfulness
2. Ask for God's forgiveness on the grounds of Christ's death on Calvary and his shed blood
3. Ask for cleansing from sin by the blood of Jesus.
4. Ask for a new life in Christ.

Sample Prayer For Salvation

Dear Jesus, I believe that you are the Son of God and that you died to save me. I confess that I am a sinner in need of your forgiveness. Please take away my sin and cleanse me with your blood. I invite you to come into my heart and to take full possession of my life. Thank you for hearing me and for your forgiveness.

Sample Prayer for Restoration

Jesus, I admit that I have sinned against you and have left off from following you. I am sorry for what I have done and ask you to forgive me. I now return to your love and trust you to help me not to return to my sinful ways.

Sample Prayer for children

Dear Jesus, I know that I have done many things that make you unhappy. I ask you please to forgive me and to come and live in my heart. Please make me your child from this day onward.

Appendix 2

Visual Aids

The Wordless Book

The Wordless book is just what the name suggests; a book without words. It comprises pages of differing colours, each of which is used to impart specifics of the message of salvation. The wordless book is a useful visual aid in presenting the gospel message to children. This approach is widely embraced by the Jamaica Child Evangelism Fellowship. There are persons who object to the use of this tool, since it is believed that reference made to the dark page as representing a heart of sin and the clear page as representing a cleansed heart, raises racial issues. The wise user will however find a way to dispel this notion and focus on the facts of the gospel message.

The colours of the book are **gold, black** (*dark*), **red, white** and **green**. Show the pages of the book to the children as you talk to them.

The **Gold Page** is used to tell who **God** is

1. He is Creator; He made us
1. He loves us
2. His home is in heaven and He wants us to live with Him there
3. We must be clean (*free from sin*) to live with God in heaven



The **Black Page**: is used to talk about the **problem of sin** or mankind's need for God

1. Give a simple definition of sin. (*example, our actions or thoughts that displease God*)
2. Let the children give some examples of sin
3. Explain that we were all born in sin
4. Explain that our sins separate us from God since God is too holy to tolerate sin

The **Red Page** is used to talk about **the solution** to mankind's problem

1. Talk about Jesus as the Son of God
2. Emphasize His perfection
3. Explain that He took our punishment
4. Explain that He gave his blood for our cleansing
5. Tell them that Jesus died, rose again, and is now in heaven

The **Clear page** is used to talk about **application**

1. Explain that when we invite Jesus in our hearts He makes us clean.
2. Explain that we have assurance of salvation because God promised to forgive us.

The **Green Page** is used to talk about **spiritual growth**

Explain that children can grow in Christ as they: pray, read the Bible, tell others about God's love for them and go to church.

Songs

(1)

*“Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong, they are weak but He is strong.*

*Yes, Jesus loves me, Yes, Jesus loves me
Yes Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.*

*Jesus loves me He who died
Heaven’s gate to open wide
If I love Him, when I die
He will take me home on high.*

(2)

*Into my heart, Into my heart
Come into my heart Lord Jesus.
Come in to stay, come in I pray,
Come into my heart Lord Jesus.*

(3)

*Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world
Whether yellow, black, or white,
They are precious in His sight.
Jesus loves the little children of the world.*

Appendix 3

Sample Decision Card

DECISION CARD	
Name Of Church	
FOR CHURCH RECORDS	
Name: _____	
Address: _____	
Telephone: (H) _____ (Wk.) _____	
Occupation: _____	
Sex: _____	Age Group: _____
Decision: <i>tick one of the following to identify the response of the enquirer</i>	
a) Salvation	c) Recommitment
(b) Restoration	(d) Prayer
Comments: _____	
Counsellor: _____	Date: _____
Follow-up person assigned: _____	

FOR FOLLOW-UP WORKER	
Name: _____	
Address: _____	
Telephone: (H) _____ (Wk.) _____	
Occupation: _____	
Sex: _____	Age Group: _____

FOR NEW BELIEVER	
I, _____,	
give my life to Jesus today (date) _____.	
With God's help, I will faithfully follow Jesus all the days of my life. I will give myself to the study of God's word, prayer, and fellowship with God's people. I promise to tell someone about Jesus Christ and to use my gifts, talents, and abilities in service to the Lord.	
My follow-up counselor is _____ and	
He/she may be contacted at _____	

Appendix 4

Plan For Personal Quiet Time

1. Decide on the time of day most suitable for you to meet with the Lord. It is advised that you stick to the time of day you decide on. This will encourage a disciplined approach to meeting with God.
2. Try to eliminate all possible distractions.
3. Focus your attention on the Lord.
4. Determine the order in which you will pray, study His Word, listening to Him talk to you. This is a personal time with you and your Lord. You can do a number of things in your devotional time (pray, sing, cry, sit in silence, dance) and in whatever order.
5. Plan to spend at least fifteen minutes each time. This time may increase as you become more matured in the Lord.
6. You may want to write down important thoughts that occur to you as you read the word of God. Recognize that He talks to you through His word.
7. There is no need to feel compelled to read a whole chapter at one sitting. Reading small portions of Scripture allows for a more meaningful approach to Bible study.
8. Pray in accordance with the Scripture you read.
9. Try to memorize one verse from the passage you read and meditate on it throughout the day as much as is possible.

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