

‘Feed my sheep’ – Follow Up

An article for churches preparing for mission

In John chapter 21, Jesus asked Peter three times, “Do you love me?”, and three times gave Peter the task to “feed my sheep.” As a shepherd cares for the wellbeing of his flock, Peter was to do the same for the earliest followers of Christ. It was entirely consistent with Jesus’ call to “go and make disciples of all nations...” (Matthew 28.19). A ‘disciple’ is a convert nurtured in the faith – it was as important 2,000 years ago as it is today.

Repeated experience has shown us at *Through Faith Missions* that any mission is only as good as its follow-up. We hope – and expect – that men, women and children will receive Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord through your mission. It is a wonderful prospect both for them and for us, who gain new brothers and sisters in Christ. But ... it also has implications for the local churches receiving them.

What will these new Christians need to help them become lifelong disciples? And what is the part that can be played by the ‘ordinary church member’? Here is an outline of ways in which you could help:

- **Welcome.** Newcomers to any group need people who will go out of their way to make them welcome. Christian faith is about a personal relationship with Christ, lived out in the Body of Christ. That’s the local church. Could you take a new Christian along to church? Show them through the service book or guide them through when to stand and sit? Welcome them into your home and family?
- **Word.** Someone coming to the Christian faith will need a friend like you to show them how to find their way round the Bible, God’s Word for healthy Christian lives. Are you ready to show them? And could you help them to learn to pray?
- **Witness.** Those who find the new life that Jesus offers will be trying to understand how this changes the way in which they live. Their lifestyle may have to change. They may also be struggling with how they can speak of their faith to family and friends. Could you help them?

Occasionally in the news we hear about a newborn baby left abandoned in a public place. Local authorities step in immediately. No-one would dream of leaving the child to fend for itself.

New Christians similarly need help right at the beginning of their Christian life. Don’t leave them out in the cold! Follow-up does not need great skills, just a willingness to care and to share simply how you live out your faith.

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