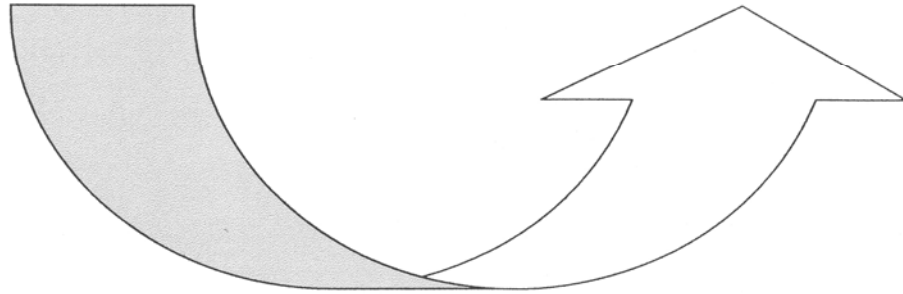


Following-up



New Believers

The Second Nature

Gal 5:16-17 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. 17 For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.

1st Corinthians 10:12 reminds us- Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.

Tommy Nelson, pastor of the Denton Bible Church, in his book "The 12 Essentials of Godly Success" states 'your flesh is hostile to God, and you will never be rid of it this side of death. It is like a constant hangnail. It impedes your progress.'

It is important to note that the flesh is not an equal and opposite force. It has been dethroned in your life as a Christian. The flesh has been crucified with Christ. Its power is broken by the new covenant in the power of the Holy Spirit. But the flesh is still present. It is a live grenade. It is a pit, a loaded gun ... nitroglycerin. It is a rattler always ready to strike.

No academic degree can help you conquer the flesh. No emotional or spiritual experience will give you an ultimate victory.

C.S. Lewis, in his book "The Great Divorce", describes the flesh as a lizard that sits on your shoulder and whispers filth continually in your ear.

Francis of Assisi called the body "Brother Donkey."

Francis Sinatra, the great theologian of Rome, said "your body is the monkey that is never gone ... just waiting its turn."

My point to all the above and the comments in the book by Richard DeHann is just this ...if a new believer is unaware of war that is raging in him, the war to do evil, when he is 'trying' to do good, he will soon come to believe, with the enemy's input, that he is not a Christian. That God has let him down, that he must not be a good enough Christian. So, by works he tries to strengthen himself. He becomes discouraged, depressed and frustrated ... and, without help he will most likely drop out. Before he became a Christian he never had these sorts of struggles. True, before he became a Christian the flesh ruled unchecked in his body. Now, a new, stronger nature has arrived and the old nature is not going to give up without a fight.

In the bible, the Hebrews, who are in slavery, are promised by God that God will guide them into a land flowing with milk and honey. God promises to drive out the enemy before them. The Hebrews have to do their part to serve God and fight the enemy ... knowing that God is good for all He promises.

The Hebrews take Jericho, a walled city, by doing things God's way, and God fights for them so they are victors. They come to the next town, Ai, and are defeated. Remember, God promised to give them victory, to give them the land, to drive out the enemy ... and now they are defeated. Were they defeated by a superior force, insufficient weapons or a better trained army? Even with God on their side, they lose because of SIN.

Men, that is what happens to us. We have God's promises, we have his protection and provisions, but, we are defeated ... we lose a battle, not because we are overwhelmed by a superior force but because of SIN.

1 John 4:4 Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

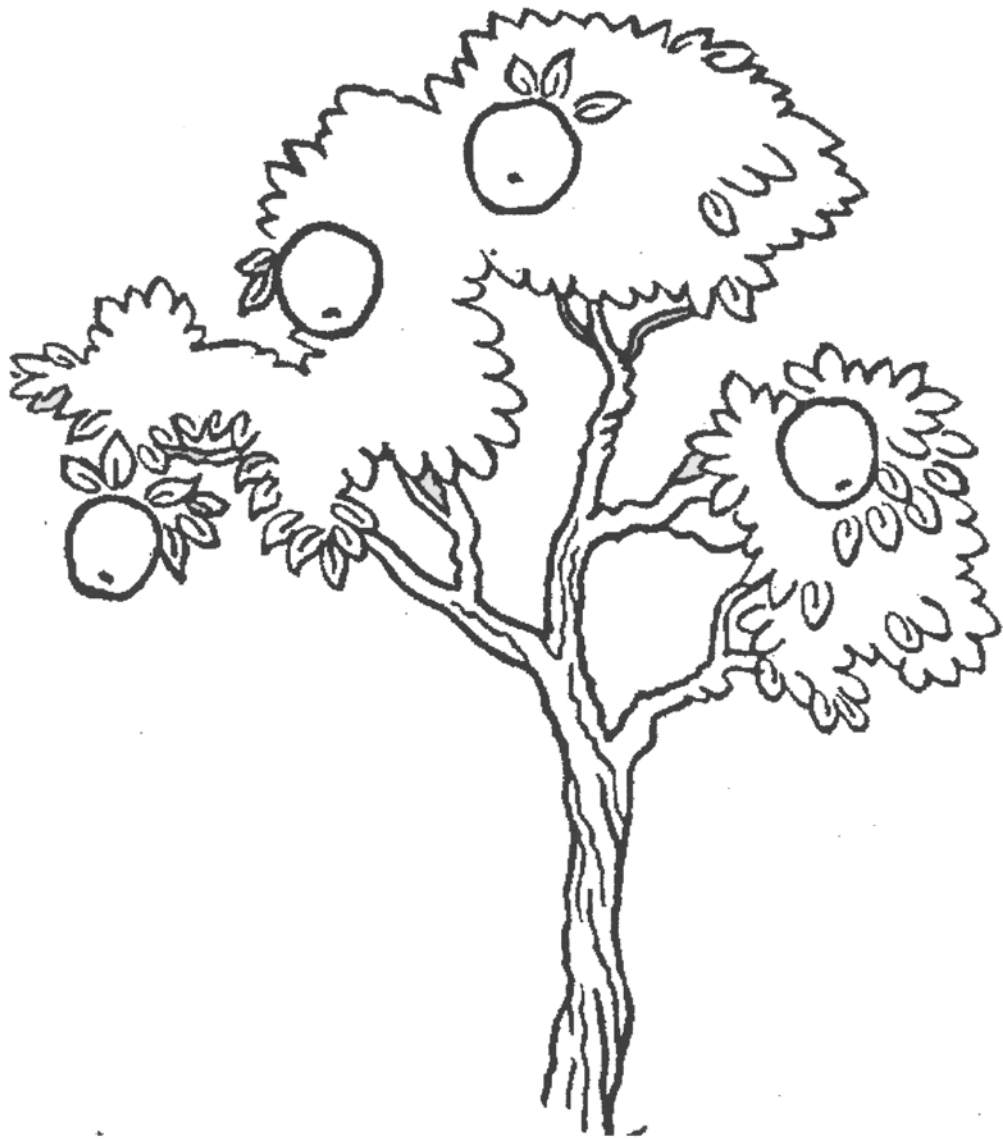
1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man;

We must understand that we be aware of the possibilities of our 'choosing' to sin.

That's why Paul encourages fleeing youthful lust, strengthening our personal fellowship with Jesus and being very sensitive to the Holy Spirit which warns of impending danger. We hide the word in our heart so we have ammunition to fight with. We do not debate, reason or think 'what if'? Take a lesson from Jesus. When tempted, He quoted scripture. He did not debate or carry on a conversation with the enemy. Compare that to Adam and Eve. They got into a discussion with the enemy, listened and sinned. They didn't flee. They didn't say ... 'God said'

I was at Glen Eyre a few years ago for a conference. The main speaker was a missionary from South America. He had some wonderful sermons which I do not remember. But what I do remember is the last thing that he said. "*I hope and pray that I will be here next year and that all of us will also be here, but history proves that a great percentage of us will fall by the wayside and become 'has-beens' for the Lord*". I thought to myself, if this man of God, a seasoned warrior, is concerned ... I am scared. And you know what? I was one of the percentage that fell by the wayside. Only by the grace of God did He pick me up, dust me off, and set me on the path again. That's what I get out of Ecclesiastes 4:9-10.

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. 10 For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.



Why Men Hate Church

By David Murrow

***The following statements are excerpts of page 225 from the book written by David Murrow entitled "Why Men Hate Church".*

Men need a relationship with God

It's not enough for men to connect with each other; they need to connect with God. Our churches are full of men who know about God, but who do not know God personally.

For men the question is not "Am I saved, confirmed, baptized, a church member, a practicing Catholic, a believer, a Christian, or Spirit filled," All of these things are good, but they do not get to the heart of the matter. The real question is not one of status but one of practice: "Am I walking with God? Am I following Jesus Christ today?"

Once men are saved/confirmed/baptized/members, we tend to forget about them. We teach them principles and give them moral guidance, but we do not show them how to walk with God. The average church going guy has no idea how to follow Jesus for three reasons:(1) he has never been shown how to do it, (2) he has never seen another man doing it(other than a pastor), and (3) he thinks it's about religious practice and moral living.

We call men to confirmation, church membership, and salvation because we can count these things. We can report them to headquarters. It's harder to count the number of men walking with God, but is there anything more important to the health of your church? Men need to follow Jesus Christ, but we cannot expect them to do it alone. It takes spiritual fathers and a band of brothers. It takes a team.

Jack received Jesus during an invitation at his local church. Two months later, he no longer went to church, had lost contact with believers, and was not living any discernible Christian life.
MORE THAN HALF OF CHRISTIAN CONVERSIONS END THIS WAY.

Gal 6:1-2 Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.

Mark 12:28-31 "What commandment is the foremost of all?" 29 Jesus answered, "The foremost is, 'HEAR, O ISRAEL! THE LORD OUR GOD IS ONE LORD; 30 AND YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH.' 31 "The second is this, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' There is no other commandment greater than these."

Statistics indicate that after a life-changing decision to follow Christ many new Christians quickly return to their old way of life. They lose interest in fellowship with other believers. They attend church irregularly ... Why Does This Happen? What can we do?

Throughout this study our attention will be on the evidence that we see in many churches within our communities. We see a lack of continued attendance and fellowship by new believers. Is that the problem or does it go deeper than that?

Satan Steals the Word

Mark 4:1-8, 13-20

Mark 4:1-8

He began to teach again by the sea. And such a very large crowd gathered to Him that He got into a boat in the sea and sat down; and the whole crowd was by the sea on the land. 2 And He was teaching them many things in parables, and was saying to them in His teaching, 3 "Listen to this! Behold, the sower went out to sow; 4 as he was sowing, some seed fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate it up. 5 "Other seed fell on the rocky ground where it did not have much soil; and immediately it sprang up because it had no depth of soil. 6 "And after the sun had risen, it was scorched; and because it had no root, it withered away. 7 "Other seed fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked it, and it yielded no crop. 8 "Other seeds fell into the good soil, and as they grew up and increased, they yielded a crop and produced thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."

Mark 4:13-20

*And He said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables? 14 "The sower sows the word. **15 "These are the ones who are beside the road where the word is sown; and when they hear, immediately Satan comes and takes away the word which has been sown in them.** 16 "In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away. 18 "And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, 19 but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. 20 "And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."*

Fact / Evidence

(What Do We See)

**They 'lose interest in fellowship'.
They 'attend church irregularly'.**

Problem / Cause

(Why Is This Happening?)

Satan steals the Word

Prov 28:14 How blessed is the man who fears always, But he who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.

Rom 2:5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Matt 13:19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it,

Matt 7:26 Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.

James 1:22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.

Solution / Cure

(What Can We Do About It?)

Hold Tight to the Word of God

Isaiah 66:2 For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being," declares the Lord. "But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at my word.

Hosea 10:12 Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord.

John 6:37 All that the Father gives me ...I will certainly not cast out.

Heb 3:13 But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Careless Hearing

Mark 4:16-17

Mark 4:16-17

"In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; 17 and they have no firm root in themselves, but are only temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.

Fact / Evidence

(What Do We See)

They 'lose interest in fellowship'.

They 'attend church irregularly'.

Problem / Cause

(Why Is This Happening?)

Careless Hearing

Matt 8:19 Then a scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go."

Galatians 1:6 I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him.

Galatians 4:15 Where then is that sense of blessing you had?

Hosea 6:4 For your loyalty is like a morning cloud and like the dew which goes away early.

Isaiah 29:13 People draw near with their words and honor me with their lip service.

Solution / Cure

(What Can We Do About It?)

Be 'In' the Written Word of God

John 5:24 He who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me.

John 8:31 If you continue in My word ...32 you will know the truth.

John 8:47 He who is of God hears the words of God.

Ezek 33:31 They come to you as people come, and sit before you as My people and hear your words, but they do not do them.

The bible is the written Word of God.

Cares of the World

Mark 4:18-19

Mark 4:18-19

"And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word, 19 but the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."

Fact / Evidence

(What Do We See)

They 'lose interest in fellowship'.

They 'attend church irregularly'.

Problem / Cause

(Why Is This Happening?)

Cares of the World

Luke 10:40 But Martha was distracted with all her preparations.

Matt 6:31 Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'

Luke 21:34 Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down.

Matt 16:26 "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?"

Ps 127:2 It is vain for you to rise up early, to retire late, to eat the bread of painful labors;

Prov 23:4-5 Not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. 5 When you set your eyes on it, it is gone.

Luke 12:15-21 Then He said to them, " Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions." 16 And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man was very productive. 17 "And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' 18 "Then he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19'And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" 20 "But God said to him, ' You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' 21 "So is the man who stores up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Solution / Cure
(What Can We Do About It?)

Matt 6:33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness ...

Matt 6:19-21 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 "But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; 21 for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matt 6:24 No one can serve two masters.

Heb 13:5 Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, " I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU,"

Suggestions

Roy Robertson says... “Someone must follow-up with a new Christian within 2-3 weeks of his conversion or he will most likely drop out.

- He will not have the Spiritual food needed to continue in the faith.
- He may not know for sure what he has committed to.
- He will not know how to have a personal relationship with Jesus unless some one helps him early on.

John Crawford say’s ... “People do what they have been done with”.

When we have the pleasure to witness a person’s conversion at church or hear of a person accepting Jesus, I suggest the following.

- Call or visit with the individual to share the joy of a new brother in Christ.
- Ask how he came to know Jesus and who had a part in guiding him to Jesus.
- Ask him if he knows who Jesus is. If he does not understand that Jesus is God, he needs help in understanding.
- Share some of your experiences of being a new Christian.
- Offer to show him how to have an appointment with Jesus every morning, how to pray, read his bible and the importance of memorizing scripture.
- Teach him the assurance of salvation. Give him a devotional book, encourage him to begin reading the gospel of John, offer to meet again to see how he is doing and to see if he has any questions.

All this could be done over a cup of coffee, breakfast or lunch. We want to give him enough to get started but not too much to overwhelm him. A new baby only needs a couple of ounces of milk but he needs it often. Try to make an appointment to meet him again.

Your brief testimony of the joy of being in the presence of God and His leadership will be important to him.

Try, try not to use church lingo, but share in very simple terms.

Hopefully you will have an opportunity after several meetings to share the old and nature and what to be aware of that could derail him.

Invite him to join your bible study group or to join with you when you meet with your Paul or Timothy. He must have Christian fellowship! He will loose a lot of his old friends of the world and we must fill the vacuum.

As you talk with listen, listen, the Holy Spirit will give you discernment and the man will tell you the needs he has with out him knowing exactly what is the problem if there is one..

Pray and enlist some men to pray with you. Pray for each spiritual discipline to be understood and grasped by our new brother.

You can do this in the power of Jesus Christ.

Summary

Following-Up New Believers

Why do we need to follow-up?

The second nature (pgs 1-2)

Christ commands it (pg 4)

New believers don't know what to do (pg 4)

Satan steals the Word (pgs 5-6)

Nobody else is 'doing' it (pg 6)

Careless hearing (pg 7)

Cares of the world (pgs 8-9)

How can we identify the problem?

New believers start attending fellowship less (pg 5)

New believers start slipping back into their previous lifestyle (pg 5)

What can we do?

Help them personally know God (pg10)

Pray and enlist others to pray with you. (pg10)

Question ...“Why Does This Happen?”

Statistics indicate that after a life-changing decision to follow Christ many new Christians quickly return to their old way of life. They lose interest in fellowship with other believers. They attend church irregularly.

(Please briefly answer the two following questions and return to leader.)

Why does this happen?

What can we, as individuals, do to help these brothers get back on the path to have peace and joy that Jesus offers those who follow Him?