STEP #6: <u>THE HARDEST STEP OF ALL - FOLLOW-UP</u>

"Follow-up" is the spiritual work of grounding a new believer in the faith" (See: 3 John 4; Col.1:28,29; Acts 14:21,22)

(The same day as his salvation:)

1. Lead him to a public profession (Matthew 10:32 - "Whosoever therefore shall <u>confess</u> Me before men, him will I also <u>confess</u> before my Father which is in heaven (Have him <u>pray</u> and <u>promise</u> God that he will confess Christ, and not be ashamed of Him)

2. Follow him up - he's your baby!
   a. Call him on the phone
   b. Go by his house and bring him to church
   c. Sit with him in church
   d. Walk the aisle with him
   e. Be his trustworthy friend
   f. Teach him to <u>grow spiritually</u> that he may win others to Christ and live for God.

G - R - O - W - T - H

HOW?

<u>G</u> - GO TO CHURCH FAITHFULLY
(Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:41-47; II Cor. 6:14, 17)

<u>R</u> - READ THE BIBLE DAILY
(II Pet. 2:2; Acts 17:11, 20:32; Matt. 4:4; Ps. 119:9, 11)

<u>O</u> - OBEY THE COMMANDMENTS OF JESUS CHRIST
(John 14:5)

1) Be baptized (Mt. 28:19; Acts 8:26-40). Baptism is a <u>picture</u> of how the believer is <u>identified</u> with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. It is the first step of obedience.
2) Love one another (John 13:34)
3) Be filled with the Spirit (Eph. 5:18; Jn. 14:15-26)
4) Stay close to the Lord Jesus Christ (John 15:1-16)

<u>W</u> - WITNESS FOR CHRIST EVERYWHERE YOU GO
(Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19-20)

<u>T</u> - TAKE TIME TO PRAY DAILY

A - C - T - S

1) A - Adoration ("Hallowed be Thy Name") (Mt. 6:9; Ps. 111, 112, 113)
2) C - Confession (I Jn. 1:9; Ps. 51)
3) T - Thanksgiving (I Thes. 5:18)
4) S - Supplication (pray for yourself and others) (Phil. 4:6)

<u>H</u> - HONOR GOD BY GIVING TO HIM
1) Give Him your time (Eph. 5:15-16)
2) Give Him your talents (Rom. 12:1-2; I Cor. 12)

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0<05t4Tays "I want more!"

--Praying and reading your Bible when you don't feel like it (or "too busy")

--Disciplining and teaching your children when the progress is slow or not noticeable

--Not quitting a job (task, etc.) until God says "You are done" - not when you become sick of it.

Character is what you <u>are</u> not what you appear to be.

"Out of the heart are the issues of life" (Prov.)

SEE Mt. 12:35

Character will always prove itself by what you do, but what you do will not always prove character (ILLUS: good tree produces good fruit) Your predictable behavior reveals character. Some of us can "luck out" and do good things now and then by accident, or wrong motive - this does not reveal character. (ILLUS: even a broken clock gives the right time twice a day.)

Your typical or predictable behavior reveals what sort of person you are (ILLUS: a man who has a batting average of 100 indicates that he probably will not get a hit 9 our of 10 times). I'm not speaking about perfect consistency, but consistency or tendency nonetheless.

It's not the person who vomits/gags at the smell of whiskey and has never tasted it who deserves a "Well done thou good and faithful servant" for being sober. Rather, it is the person who really enjoyed it at one time, but says "No" when tempted to give in.

It's not the person who would choke on a cigarette . . . It's the one who had a habit of smoking but gave it up - never to go back.

Not situation ethics.

Doing good does not come easy to those living in the flesh.

"The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

***II. BY <u>DENYING YOURSELF</u>, WHEN YOUR WILL CONFLICTS WITH GOD'S! (Mk. 8:30-38)**

(The Principle of <u>self (Spirit) control</u>)

Why does conflict come between our will and God's? Why is it so hard to <u>deny ourselves</u>?

1) The temptation of Satan (v. 33)
Satan tempts us to mind ("savour") things that are of men.
NOTE: Preceding context: Peter had no sooner pronounced Jesus as the "Christ" (Messiah) (Having learned it of the Father - Mt. 16:17), than he turned around and rebuked Jesus (under Stan's influence) for saying that He would suffer and die.

God's will was that Christ would die. (NOTE v. 31 "must" . . . v. 33 - "things that be of God").

When our will conflicts with God's, who wins? Beware of our adversary.

2) The pull of the world's pleasures (v. 33, 36, 38)
"Things of men" (v. 33)
"Gain the whole world" (v. 36)

We live in an "adulterous and sinful generation" (v. 38)

3) The selfish love of your own life (v. 35)
Man by (old) nature is selfish, seeks comfort, pleasure, etc., even at the expense of doing what is right.

4) The cost of sacrifice (v. 34)

Self-denial requires sacrifice. The phrase "take up his cross" meant a lot to those who heard it, because they lived in a time period when thousands were crucified on crosses.

If we are not willing to deny ourselves a little sleep, time, and money so that we might serve God and give to God -- what makes us think that we would ever die for Him??

"Deny himself" = the basic idea is to say "No." It is to disown oneself, to turn away from the idolatry of self-centeredness.

How do we deny ourselves? ("take up cross")
--Consider ourselves dead to our own selfish will (Ro. 6:11-14; Col. 3:1-ff)

Why do we deny ourselves? ("Follow Me")
--Our goal in self-denial is to simply follow Christ!
Anything, anything, anything that hinders ourf ollowing Him, we must give up!
(and the thing [whatever it is] may not be sinful in and of itself)

We don't give up things:

1. to impress God or others
2. merely because they are evil

But because they are weights, etc., that hinder our walk with Christ (Heb. 12:1-2)

What would motivate us to sacrifice in such a way to follow Christ?

Our love (devotion) to Him)cp. Mt. 10:37-39)

ILLUS: If you and your family are starving to death, and you are given a piece of bread, who gets it? If you love, you will see that your family gets it.

Everytime you give up something for Christ's sake, you are saying, "I love you, Jesus!"

The answer to self-control is not celibacy, monkery, asceticism, anorexia nervosa, inflicting pain on yourself (self-torture).

The body is not evil (I Cor. 6:18-20).
Sex is not evil (Heb. 13:5)
Food is not evil (I Tim. 4:3-8).

The answer to self-control is simply putting yourself under the authority of God's will.

Don't offer excuses. EX: "This is the way God made me." "I'm stuck in this situation, and there's no way out."

Your life is like an unfinished story; why not make the conclusion of your life one in which your character was changed and became what God intended.

III. BY WORKING HARD AT WHAT REALLY COUNTS IN LIFE! (I Tim. 4:7)

(The Principle of priorities)

This verse teaches that you must:

A. Dedicate yourself to making personal effort
"Exercise thyself"

1. Our "nourishment" - God's Word (v. 6)

2. Our "exercise" (training) (v. 7) -_____ - from which we get "gymnasium"

"Exercise yourself" - no one can do it for y

(see Rom. 12:1,2)

Christ is Lord over our: personal lives, family relationships, use of money & time, friendships, possessions, careers, etc.

If God commands discipleship, we must obey.

If new believers need it, we must love them enough to commit ourselves to this great task.