

DANIEL HOLLAND

SECOND
EDITION

A practical handbook

CARING

for new Christians



A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK

*Caring
for new
Christians*

**AN INTRODUCTORY
RESOURCE
FOR CHURCHES
AND FELLOWSHIPS**

DANIEL HOLLAND

DEDICATION

*for he is our God
and we are the
people of his pasture,
the flock under his care*

(PSALM 95 v7a)

To the great shepherd of the sheep
and the lover of our souls, Jesus Christ.
From Him every true underling shepherd and
tender of men's souls learns his vocation.

Appreciation to all evangelists, pastors,
small group leaders and disciplers
who both hunger for the lost
and nurture new Christians.

Thanks to the long-suffering Christians
who gave me grace to learn and
grow on the job as a pastor.

Thanks to my parents for investing so much
Scripture into me – and for your love of Scripture.

As always, love and gratitude
to Rebecca and Anna,
especially for the time you sacrifice
for me to undertake such projects.
Glory to God.

Foreword

In ancient Sparta it was the common practice to abandon newborn babies outside the shelter of the home where they would be exposed to the full force of snow, rain, ice and hail. Not surprisingly, given this cruel and inhumane practice, many precious young lives were lost.

No parent with half an ounce of compassion would dream of depriving their children of love, nurture, food or discipline. Yet so often as churches, that is precisely what we do with new believers in Christ, leaving them to sink or swim against treacherous tides that so often pull them out to sea.

In this extremely important and timely new volume, Dan Holland stresses the importance of guiding new believers through the early stages of Christian life so that they can be trained, encouraged and equipped for the challenges that lie ahead. He explains in clear and direct language how to prepare the new Christian to stand against the attacks of the evil one on the one hand, and to navigate the initially strange uncharted territory of church life and Christian culture on the other.

Writing as someone who has at different times worked as a youth worker, pastor and evangelist, Dan writes with passion, focus and clarity and a real insight and experience of the issues involved. Packed with real-life case studies and anecdotes, he presents vital strategies to help new believers grow to their full potential in Christ, and to help churches become friendly and welcoming places where new Christians can flourish and multiply.

At a time when the culture of the world and the culture of the true church are pulling apart from one another at ever-increasing speed, this book could not have come at a more important time.

In this new season more than ever we need to train up those who can stand against everything the world and our fallen culture throws against them.

For this reason, I cannot commend this book too highly.

A Practical Handbook for Caring for New Christians is not just a must-have handbook for pastors, elders, youth workers and housegroup leaders, but for anyone who has a heart to see the lost brought to maturity in Christ, since all of us as believers play a vital part in bringing up new members of the church family.

Alongside the author's recent ***Prophetic Evangelism*** (Christian Publications International, 2021) and the important companion volume to the present book (***'A Practical Handbook for Growing as a New Christian'***) it would make an ideal addition to any bookshelf, and one that will be treasured greatly for many years to come.

DAVID LAMBOURN (EVANGELIST)

Author, 'But is He God?' (Paternoster, 2014)

I am glad to commend this book. We can easily forget that when someone becomes a Christian and is born again, the battle is not actually over, it has just begun. This book is a fountain of practical advice and godly wisdom from Dan Holland, which will be extremely helpful in bringing new Christians into the fruitful life and ministry which is God's purpose for them.

REV. JAMES ALEXANDER.

(ST ANDREWS CHURCH, OAKINGTON)

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Introduction and explanation

It's so encouraging during missions, evangelistic services and of course everyday life when people give their lives to Jesus. As Christians we are elated by this, and rightly so. However, six months or two years later, where are these new Christians to be found? Statistically very few are rooted and growing healthily in local churches. Too often they have rarely been seen since the occasion they made their commitment. Of course, our faithful God goes on working in their lives. Sometimes individuals actively decide not to engage with us, but that does not have to be the end of the story. For our part, however, there are things that we could do to better to facilitate integrating believers into church life. Often there is no lack of goodwill or desire to do this, but we need practical help. The purpose of this handbook is to put some tools in your hands, and to reduce as much as possible the unnecessary falling away of new Christians.

FOR CHURCHES AND FELLOWSHIPS

We pray you will find something helpful, even inspirational, in this resource to help you disciple new Christians. Our material is not definitive, nor does it answer every question, but it sets out some universal truths, even

where they may be exacting or uncomfortable! We unapologetically present some ideal scenarios, while recognizing you have busy lives and time pressures which mean no one person can do everything. Tasks can be shared and ideas may be sparked. We want to equip you to do the best you can with the resources you have, trusting God is at work. We highlight patterns and rhythms rather than formulas.

Please work through the material. Why not make each chapter the subject of a Bible study with good group discussion and interaction? If you discover areas where you think you could do better, then together you could pray and seek to develop an action plan to move you closer to where you think the Spirit wants you to be.

Sometimes neglected, it is the task of the local fellowship to 'bring-up' the new disciple in the Christian faith, to see them mature in Christ. Different 'churches' will have differing theological insights, understandings and constructs. Our material is, we hope, usable across most normative Christian 'streams'. You may wish to adapt some insights to better reflect where you stand, however we believe this material is practical, biblically balanced and Spirit inspired. That is not said in any attitude of triumphalism but rather in acknowledgement that there is, and must be, a "right" path to tread in following Jesus. Jesus Himself said that the path to life is narrow and the door to the sheepfold is narrow. This implies we must take care how we live our lives in His Kingdom. It also implies forward movement, as in any journey. We are not static –

we are all moving forward. Realistically, if we are not moving forward, then we are slipping backwards!

A new disciple should experience support and encouragement. Some churches seem to assume that Christians mature 'naturally' or that it is entirely God's province. However, Scripture and practical experience tell us otherwise. It is our God-given role and privilege to help bring on the new Christian so they will grow and prosper within the Kingdom, becoming agents for change, able and willing to share their faith. This book will stimulate your reflections and actions to that end.

We sincerely pray you will be blessed and equipped as you read this short handbook.

Explanatory note 1

In this book we use the term 'he' and 'him' in preference to 's/he' and 'them'. Plainly the points we are making are gender neutral and gender blind, but in terms of writing flow 'he' and 'him' works best! You can make adjustments in your mind as you use this material, and we are sure most readers will be quite relaxed about this!

PART ONE

*The Bible,
prayer and
baptism*

1 The Bible and prayer

FINDING RHYTHM

The primary way the new Christian is going to grow is through digesting Scripture. As quickly as possible let's encourage him into the Bible both in shared times together and in his personal life (it used to be called a "quiet time"). Realistically the new Christian will need help with this. Reading of the Bible is spiritually opposed by forces of darkness, so we need to be proactive. Every new Christian will differ in reading ability, intellect and learning style (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, written or experiential). It is important we take these differences prayerfully into account. Holy Spirit can increase a new convert's ability and capacity; the surest signs of His work in the new Christian's life will be an insatiable appetite for the Scriptures!

The Bible is one book that shouldn't necessarily be read first from start to finish, especially the first time around. Generally, it is best to start off in the gospels. Mark is short and accessible but the Holy Spirit may guide the new Christian elsewhere. The important thing is that he engages with Scripture actively. Big chunks, small bites, grazing on scripture through the day; focussed times of study, the new Christian will find his own rhythm. Where there is a will

there is a way; what he needs is encouragement. Anointed books of biography and teaching, while inspirational in their place, should never supplant Scripture.

We live in an era of endless resources and translations of the Bible. There is no excuse, we can find a version¹ that suits everyone. Possibly, for example, the Manga Bible for teenagers and the NIV for adults, all in the hope that they will branch out in other versions as they are enthralled with God's Word. Our new Christian can listen to the Scriptures through any number of streaming sites and apps. There are dramatized film versions of the Bible and audio Scriptures set to all styles of music and any number of websites with tips to help him engage.

Let's get the Bible at the heart of the Christian's life right at the beginning, establishing a powerful habit. He will pick up on our love of Scripture and his faith will take root and grow strong. His discipleship will flow out from a childlike understanding of the Word of God. This is our urgent prayer.

BIBLE STUDIES TOGETHER

This must be bespoke, not a formula (it's tempting to pick the epistle or resource that touched us profoundly!). Let's be Spirit led; there are brilliant resources out there. What will help a

¹ *However you may find that a new Christian is quite happy with an 'adult' Bible such as the NIV. This may depend on reading ability and maturity. We do not have to "dumb-down", but be sensitive to needs.*

new Christian most is practical teaching, speaking into his issues at the time: self-esteem, addictions, sexuality, handling rejection, anger and relationships. An intuitive and creative discipler will quickly discern what best helps and energizes the convert. If the new Christian is from a Muslim or Hindu background, concentrate on scriptures relating to the divinity of Christ. Or from the New Age; the true spirituality of Christ, maybe the gospel of John.

FOR THEIR SAKE

God will have been at work in the new Christian by His Spirit long ago, before salvation, teaching them things that you can now show them in Scripture. They will be delighted by this. As a discipler there may well be a cost in curbing your own enthusiasm; refusing to be self-indulgent in your Bible studies together. You have other forums to explore deeper truths of the faith, so be unselfish. We live in a visual age; the new Christian mustn't ever be made to feel bad that he can't read fast or takes time to grasp things. As they say, Rome was not built in a day! Discipleship and progress to maturity will take time. Repetition is a big part of absorbing truth.

NOT TOO MUCH, NOT TOO LITTLE

Don't force feed the new Christian, this is counterproductive. Rather, stimulate his spiritual appetite and give him a taste for Scripture himself. Too little interaction with the Bible and

he will wither up. Too much and he may get spiritual indigestion. A spiritual babe needs just the right amount. A skilful discipler will know when to exhort and encourage.

It will be obvious when it's time to introduce 'meat' into the new Christian's spiritual diet. As the believer engages with Scripture over time, we should prayerfully expect to see and work

Growth to maturity – the Christian journey

	JOURNEY STAGE	KINGDOM DYNAMIC	SALVATION PURPOSE	EFFECT
▶	Repent and seek the Saviour	Entry into the Kingdom	What Jesus has done for you	Justification
▶	Baptism	Publicly marks our 'engagement' (betrothal) to Jesus	Demonstration that you are on THE WAY	Marks an irreversible turning point
▶	Baptism in the Holy Spirit	Outpouring of power and authority to enable Kingdom living	Witness to unsaved and strengthening the family of believers	Power Courage Ability to witness
▶	Rejoicing in the Word	Kingdom truths revealed throughout history	Confidence in God's Salvation plan	Growth into maturity
▶	Journey into Righteousness	Kingdom living	What you do for Jesus	Sanctification

towards these stages in his development. The diagram below is not a prescriptive formula, but it indicates scriptural patterns for salvation and therefore how things might happen sequentially in a discipleship journey:

PRAYER

To inculcate a lifestyle of prayer in the new Christian is one of the greatest gifts that we could pass on. Firstly, we can demonstrate simple prayer, in times together, and in meetings. Secondly, we can encourage the new Christian to talk naturally to God themselves; about big things, small things and in everyday life. This can be in structured sessions, and, maintaining a conversation with God through the day. Thirdly we can pray regularly for their prayer life to grow. Fourthly we can model listening to God, which is after all at least half of what prayer is! Let's affirm any growth in the new Christians prayer life and celebrate any answers to prayer. We can study Biblical prayers together.

REPENTANCE

Repentance is not a once and for all moment of crisis, although that is often the start of the Christian journey. Repentance, literally meaning a change of mind leading to a change of direction, is the process by which the life of the new Christians changes progressively to become like Jesus. It never stops, and we mustn't be embarrassed by this, we should

encourage the new Christian to keep short accounts with God and others. Equally we should warn against condemnation, the enemy's counterfeit. Conviction from God comes with peace and precision, and we should welcome it, acting swiftly upon it.

2 Baptism

This practical handbook has no pretensions of being a theological treatise, however, we assert that the next biblical step of obedience after **conversion** is **baptism**. Not a complicated or extreme step, but somehow it has become a hot potato. Baptism is the prophetic identification with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, the washing away of sins, renunciation of the devil and agreement with Christ and His new life. It is healthy for the new Christian in every emotional, spiritual, psychological, relational and rational sense, ushering in a full and free life.

Jesus fulfilled all the law and the prophets, distilling all the Old Testament rituals into two simple and accessible observances, the bread and wine of communion, and baptism. Let's help new Christians to the simple obedience of baptism as quickly as possible (just as in the book of Acts). My previous pastor would pull the tide timetable out of his draw in a flash as soon as anyone mentioned baptism (it was a coastal town). Normally within a week they'd been baptised in the sea!

If the new Christian has already been christened as a child, then this will be an (adult) believer's baptism. Some family members, friends or even Christians may be upset by this stand. We need to work through this sensitively and

prayerfully, respecting decisions previously made by their family while firmly pointing towards baptism. We do not seek to cause offence, but Jesus made it plain there are sacrifices we all must make. If there is no way to baptise the new Christian, then there could be a public recognition of their sincere commitment such as confirmation. We recognise here that there are many traditions, and just as many styles of church, God ultimately always looks at the heart.

Our instinct is to protect the new Christian from the very challenges that have made us strong in faith. We must trust that God is in this process and knows what He is doing. The new Christian will intuitively pick up on our faith, or lack of it!

NEW CHRISTIAN AND BAPTISM COURSES

We recognise the high value of courses which can help develop the new Christian's understanding and give a teaching framework for faith. As a pastor I spent hours with new Christians going through the scriptures, preparing them for baptism. However, simple childlike obedience is equally important to perfect understanding. We mustn't try to be wiser than God and hold out 'hoops' of our own design for the new Christian to jump through. If Jesus Himself, the Son of God, submitted to baptism then how much more must the new Christian? Jesus did not presume to step out into His ministry before 'fulfilling all righteousness' in baptism.

We all have a story about someone who was baptised, yet never seen again and is now far from God. We've agonised about whether they were baptised too soon or weren't really saved, but we mustn't allow a bad experience to alter our theology and practise. As we stick determinedly to Biblical instruction, we will see good fruit. We do not suggest baptising someone on a whim without any evidence of faith, yet we note that in the first century AD the risk implicit with baptism was deemed testimony of real and saving belief. There is no biblical precedent of a new Christian needing to 'prove' their faith to church leaders. They were instructed about it, they asked for it (often immediately) and were then baptised. One approach that may be helpful is suggested here:



FIND A TIME AND PLACE

Baptism is a powerful public declaration of faith for the new Christian. Their family and friends can be invited to share this momentous moment and to hear the gospel for themselves. If you live by the sea, a suitable lake, or an outdoor swimming pool, these can be great

locations to conduct baptisms, including all the church family. I have baptised people outside as early as Easter, and as late as October. You might equally hire a mobile baptismal pool or request use of the built-in pool of some friendly local church. I baptised someone on New Year's Eve in a heated outdoor pool!

Get a date in the diary and a suitable time to invite friends and family as soon as possible. It's incredibly meaningful for the new Christian to mark their faith publicly and with their family members (Christian or not). If it can't be a public baptism, then still proceed with whatever options are available to you. I heard of an elderly man being baptised in his bath. Or you might provide an intimate service with just three or four present, there can always be a celebration later. It is good to give the baptised Christian a few hours company before sending them home, especially if they are going back to a hostile environment.

HOLY SPIRIT GIFTS AND AFFIRMATIONS

Immediately after baptism, gather around the new Christian and pray for the infilling of Holy Spirit. Scripturally this is often a time when God affirms baptism with the in-filling of His Spirit.

The new Christian may receive new spiritual giftings, and often will experience deep joy and peace. Just as we see this in the life of Jesus, the Father wonderfully affirms His son(s) either directly or through the assembled believers.

Baptism is an occasion to celebrate a new Christian's acceptance into the family. Bibles, pertinent Christian books and cards encourage someone who has taken this step of obedience. New Christians will be touched by these tokens; perhaps they come from dysfunctional homes and broken relationships where there was no celebration of their important decisions.

Some people still treasure their baptismal cards decades later.

Baptism services are accompanied by a tangible sense of the presence of God. They are a wonderful celebration. Why not conclude with a fellowship meal, a picnic by the sea or a group meal at an inexpensive local restaurant?

PROTECTING IN PRAYER AND FELLOWSHIP

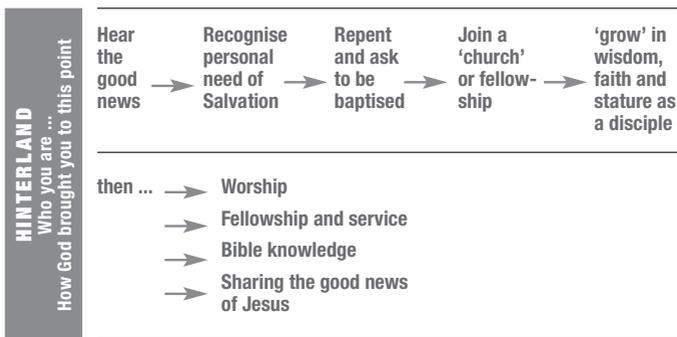
Some Churches are reluctant to suggest baptism to new Christians. They worry about the spiritual attacks that can follow-on from this momentous and defining event. We remember, indeed, that Jesus was driven straight away into the wilderness after His baptism where He did battle with the devil. However, to deny someone baptism because of our fears is surely an agreement with the enemy instead of trust in the purposes and commandments of God! We should preach baptism, while surrounding the new Christian before, during and after with prayer and moral support.

We mustn't try to protect someone from

themselves, or from biblical faith, no matter how well intentioned we feel we are. Nor should we inculcate fear into a new Christian about what might happen after baptism. We can warn that it might be tough, but it will also bring huge blessing with it. We seek to build faith in the new Christian not only to stand after baptism but emerge as a disciple. The occasion can be followed up immediately with one-on-one discipleship. Baptism is not the end of the story, marvellous as it is, it's the commencement of the lifelong adventure of discipleship. There are exciting and blessed times ahead!

Our diagram below sets out the Christian journey at its most basic in the sense of what happens when someone comes to faith. On the left side there is a 'hinterland' of life, background and (perhaps) religious experience, but at some clear point there will be a definitive hearing of the good news, of the gospel, following which understanding and acceptance ('belief') occur in the individual. A 'decision' for Christ will be made, followed at some point by baptism. Then the journey of faith begins:

What happens when someone comes to faith in Jesus



PART TWO

*Welcoming
new
Christians*

3 The Culture Chasm

PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE

Prayerfully anticipate the practical needs of the new Christian, who has just taken a huge step into an unknown new world. He may need a lift to church meetings, reminders of service times and opportunity afterwards to discuss aspects he doesn't understand. He may require financial help with rail tickets or buses, although this requires sensitivity.

LANGUAGE OF ZION!

I vividly recall how unsettling it was on one of my Indian missions when my pastor friends switched from English and rattled off in Telugu or Hindi, looking pointedly at me. Once I asked why they made this sudden language change; they'd been making some personal comments about me. At other times it was habitual for them as genuinely bilingual people. As English speakers, we are spoilt because most nations have at least a smattering of English.

Similarly, have you ever seen a doctor who gets a second opinion and goes off in 'doctor speak' that is absolute gibberish to you? Both examples are akin to a church community; one minute everyone is speaking normally, then suddenly they are switching to the language of Zion. This is the 'holy' language of Christians.

There are different dialects, but someone who has been around church circles for any amount of time knows what I mean.

For a new Christian, this heavenly language is confusing and excluding, rather like my experience in India. But it could leave him feeling alienated. There's nothing unusual about groups of people using coded language when they are together, but with a newcomer we must actively counteract the language of Zion, being as inclusive and accessible as possible. Our new Christian may not say, especially at first, that he doesn't understand what's going on. We need empathy. Below are some questions worth reflecting on.

- *Am I speaking in plain English?*
- *Am I saying what I mean to say?*
- *Am I assuming a level of understanding that isn't there?*
- *Could I say the same thing with more clarity and less religious baggage?*

Below are some hypothetical comments (with interpretations!) to illustrate my point. You will no doubt recognise some different dialects of this language! The more normal and approachable our language the better. It's a good exercise for us to try to de-codify our language. So try to avoid:

Pastor was in the Spirit today!

(I liked the message)

Brother George is in a fleshly stage

(George is in a grump)

The eucharist was beautiful

(I was touched taking the communion)

Dear Bert, bless him. What a talker he is!

(Bert is a gossip)

The anointing of God was awesome!

(I felt the presence of God)

The vicar's spiritual

(The vicar won't speak to you, he's not personable and nobody understands him!)

PERSONAL SPACE

There are different church cultures. Some of this reflects denominational preferences and individual personalities. I am used to churches where we hug occasionally and some people get a holy kiss too.

Let's be mindful that a new Christian might find this strange. They might want to watch and listen unobserved from a distance. Maybe they have social anxieties and choose to slip in midway through the service. We should withhold judgement, it may not be just bad time-keeping! The new Christian may not want to be hugged. Remember what a big step it is for him to walk into a church service for the first few times.

Another new Christian may be emotionally

withdrawn. It is healthy and healing for him to have platonic affection expressed in church life. We can pray for emotional intelligence (EQ) to read situations well, and to respond accordingly.

Sometimes body language can be misleading. One couple visited my previous church and judging by their body language, especially the man, I assumed they had not enjoyed the service at all. I was bracing myself for a 'ticking off' afterwards (Pastors will know what I mean here). Instead, they returned and stayed with us for years. He became a trustee and was very supportive in our vision. So even if we are good at reading 'body language', let's not assume we've got it right every time.

Let me introduce two 'animals' whose characteristics illustrate my point...

THE PORCUPINE



That spiky, contrary person who puts people's backs up and gives off an air of hostility may in reality be a teddy bear inside who melts if given a morsel of affection. Ironically, people mostly give the *porcupine* a wide berth to avoid those poisoned spikes!

THE OCTOPUS



That new Christian who oozes love and tactile affection may be covering for his nerves. He's trying to settle in this new Christian community. The tiniest rebuff and he is 'destroyed'. All his extrovert affection is not, in his case, a marker of

wholeness – perhaps indeed the reverse. He may need help with spiritual cleansing. Some of the women feel uncomfortable when he cuddles them longer than they would like.

The new Christian (*octopus*) observes the tactile affection in the Church community and starts hugging and kissing indiscriminately. He loves this inclusive and supportive environment, and rightly so, especially as he was very lonely. However, this hugging and kissing is supposed to be ‘holy’. The Octopus may not read the body language of other Christians which is screaming, ‘don’t touch me’. It seems churlish to tell a bright-eyed convert to stop being so tactile. We hope that the Pastor will ‘deal with it’. Don’t be threatened by the enthusiastic welcome of the new Christian, give him lots of grace.

Conversely some churches give visitors rather too much ‘personal space’ and probably need to engage more. It would be tragic if a new Christian never returned because he didn’t feel welcome, however great the meeting otherwise had been. First impressions are powerful, and stick with us!

With this next anecdote, please bear in mind I have pastored a church and understand time pressure on Sunday mornings. Bec and I were on holiday and visited a big city church. Nobody spoke to us as we entered and sat down. A word of wisdom for church leaders; don’t have unwelcoming people in your welcoming

team! We lingered after the service; smiling and looking around but nobody approached us. I tried to engage with a couple of stewards who made it clear they were busy. Finally, we slipped out.

Honestly, I don't want to return to that church. It's human to remember most how we were treated personally. The service itself was lively, no problems there. Let's all be alert in our church community, welcoming and including visitors. Maybe if we see a gap it's because we are supposed to fill it?

4 Mutual Accountability

EMBARKING ON A JOURNEY TOGETHER

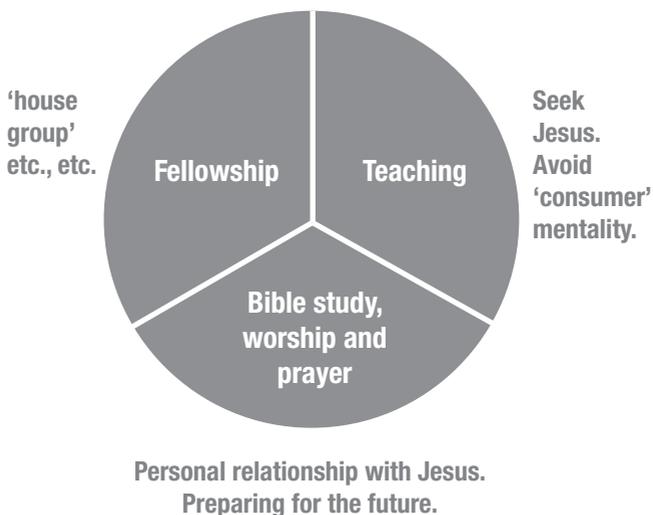
We hope this does not sound scary or complicated. It is neither! But both you and the new Christian are embarking on a journey together. So, you need to be sensitive to his needs, as he walks with you. The new Christian has much to learn and to adjust to, and this takes time. We are NOT following the worldly pattern of impatiently expecting him to rush to maturity. You will learn a huge amount in helping him grow; we are ALL learning and developing ALL the time! That is one of the wonders and blessings of relationship with Jesus, and with each other. We can be refreshed in our relationship with new Christians.

You have a big part to play in welcoming the new Christian into the family of God, providing a context for him to learn and grow. The schematic overleaf loosely illustrates structured and informal ways you can help facilitate growth. You aren't solely responsible; he has choices to make too.

One-to-one discipleship



Church family – building relationship



5 The Orphan Spirit

Owing to our increasingly broken society, the fragmentation of the family unit and particularly the absence or abdication of fathers, new Christians arrive wounded into God's Kingdom. It's folly not to anticipate and plan for this. After all, don't we ourselves still have struggles, even though we have been in the 'sausage machine' for years? It can be helpful to use the vectors of sonship and the orphan spirit to illustrate these issues. So many discipleship and church issues really originate in these orphan and rejection issues.

We all need healing for rejection; this applies to all of us, not just to new Christians. Actually new Christians sometimes locate the unhealed (orphan) parts of us, they have fresh eyes. The caricatures below show three specific extreme rejection reactions which need cleansing and healing. Most people will have a combination of these. It's worth saying we are assuming here Christian leadership that is godly, albeit human and imperfect.

RHINOCEROS (OUTRIGHT REBELLION)



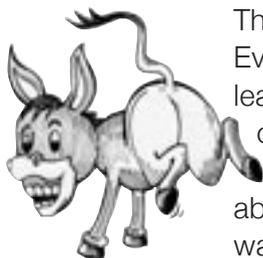
Every leader will relate to the '*rhino*'. No matter how conciliatory and supportive we are with a '*rhino*' he will turn and

charge with lowered horn at the slightest correction or perceived slight. The rhino doesn't care who he gores on its way to the target and always assumes his aggression is completely justified. The *rhino* often has a following of people he has brought round to his view of things. If he smells a whiff of fear he'll keep charging until he gets everything his own way. Some pastors have never recovered from a '*rhino*' charge.

HOW DO WE OVERCOME?

We must bind up the fear that is being projected towards us. The *rhino* may not be as confident and bold as he seems, and standing up to him will almost certainly expose this fact. Still, it is disconcerting when the horn is charging towards us. It is important to confront the *rhino* early; 'I will not be bullied. I obey God not man'. What is tolerated, dominates! We are storing up trouble for ourselves if we let a *rhino* assert control in church, even if he is a new Christian.

THE DONKEY (PASSIVE AGGRESSION)



The *donkey* has a subtle expression of rebellion. Even though there hasn't been a 'falling out' the leader feels opposed by this person and walks on eggshells around them. The *donkey* is stubborn, he screams and digs his heels in about a matter of theology or admitting that it was his shoes that brought mud onto the new church carpet. He dislikes and distrusts authority of any kind.

The *donkey* doesn't consider himself awkward but he will appear co-operative and then kick up a stink at the last moment. He is as disruptive as the rhino, subtly operating in the background. He consumes a lot of the pastor's time, but it's always other people who are the problem! Other church members don't realise how much trouble the leader is having behind scenes with the *donkey*; they are shocked when the pastor snaps at him.

HOW DO WE OVERCOME?

We must not come under the control of the *donkey*. Even if we bend to every demand we will never satisfy him, but we must keep loving and extending grace to him. He must be welcome to join in with our activities on the understanding that he will submit to leadership. The *donkey* himself is welcome but manipulative behaviour is not.

THE GHOST (WITHDRAWAL / AVOIDANCE)

An enthusiastic convert who seemed to be making great strides, suddenly and without warning, disappears under the radar.

Phone messages are ignored, text messages unanswered, commitments broken. He scurries away when greeted by a church member on the High Street. The unspoken message is; 'leave me alone'.



I have been down this road. Being so eager to follow up a decision for Christ I was in danger of becoming a stalker to a man who clearly didn't

want to be followed up. Endless phone messages, texts all ignored and the door unanswered when I called. Eventually I realised I should pour all my energy into prayers. Often a *ghost* waits until he is no longer being 'pursued' and re-emerges when least expected. He is astonished if any reference is made to him completely disappearing for months, even years, and denies any knowledge of all the attempts at contact. He may imply he was the one that was dropped.

HOW DO WE OVERCOME?

Welcome the *ghost* back with open arms, but gently refuse to accept his narrative. At the Spirit's leading there may eventually be a moment to probe into what was really going on, and if there's a way to help. Often an orphan finds community so threatening he withdraws for a while. He has experienced rejection before, and has learnt to reject first! He needs to be loved consistently but challenged graciously about withdrawal, which is a form of rebellion!

We mustn't give ultimatums, and a good dose of patience may be needed to track through seasons when he disappears again. If we keep loving the ghost we are breaking down the lie that God and the church will reject him. Deep down part of him 'wants' to be rejected so that his personal narrative of rejection is unchallenged.

FINDING HEALING IN COMMUNITY

Most, if not all, emotional and psychological wounds come through broken relationships and communities. God in His infinite wisdom has ordained that healing should flow through the same channel. We are designed for community, and healthy relationships provide the environment for us to grow and transform, discovering our Christ given identity and purpose. The new Christian needs this like oxygen.

For the new Christian to consolidate any healing he receives long-term he must stay in community, even when it's messy. If he isolates himself, as often happens with Christians, it is doubtful whether he can maintain his healing (or his faith for that matter) over time. For instance, if God heals him of social anxiety and then he withdraws from church, he is not giving God the opportunity to renew his mind and transform his behaviour around people whom he can trust with his struggles, those who will pray for him.

A SPIRIT OF SONSHIP (BOUNDARIES AND BLESSINGS)

We all need healthy boundaries in our lives; they make us feel safe and protected. They give life to us and the people God surrounds us with. Even the '*rhino*' and '*donkey*' who kick against them secretly desire them deep down. Consider how many young men and women from dysfunctional homes gravitate to the ascetic

discipline of the army. This draconian discipline gives them a sense of security that they crave.

By our example we teach the new Christian what healthy and sustainable relationships are. He may have had bad or non-existent role models.

This isn't his fault, but we must not allow him to trample over our boundaries because that is not good for anyone. In taking such precautions we are, in any case, reflecting current secular 'best practice' in what is now generally known as safeguarding. Many new Christians will understand, and even expect this.

When I was a pastor, I tried to avoid any scenario where I might be alone with a woman. I still do now, especially with a younger woman and particularly if there is any prayer or counselling involved. I enlist another trusted person, preferably a woman, to support. Some might view this as excessive but it benefits everyone. Mostly it isn't essential, but the boundary protects me from the potential one time where there is another agenda. It is easy to uphold because there is a precedent, which avoids giving the message, 'I don't trust YOU!'

Consider how our media sitcoms and reality shows regularly involve house shares with teenage girls and boys, even room sharing. The polar opposite of fleeing youthful lusts! The temptation and confusion this causes is utterly avoidable. As we understand the submission of our wills to God's will, we relate to healthy boundaries as a blessing and not a

hindrance in our lives. Their purpose is to keep us free and blessed as sons! The table below gives us an inventory of our attitudes and those of a new Christian.

	ORPHAN SPIRIT Old nature	DISCIPLE New birth, new nature
FRIENDSHIP AND FAMILY	Guarded, cold. Finds it difficult to receive. Gives out a lot of rejection. Suspicious and looking for/expecting rejection. Passive/aggressive.	Open and receptive. Grateful, warm, secure and reciprocal in relationships. Expects to be welcomed and accepted. Quickly brushes off rejection or misunderstanding.
GRACE	Internally battles the concept of grace. Can't forgive himself or others. Is legalistic with others - 'one strike and you are out'.	Joyfully embraces grace. Is happy to be forgiven and release forgiveness. Is quick to extend grace to others. Gives second chances.
DISCIPLINE	Resents and kicks against any correction/sulks. Won't come under authority. Sees leaders as a threat.	Doesn't enjoy discipline but accepts it as a path to growth and maturity. Glad to accept the protection and safety of Godly authority.
SMALL GROUPS	Is instantly on-edge in a small group setting. Is competitive with others. Either dominates or disappears into the background.	Loves the nurture and openness of a small group. Flourishes through giving and receiving within a small group scenario.
CHURCH LIFE	Spiky, critical, and difficult to get along with. Others have to try hard to include him.	Has softer edges, rubs along well with people. Well liked, easy to be with. A team player.
RESPONSIBILITIES	Gets overwhelmed by any expectations from others. Unreliable.	Enjoys the opportunity to commit. Takes responsibility seriously. Reliable.
SERVANTHOOD	Untrustworthy. Resents serving, especially unseen service. Doesn't recognise where others contribute.	Trustworthy. Gladly contributes to church life, even if unnoticed. Notices and thanks others for their serving and sacrifices.

6 In the world but not of it

BEING DIFFERENT FOR THE RIGHT REASONS

We do not have the time here to evaluate all aspects of seeker-sensitive Christianity but suffice to say there is a danger that we water down church from a Biblical expression. We assert that as Christians we cannot be anything but different from the world (in the world but not of the world). We must, however, be different for the right reasons: because we are closely following Christ, not as an exclusive sub-culture.

Every local church has its own behaviours which are expected. Sometimes these are more cultural than Biblical. One indicator can be the 'sins' that bother us most:

- Smoking, especially outside the church building.
- Smelling of alcohol.
- Badly behaved children putting sticky unwashed hands everywhere.
- People who are first in the queue for the fellowship meal and pig out on everything.
- Noisily arriving halfway through the service.

It's tempting to target these 'super-sins' with a

new Christian, so that they fit in with our church culture. But do we make these things a bigger priority than Jesus does? Maybe these represent 'fruit' sins rather than the 'root' ones buried deeper underground. These heart sins take more 'excavating', and patience from us. It's more important to prioritise the issues of the heart. It's not to say that the above things won't ever be addressed. In the meantime, however, are we more likely to tolerate the following inground behaviours in church, and functioning in longterm Christians? These are all robustly confronted in scripture.

- Spiritual pride and judgementalism?
- Gossip?
- Greed?
- Divisiveness?

BEING UNSHOCKABLE

We encourage an atmosphere where a new Christian can be open and vulnerable, and confession is part of this, so we mustn't fall to pieces when he confesses sin. We must perfect a poker face, no matter what we may think. As a pastor I thought I was past being shocked; yet every so often something would take me by surprise, and my wife tells me I have a terrible poker face! Often my shock was because of the people involved rather than the issue itself.

Here are two caricatures of possible responses:

THE OWL (UNSHOCKABLE)

The owl listens unblinking to the confessions of



the new Christian. There is no hint of judgement or disgust, but the wisdom of a life lived in the world and experience of a God Who is the expert redeemer. The owl can always navigate through the darkness to find a way back home.

A new Christian mustn't read revulsion from our countenance. We must be wise to the kind of lies the enemy might be sowing into his mind, as we remember our own experience 'I'm worse than I thought' or 'I'm uniquely wicked.' We will all struggle in different ways. We must lavish grace on our new Christian if he often falls down in an area we easily get victory.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND LEGALITY

Our new Christian may make confessions under the conviction of Holy Spirit, which legally must be reported to the police. We must be vigilant to do this. Someone once made a disclosure to me; he was screwing himself up, and in my immaturity I promised that what he said wouldn't go any further. This was intended to make it easier for him. As he disclosed it dawned on me that this was a matter with legal repercussions. I then backtracked furiously to get his permission to report this information appropriately. I needed to do so. I would be morally and legally culpable if not.

This was not an issue of forgiveness or redemption. My love and help were not

withdrawn from him; however, there are matters that must go through legal channels. Church history is besmirched by the blurring of these boundaries. Let's not be negligent.

A GOSSIP FREE ZONE

It's essential for a new Christian entering church life to sense that it will be different to his workplace and family, especially where gossip and backbiting are concerned. The destructive effects of gossip can be found anywhere; a church community should stand in stark contrast to this, embodying the light and integrity of the Kingdom of God.

If a new Christian shares some personal struggles for prayer we must be confidential with the information we have received. We may personally be open with our lives but that's our choice. We must protect the new and nervous Christian. As in every area, we do as we would be done by.

THE HYENA (GOSSIP)



The Christian *hyena* runs in a pack and comes to life if there is a wounded and/or dying animal in the area. The *hyena* laughs, feeding off the misery of others, spotting weakness from a long way off. He is hard to catch. He slinks in the shadows with his pack and disappears into the jungle having devoured the dead animal (such behaviour in the long term, of course, calls

into question whether the ‘hyena’ is truly a Christian).

When I was pastoring, occasionally people would complain to me about someone else in the church. I wanted to explain that person’s story, because it illuminated their behaviour, even if it didn’t justify it. To know someone’s struggles is to understand them better, this breeds compassion. However, my hands were tied in confidentiality.

A good way to shut down gossip is to counter with something positive about the person in question. This clearly indicates that we will not participate; the gossipier will probably withdraw at this point. We may only have to do this once.

BOUNDARIES

Through a bizarre set of circumstances my wife and I discovered that a church I had left years before put some of our private information (without permission) on their notice sheet, for prayer! My wife was hurt by this. Some people are more private than others, but this is not the point. We spiritualise matters in the church, and boundaries can be porous; ‘just sharing for prayer’.

I heard once about a new member at a church who was somewhat paranoid, and convinced herself that she had been ‘ambushed’ by the leadership team. She’d been gossiped about, so she thought. This wasn’t true, but no amount of persuasion helped. The relationship never

recovered and she left the church in a fit of pique. Maybe this was unavoidable, but it's a good reminder not just to do right, but be seen to do right, avoiding even the suspicion of wrongdoing.

PART THREE

*Integrating
new
Christians*

7 Integrating new Christians

THE COVENANT OF SONSHIP

God gave to Abraham and later to the promised nation of Israel the sign of circumcision (Genesis 17), marking them out as His special children and separating them from the other nations. Without going into gory details circumcision involved a cut, a separation of flesh performed on the eighth day after birth for all sons.

Mercifully, under the New Covenant we lay aside the Jewish ritual of circumcision. Now as with all the New Covenant teaching, covenant relationship is a deeper issue of the heart. Our hearts are ‘circumcised’ by the Spirit. We become sons of God. The cut comes when God begins to discipline us as sons, to separate our spiritual life from our old, fleshly sinful nature. (Romans 2v 29)

There is nothing which more quickly separates out sons and orphans than the arena of discipline, and I refer to healthy, loving discipline. Orphans find discipline unbearable; they are insecure, unfathered and react rebelliously to anyone who dares to challenge or correct them on anything. One ‘cut’ of discipline (like being asked to be quiet when someone is speaking in church, or to please park on the

other side), and they're out of the door!

I am aware of people who have burned their bridges with church and shipwrecked their faith. With a few probing questions it becomes evident that they nurture offence over something (inconsequential?) that happened in a church years ago. They hold tenaciously to it and simultaneously to their orphan spirit; 'the pastor should never have spoken to me like that'. I hasten to add that tragically there have been unspeakable sins committed in church (some of which **MUST** be reported to the authorities), but that is not what we are addressing here.

RECEIVING THE 'CUT'

If you are not disciplined—and everyone undergoes discipline—then you are not legitimate, not true sons and daughters at all. *Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of spirits and live! They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12v 8-11)*

'Sons' are secure in their identity and in their father's love. Although no discipline is pleasant at the time 'sons' recognise it as a necessary aspect of their discipleship. They can, over time, see behind the discipline to a God of wisdom

and a Father who loves them so much that He would not leave them wallowing, proverbially, in their pig swill. Our heavenly Father places us in a real world where things happen in real time with real consequences. Sin can be forgiven, of course; that's the beauty of The Cross, but consequences keep circling out like ripples in a pond. The diagram below reminds us that we all, not just new Christians, have a personal identity which influences the way we act with consequences (both good and bad) that can be self-reinforcing:



Mature church leaders should be aware of how important personal identity is in governing a new Christian's behaviour. Gentle challenge should be brought, humbly in a culture of love and acceptance, but it must come nonetheless. We need grace and truth to grow strong. God will show us which battles to fight and which to leave alone. Attitudes are just as important to address as actions; they are bound up together. This process will help our development as 'sons', as we facilitate the growth of the new Christian.

Better to gently challenge attitudes early on (with lashings of grace) than for the new Christian to reap the full grown fruit of destructive actions later. It's preferable to challenge a rebellious teenager in their home rather than wait until they are adult and thrown into jail. In the big bad world, there are people who do not love our child as we do, and will not tolerate their bad attitude.

None of us have known perfect fathering or discipline by authority figures. Many of us have a horror story about a teacher or scout leader humiliating us and 'pronouncing the lies of the devil' into our hearts. Perhaps as a 'kneejerk reaction' to this, and to sin exposed in almost every institution and authority structure, even the most submitted Christians can struggle with authority. We naturally project our broken experiences onto God and His church.

The difficulty confronting us is that there is no

predicting how someone will react to discipline until the 'cut'. Will they take the 'cut' and choose 'sonship' or revert to orphan behaviour? Someone can present as a pleasant, mature believer until they are corrected (have you been put right by a Christian who doesn't love you?). Their mask rips off and they stamp and huff and scream to every-one about how unfair it is. They remain offended for months, often carrying a grudge. Another proverbial 'animal' may help to illustrate this:

THE OSTRICH



I was a pastor far from heavy shepherding but more like the proverbial *ostrich*, burying my head in the sand. I never once compromised what I said from the pulpit, but I procrastinated against individually challenging someone.

I hoped against hope that the need for loving discipline would miraculously disappear.

This was delusional. Today I would gently but decisively 'challenge' earlier. I didn't do this before because of my own insecurities, I wanted to be liked and I feared people's reactions.

There is wisdom in choosing our battles and I was no power crazed tyrant! However, sin needs to be challenged: otherwise there is frankly no point in having leadership. Although I was wrong to fear people, I was right to expect volcanic reactions. This would often be after 'the conversation' when I would hear reports of what was being said behind my back.

I LOVE YOU TOO MUCH TO LET THIS ONE SLIDE

If we really love our new Christian we will be faithful to them and their spiritual integrity even if it risks losing them. Their souls are more important than a co-dependent 'friendship'. There is no such thing as discipleship without discipline, but we may hesitate to bring the 'cut' of sonship because it is the point where many run away. Opinionated people often crumble to pieces with a mild challenge. Their prickly shell elaborately disguises their insecurities and rejections.

Conversely, some Christians who do not seem mature receive a challenge and respond to it remarkably well, growing through the experience. Psychologists tell us that children, and adults too, yearn for boundaries. We probe for them and feel safe when they are lovingly enforced. This is as true of church as any grouping of people.

Unchallenged rebellion in church makes everyone feel insecure, creating a toxic environment. Let me repeat the truism 'what is tolerated, dominates.' Others, including the new Christian, will lose their trust and respect for us if they don't see discipline enforced where it is needed. If we are going to be effective in discipling then on occasion we have to say, *'I love you too much to let this behaviour slide.'*

Keeping things light and fun

SOCIALISING, JUST BECAUSE

None of us like to think that we are someone's project, not worth knowing for ourselves. We all want to be valued and we flourish when we are. Social times together enhance relationships and break down barriers. There may be two or three who are mainly responsible for discipling the new Christian but others can give hospitality. The wider this is spread out the better; it's healthy for the new Christian to have multiple church friendships. It's too intense if he or she is locked in to just two or three people.

Periodically why not suggest a social activity that the new convert enjoys? Coffee, or pizza and a football match, or a cinema trip? Good clean social fun is invaluable for a new Christian, who may be experiencing turbulence in home life or old friendships.

The modern concept of 'quality time' and 'quantity time' is disingenuous. We cannot squeeze a meaningful relationship tidily into an hour a week before lunch. There must be some give and take and times of unhurried fellowship. Quantity time may well lead into quality time but not always, and not immediately, and that's fine too. It's rare to have quality time without quantity time first.

Our new Christian can discover that we are

three dimensional people; natural and personable outside of church meetings. Small things like observing how we speak to waiters in a restaurant and handle ourselves at a rowdy sports event is all part of discipleship.

MIXING UP THE DISCIPLESHIP PROGRAMME

Variety is the spice of life; discipleship is no different. Creative types can be introduced to the large pool of contemporary Christian music, film and art. Christian conferences can be a time of accelerated growth and fun for the new Christian. The pressure is off us because we just need to facilitate him getting there; he can enjoy as much or little of the programme as he likes. There are many great worship events and secular Christian bands. This can be an eyeopener for a new Christian to discover he is not alone. This effect is magnified if his home church is small and he is the only younger person, or older person.

There are thousands of online courses and materials and there may also be a resource church nearby running short courses and even running internships.

RECIPROCITY IN FRIENDSHIP

A Christian that I was discipling invited my wife and I to the hostel where he was living for a meal. He told all his friends in the house we were coming and cleared the main room to lay a table for us. With obvious delight he served us a

three course meal, proud to introduce us to his friends. I can only imagine how hurt he would have been if we had refused. We remain good friends even though he has moved elsewhere and we still reminisce about this meal years later.

If the new Christian offers hospitality, we should graciously accept. Healthy relationships are reciprocal. This is a wonderful mark of friendship and God's activity in his life.

9 Small Groups

I enjoy small groups and leading them is mostly an absolute delight. They are the engine room of the church where much of the meaningful prayer and teaching happens. Except for those who can't attend because of work etc, members are usually the ones fully committed to church life, the core group.

NOT READY YET?

This may seem counter intuitive but we shouldn't always rush a new Christian into a small group. I'll never forget helping on an Alpha course which included a Portuguese man who had recently arrived at the church. He was in the middle of a painful divorce, compounded by his redundancy. The combination of his raw grief, fiery Hispanic temperament and a group of sympathetic and polite people was disastrous. The ladies sat in stunned, poleaxed silence while

he ranted and raved in broken English about the injustices dealt to him. The Alpha course took a complete back seat to his emotional needs; he couldn't possibly focus on a course. Hindsight is twenty-twenty!

THE SMALL GROUP IS NOT AN END IN ITSELF

Sometimes through the years a small group hits its stride, becoming an exciting and life affirming place to be. The inherent danger with this 'success' is that it's tempting to close ranks as a group. It's time consuming and more emotionally demanding to intentionally incorporate new Christians, to really welcome them as we would like to be received and included. If we do so, the group may continue growing to a point where it needs to be split into two (twelve is an ideal number). It's sacrificial to move on when we have grown attached to the group. With each

Four stages of Group life

FORMING ▶	STORMING ▶	NORMING ▶	PERFORMING
Getting to know one another	Some disagreements and misunderstandings	Reaching better understanding of one another	Group synergy emerging
Discovering each other's different backgrounds and ideas	Different approaches and methods of communicating	Willingness to listen to one another	Complementary giftings becoming clear
Welcoming a new member who changes the dynamic	The group is not gelling.	Trust is growing	Mutual appreciation and trust
	Personality clashes and sharp words		Sharing at a deep level, supporting each other

We must actively resist the human instinct to form a clique with the people we know and feel comfortable with. A new Christian will pick up if he is not genuinely welcome and included. He may then make one of the three responses in chapter 5 (*ghost, rhino, donkey*).

Alternatively, if the group is unhappy and has a bad dynamic the temptation is to snatch up a new Christian and to focus on them as a way of avoiding discomfort in the existing group. It's the same dynamic as an unhappy couple thinking a baby will solve their relationship issues.

SIBLING RIVALRY

There may be immature believers in a small group who feel threatened by the arrival of a new Christian, rather like a new baby arriving in an established family. They are jealous of all the attention and excitement over the new Christian. The group leader does still need to take this seriously, including these believers in disciplining the newcomer; 'could you take a role in befriending them?' This may alleviate their insecurities and consolidate their place in the group.

BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

A lovely way to build friendships and value one another is to celebrate birthdays. Someone might like to take responsibility for recording birthdays. For a new Christian this may speak volumes especially if their birthday is ignored by

their natural family. The group could occasionally share a meal and or meet on a Saturday for a walk or picnic. Everyone has busy lives but these activities pay dividends in creating a healthy small group.

CARING AND 'OVER-SHARING'

Small groups should be safe places which provide a new Christian with friendship and solace from the big bad world outside. They should be encouraged to open their lives, trusting the confidentiality of the group. The group can become a comforting and life enhancing place for him; a surrogate family with which he can grow and flourish.

There are however a couple of things to watch out for....the heady combination of an alien experience, nerves, and the nurturing nature of the group can exert a strange force on a new Christian. Two extreme reactions he might have could be; complete silence and non-participation or alternatively reckless 'oversharing' of information to virtual strangers.

Broken people generally overshare. In the small group dynamic it's worth giving this some thought. If sensitive things are shared, for instance domestic and/or sexual abuse and safeguarding issues, the group leader could pray at the time and offer more in depth counselling later. This is to protect, certainly not to discourage, the new Christian. If he has divulged too much, afterwards he may feel embarrassed and/or exposed and may not

return. Alternatively, after ‘oversharing’ on his first visit the new believer may be withdrawn in the group for several weeks afterwards.

If mature group members know that this might happen, they can help support in prayer, and allay other people’s insecurities. Often we see a projection of our own anxieties, we may sometimes think it’s us if someone seems upset.

PART FOUR

*Discipling
new
Christians*

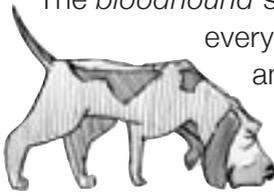
10 Healing and Deliverance

Commensurate with our broken society a new Christian may have need for healing and deliverance. I have never known a believer who didn't need some help in this area. The start of the discipleship journey is the obvious and most efficacious time to do this. There's nothing shameful or unusual about needing deliverance, and the more naturally we talk about and treat it, the easier it will be for the new Christian to access it.

It's no big deal; it's quite normal that we have areas of our lives that have come under the influence of the enemy; nothing esoteric or hyper spiritual. We simply need to remove the devil's influence in the name of Jesus. It is good to do this accountably and naturally. The new Christian will take his cues from us; if we are relaxed and confident this will help him. This book does not claim to be a deliverance resource, but we flag up the need for healing and deliverance while suggesting further research and prayer. (At the back of this booklet are some relevant links). The baptism event provides an opportunity for general prayer for wholeness ('shalom' might be the optimum biblical word) and that may well go a long way to providing the healing we all need, but beyond that there may be more work required.

Some further 'animal' illustrations show two extreme views on this subject:

THE BLOODHOUND



The *bloodhound* sniffs out ten demons behind every bush! He discerns wounds and bondages everywhere, ever suspicious that some are still eluding him. He is never more fulfilled than when he is chasing them down and driving the trespassers out! This is his focus, and he loses interest if there is no chase.

The pressure with this topic is either to give the enemy too much airtime, being hyper-vigilant because he's encamped behind every bush, or minimizing his activity completely. He is equally happy with both scenarios. It's important we get this balance right because the new Christian will take his lead from us; if we emphasize or minimise something unduly, so will he.

THE SHIREHORSE



The *shirehorse* has been faithfully ploughing the same furrow for decades. He doesn't approve all this kerfuffle about demons and deliverance. He's never seen demons and thinks this is just a huge distraction from the important work that needs to go on. Give a new Christian some proper work to do, and they'll forget all that nonsense.

The *shirehorse* has been made a certain way with particular strengths by God. This is to be celebrated. But many people are mashed up by

life; they can't be a shirehorse, however hard they try. They are crippled until they get some healing.

Let's realistically assess our experience and faith levels. We might be quite confident to pray with a new Christian who confesses he has harboured jealousy against a family member for years.

SPECIALIST HELP

However, to minister deliverance to a new Christian rescued out of Satanism or deep childhood trauma may be beyond us (this would be the exception not the rule). We need to prayerfully seek out specialist help from parachurch ministries who have a tried and tested record with such backgrounds. In these areas a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing. The last thing we want to do is go rummaging around in the new Christians pain leaving him stirred up and in a worse condition than before.

We could accompany the new Christian, or at the very least support him in prayer through a week at Ellel Grange, Sozo, or similar. We can assist him as he returns home and integrates back into local church life. If local believers understand something of what he experienced, it's going to be easier to get behind him afterwards.

My discipleship was piecemeal. It was years before I was able to achieve lasting victory

because I didn't understand and wasn't offered healing and deliverance. If I was told anything, it was that these things aren't necessary, it was all done at The Cross. True legally, but not true functionally, because the enemy will hide whenever he can until he is exposed and driven out.

We aim to give our new Christian the start that we would have wished for. He can benefit, if he is willing, from our mistakes and our successes. He can avoid many pitfalls if he is willing to be teachable, and we are humble enough to share our failings.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Be upfront with the new Christian; this is about pastoral care, not being unduly intrusive. If he repeatedly reneges on commitments or goes underground, phone up and enquire. If he won't answer, there's nothing we can do about that. We won't be ungracious, but neither will we be doormats. As far as healing and deliverance goes we'll be absolutely committed to helping him but we'll only invest as much effort as he does. Otherwise, we can put enormous energy into propping someone up because we're more invested in God healing them than they are.

That would drain us of time and energy, and it is ultimately faith sapping both for the discipler and the new Christian. If he is just going through the motions to placate us there will not be any real freedom gained. We refuse to be heavy shepherds. Deliverance is not a short cut and it

will only work if the new Christian seriously wants to be free. He must first hate the sin that imprisons him.

The aim of healing and deliverance is to extract all the poisoned roots and rotten entanglements in the heart, so that true and healthy spiritual roots can take their place.



DISCIPLESHIP

We cannot grow bigger than our (unseen) root system for long or we will fall over.

For healthy sustained growth our root system is:

1. THE WORD OF GOD
2. FELLOWSHIP WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS
(CHURCH LIFE)
3. PRAYER-LIFE AND WORSHIP
(PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY)
4. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT
5. GIVING
6. INTEGRITY
7. DISCIPLESHIP

11 Opportunities & Responsibilities

DELEGATION

It's important to be aware that delegating responsibilities to a new Christian is not going to save time in the short term. Almost certainly it will take more effort in the beginning to pass on information and skills. Jobs may come back to us after a few weeks; sometimes we take them back because the new Christian discovers he has bitten off more than he can chew. Does this mean we shouldn't attempt delegation? Not at all, but let's do so with prayer and our eyes wide open.

Wisdom is critical. Most people feel comfortable in a group or family when they can contribute. However, the new Christian has his own unique story and personality and it behoves us to treat him as an individual.

SERVING

Often the desire and willingness to serve is a good sign that Holy Spirit is at work in the new Christians' life. However, we shouldn't exploit this and use it immediately to our advantage. For example, if a new Christian has tech skills which we desperately need at our church it's tempting to pounce on this. It's not

fair to overload him. He may not be confident enough to say if he is feeling overwhelmed. All service in church is spiritual; to do the tech at church may bring with it a spiritual opposition that the new Christian doesn't understand and is unprepared for.

Our new Christian may not know how to say 'no', and we must recognise unspoken messages by active listening. In church it's easier to join something, with the attendant gratitude and inclusion, than it is to withdraw. I have found after stepping back that some people aren't friendly anymore; the implicit message is that I am only of interest when I am serving their vision.

This mercenary behaviour might stumble the new Christian, should he experience the same. These two animal caricatures underscore issues of delegation:

THE SLOTH (LAZYBONES)



The *sloth* has either grown up in a house where nothing is ever required of him, or over time he has manipulated others to do all the work around him. For a *sloth* it would be helpful to be involved in some serving and to be aware of the hard work that goes on behind scenes to make things happen. He may need prods and reminders, otherwise he may slip back into inertia.

THE OX (HARDWORKING)

The ox has worked hard all his life; this is comfortable for him, and in a new environment he will instinctively look to serve. The first Sunday he visits church you will find him with sleeves rolled up and hands in the washing up bowl; he'll be stacking up the chairs without ever being asked.

It is important to demonstrate to the ox that his value is not in serving but in who he is. It may not be kind to allow him to follow well-worn grooves, quickly becoming the biggest servant of the church. The new Christian mustn't be allowed to hide behind serving either, or others may never get to know him because he's always dashing about. This may be uncomfortable for him; but we must know him for himself and not his function.

A SIX MONTH HONEYMOON

This point does not refer directly, or uniquely, to a new Christian. However, if he is an accomplished singer, it's tempting to put him straight into the struggling worship band!

When Christians came to my old church we had a six month honeymoon/introductory period. If people decided to join us I'd normally ask if I could contact their previous church; this was a good way of finding out how things were left. Also, I'd explain that we liked people to be with

us for six months before they did any ministry; this applied whoever they were. They may have led worship in a big city church, or been a countywide youth worker, but we still wanted them to be with us just as themselves. The benefits of this approach were manifold:

- It exposes people's hearts. If they were coming because they thought our church could be a good vehicle for their ministry, they realised it wasn't going to work like that. We might never see them again. NB It was a sign of maturity when visitors didn't give their ministry CV on arrival.
- Paradoxically, they might be scared that we would use them for their ministry gifts; they might be burnt out and wanted to be in the congregation with time to rediscover themselves outside of ministry. Sometimes churches project a message that we are only valuable if we are useful. We must get away from that.
- We could get to know and trust them just as people. Ministry can bring an edge to relationships because there is an agenda, also spiritual pressure. Relationships need time to form and grow in depth. Beware making friends too rapidly, it can be boom and bust!
- They could get to know and trust us as people. They have time to see whether we have integrity and whether Holy Spirit is still saying, 'Yes, you should offer to help with

the Sunday school'. Exercise caution with Christians who can't rest until they have a position and a profile in the church. Good leaders don't need to be leaders.

- No-one is singled out, this is a standard approach.

12 Seasons of refreshing

Discipleship is not supposed to be all hard graft. There should be good days of fellowship, fun and blessing. As the new Christian begins to sow all this good seed into his life there will be a tipping point where he starts to reap the harvest; emotionally, relationally, spiritually and physically. It's important to encourage him regularly with how far he has come, and the changes which are evident.

Natural children need lots of praise as they grow up. My four year old daughter gets affirmed for clearing her plate, reading a simple sentence and sitting reasonably quietly through a church service. She will not always get this level of reassurance, but for now it is healthy for her. James Dobson says for every word of correction a child will need at least ten affirmations. I'm not convinced it's any different for adults; we may get lots of praise but the one comment we cannot shake from our minds is the single negative one.

So, let's find things worth celebrating in our new Christian and encourage, encourage, encourage. Sometimes we're tempted to zero-in on the negative things we see, but celebrating what's good gives a different focus and the negatives may fall away by themselves.

CELEBRATING SMALL VICTORIES

Most people are hardest on themselves. We can teach the new Christian to celebrate small victories. This gives him the strength for bigger battles. As he gets into the Bible for himself, encourage him when he's down to get into the Scriptures, put some worship on the radio or read some Psalms. Train him to encourage himself in the Lord.

REGULAR TIMES IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Everything can become dry without exuberant times of worship in the presence of God. If there have been misunderstandings with the new Christian the best place to come together again is in the presence of God. Somehow it melts us with God and each other; washing away the grit of the day and the poisonous lies of the devil. Worship is something we need to exemplify and the new Christian will see this happening.

FOCUS ON GOD'S GOODNESS

Model to the new Christian a heart of thankfulness. Without swiping his struggles off the table help him to approach challenges with an attitude of gratitude. There's always something he can give thanks for, and this lifts him to a place of faith; God is looking after him.

RESISTING SELF-FOCUS

Our negative feelings and thoughts can become

a bottleneck of unhealthy introspection and self-hatred. The new Christian needs opportunities to give of himself, however he feels. He mustn't live out of his emotions but out of the word of God. In doing this of course he will feel better, as his feelings catch up, but self-control is required.

I used to take one young man I was discipling to visit an old people's home with me, a way of killing two birds with one stone! Not only did he like old people, and they responded positively to him, but his oppressive self-focus lifted. He began to laugh and enjoy making others happy, he had a gift for this. He came out of the old people's home two foot taller, the result of his focus changing. What he focuses on will dominate his life. Navel gazing is a sure-fire route to failure.

GENEROSITY IS HIGH-LEVEL MEDICINE

This is a liberating truth; generosity is high level medicine. We'll simply never manage to outgive God: He will always be extravagantly more generous than us. Let's encourage our new Christian to give (not just financially) his way to victory. God will always reward his efforts.

SLOWBURN NOT BURNOUT

Be aware of the new Christian's background, personality and his areas of struggle before conversion. He may be lacking healthy self-image, and this may result in drivenness. In this case, calm things down, giving lots of space for him to find himself as a person, and to be valued for who he is, not for what he does. If he is prone to

hyperactivity and he arrives in an environment where attendance and initiative are affirmed, he may jump straight onto a performance treadmill, leading to burnout. Maybe walks in the countryside and times of soaking in God's presence would be healthy for him.

Conversely, if he is naturally passive and inclined to let others be busy for him, it's good to encourage healthy engagement and plenty of activity. He may have had laziness modelled and he needs a completely different example. A bit of hard work never hurt anyone!

Discipleship includes good diet, exercise, friendship, lots of rest and work that flows out of rest. A good work/life balance is evidence of Holy Spirit's work in the new Christians life. The goal is that decades later he continues to prosper in his faith. There will be highs and lows and struggles, this is part of the Christian walk, but great habits started early on can be vitalising for a lifetime.

CELEBRATIONS AND CONFERENCES

As touched on previously, these can be times of wonderful refreshing and enrichment for the new Christian and an opportunity to experience the wider church and Kingdom at work!

Maturity in the Faith

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF GOD
WORDS, WORKS AND WONDERS

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF SATAN
STRATEGY, SEDUCTION AND SEDITION

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF SELF
EXPERIENCE, STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

This diagram illustrates the growth to maturity for the new Christian as they grow in three main areas of knowledge and experience.

As you apply the simple principles outlined in this handbook (which reflect to some degree the Bible) you will see to greater and lesser extents the new Christian take root, bed-in and flourish. You will have the incalculable pleasure of seeing Christ established in his life, and the satisfaction of sensing God's pleasure over this.

The secondary effect is that you will experience these three main pillars of maturity extending in your life. Your wisdom and insight will increase accordingly. God will get the glory from this too.

Whatever the cost let's make disciples together!

Glossary

some terms used
in both books
in this series...

CHURCH – the Greek word usually translated ‘church’ is ecclesia. It means an assembly of people who come together for a purpose. Our English word ‘church’ encompasses this idea. People often say that a church is the local ‘body of Christ’, assembling together as a family. In terms of ‘church’ we should not think of an institution with all its trappings, but rather of a family, gathered. At a day to day level it is a group of Christians who seek to serve God and grow together in love and trust. Church is a place where His presence can be powerfully experienced. This resource may be helpful to explore this: <https://christian-publications-int.com/images/PDF/BibleStudent/26%2020101210%20TRUE%20CHURCH.pdf>

CONVERSION – possibly an old-fashioned term now, but it describes a radical life change. You ‘convert’ from one type of life to another. Biblically as we consider being born again, the expression means to find spiritual life in exchange for spiritual deadness. At a practical level it can mean conversion from one religion to another (e.g. from Buddhism to Christianity). In that sense, conversion is easy to understand. As a ‘convert’ you have received Jesus as Lord and as Saviour and are now living in Him as a new disciple – a follower of Jesus. This resource may be helpful to understand this: https://christian-publications-int.com/images/PDF/BibleStudent/10_THENEWBIRTH.pdf

BAPTISM – the marking of the new life through immersion in water. This resource may be helpful to understand this:

https://christian-publications-int.com/images/PDF/BibleStudent/31_BAPTISM.pdf

DISCIPLER – Someone who helps you become more mature as a Christian. A helpful secular parallel to this is a mentor. This person should encourage, equip, love and challenge you in equal parts.

DISCIPLINE – the idea that we live by God’s externally imposed standards. In turn, this requires that we discipline ourselves and accept a measure of gentle discipline via those who are recognized as leaders or elders in the faith. However, this is a million miles away from ‘heavy shepherding’ where what the leader says, goes without question! Jesus said ‘my sheep know my voice’. A leader who is obviously not Christ-like is one best avoided.

GLORY – This is the presence and power of God that changes us. In His glory (presence) we become more like Jesus and so increasingly reflect His glory. We (you) are His ambassadors!

WORSHIP – Declaring God’s limitless worth as we draw close to Him; experiencing His goodness and kindness. Worship is a time of “singing” to Jesus but equally it is a lifestyle of obeying Jesus.

FELLOWSHIP – Building relationships (friendships) with other Christians, sharing time and reciprocal hospitality.

Helpful links and Ministries

BETHEL SOZO

LEARNING STYLES

DEREK PRINCE – DELIVERENCE AND
DEMONOLOGY, BLESSINGS AND CURSES

ELLEL GRANGE

THEOPHOSTIC HEALING

BEAUTY FOR ASHES
(JENNIFER REES LARCOMBE)

FREEDOM IN CHRIST COURSE
(NEIL T. ANDERSON AND STEVE GOSS)

FREE IN CHRIST – PABLO BOTTARI (BOOK)

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