

*Here's a process
that anyone can
follow for grounding
a young Christian.*

Simple Steps:

Helping New Believers Grow

"Really?" I asked. I had just invited Jeannie to receive Christ, and she had said yes without hesitation. I was stunned. I had never led anyone to faith in Christ before. After we prayed, we just grinned at each other.

But now what? I wondered. I had heard that there was a process for helping new believers solidify their decision for Christ and launch their relationship with God, but I had no idea how to begin.

B Y B E C K Y B R O D I N

So over the next several weeks, I did what I knew how to do. I spent a lot of time with Jeannie, took her to church with me, and got her into a small-group Bible study. And despite my lack of expertise, Jeannie grew strong in her faith.

All this happened years ago. Since then, I've learned a lot more about follow-up—the process of helping new believers become grounded in their faith—and I've gotten a lot more practice in this form of life-on-life ministry. Along the way I've discovered that the process of follow-up can be summed up in five basic steps.

1. Tell them what.
2. Tell them why.
3. Show them how.
4. Do it with them.
5. Let them go.

These five steps provide the structure I need to come alongside new believers and help them grow. I've also found them valuable as I disciple more seasoned Christians who want to deepen their walks with God. And I've used these steps in workplace training, such as when I'm teaching a new skill.

Let's look at how I applied these steps to helping one new believer develop regular devotional times.

Tell them what.

I got together with Tracy a couple of days after she accepted Christ. We chatted casually for a while, and then I asked, "Tracy, how do you think you might strengthen your decision to follow Christ?" When she furrowed her eyebrows I knew it was time for step one: Tell her what.

I asked, "Have you ever heard of a 'quiet time'?" Tracy smiled in amusement, probably because of the multiple stereos thumping in her dorm, the yells of students in the halls, and the screeching tires outside. I clarified, "*Quiet time* is a term I use for carving time out of your day to read the Bible and pray. Some Christians call this their daily devotions or their time with God. It's a way to get to know Jesus better and

to let Him direct you through His Word, the Bible."

By telling Tracy, "This is a quiet time," I named and explained the activity I intended to pass along to her. I didn't assume she knew what a quiet time was—just as, in future conversations, I would not assume she knew what witnessing or serving was.

Tell them why.

While setting aside time to read the Bible and pray is a good discipline, Tracy probably wouldn't find it a meaningful or sustainable habit unless she had a compelling reason to keep at it. To help her understand how regular quiet times could deepen her relationship with Jesus, I asked, "Tracy, how would you get to know a new friend?"

"I'd spend a lot of time with that person, doing things together and talking—lots of talking," she said.

"You've just described the essence of a quiet time," I told her. "It's spending time getting to know Jesus. I think of my quiet time as slipping away to catch a few minutes with someone very dear to me—just to see that person, to describe how my day is going, and to have an encounter with that person that I can take with me as I return to the demands of the day."

I also shared some of my favorite verses related to quiet times. For instance, I told Tracy how I love the picture of seeking God painted in Ps. 27:4 (TLB):

The one thing I want from God, the thing I seek most of all, is the privilege of meditating in his Temple, living in his presence every day of my life, delighting in his incomparable perfections and glory.

Building a relationship with God is not the only benefit of having quiet times. Although this is what really motivates *me* to spend time with the Lord, new believers may be motivated to establish consistent devotions for other reasons. Some may dis-



cover the Bible as a compass or road map that guides their daily behavior and decisions. Others might resonate with the idea of taking in the Word as nourishment for spiritual growth (1 Pet. 2:2).

Explaining why something matters takes preparation. At first, you may need to spend chunks of time looking up motivational verses, developing examples and illustrations, and planning how to introduce new concepts. But as you continue to help others grow spiritually, preparation for this—and other elements of your discipling plan—becomes less demanding. Often, material you develop for one person can be easily adapted to the next person. Over time, I have selected verses that motivate me to practice many of the basic spiritual disciplines, skills, and character qualities that I think are central to growing in the faith. I keep these “on hand” in my memory, or I compile them in a notebook along with other materials for discipling new believers.

Show them how

Now that Tracy knew what a quiet time was and why it was worth doing, it was time to show her *how* to do it. I'd come to our meeting prepared with my Bible, my devotional notebook, and a passage I had already picked out. Because Tracy was new to Scripture, I chose a story—the feeding of the 5,000 in Matthew 14—rather than part of an epistle or other genre. That way, she'd be less likely to get bogged down by obscure words or concepts.

After asking Tracy if she had time for me to show her what I did during my quiet time, I turned to the passage.

“I read the story at least three times,” I said. “The first time I read just to get an overview.” I read the passage aloud.

“The second time I read for details, and I jot down what I observe.” I invited Tracy to do this with me, using the questions who, what, when, where, why, and how as a guide. Tracy seemed to enjoy this exercise.

When we got to verse 21, “The number of those who ate was about five thousand men, besides women and children,” she blurted out, “Wow! I'll bet there were a lot more than 5,000 people there—it was probably closer to 15,000 people!”

During our third reading, I showed her how to put herself in the story by using her five senses. “If you had been there, what might you have seen, heard, tasted, smelled, or felt?” I asked. This reading took another 5 to 10 minutes. Tracy was very engaged. She leaned close to my Bible with her fingers under the passage. Her eyes closed as she tried to imagine the scene. Her nose wrinkled when she imagined smelling all the fish.

Next I asked, “What message does this passage have for you?” Tracy thought for a moment and then said, “The boy gave his lunch to Jesus. I wonder what I could give to Jesus.”

After we discussed the passage a little longer, I suggested that we pray. Before we did, I offered some explanation: “A quiet time helps us communicate with God. A key way God communicates with us is through the Bible, and then we respond by having a conversation with Him through prayer.”

Tracy was new to praying, but she gave it a try. “Uh, hi, God,” she began. “It's me, Tracy, and I, uh, just wanted You to know that You can have my lunch.”

The whole demonstration took about 20 minutes. After we finished, I asked Tracy what she thought of what we'd done. She responded enthusiastically.

The method I showed Tracy—reading a passage once for content, again for details, and then for personal response—is one of many ways to have meaningful devotions. You could use a similar technique with a portion of an epistle. Instead of asking ◊

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Charting the Course

I often use a chart to help me apply my five follow-up steps to a particular topic. Below I've charted the process for teaching a new believer about daily devotions. The same format can be used with any activity, skill, or character quality you want to pass on to a growing Christian.

QUIET-TIME PLAN

Step	What to Cover	Scripture to Use
Tell them what.	A quiet time is a space that you carve out of your day to read the Bible and pray.	
Tell them why.	A quiet time helps you get to know God better by spending time with Him each day. It's like catching a few minutes with someone you really want to get to know—just to see that person, to describe how your day is going, to have an encounter that you can take with you when you return to the demands of the day.	Ps. 27:4
Show them how.	Read the passage three times: 1. Read for an overview. 2. Read for details. Ask who, what, when, where, why, and how, and jot down observations. 3. Read personally: Put yourself in the story by imagining what you might see, hear, taste, smell, or feel.	The Feeding of the Five Thousand (Mt. 14:13-21) or any story from the gospels
Do it with them.	Schedule four to six quiet times together.	Continue in Matthew (14:21-33, 15:21-28, 16:1-12, 16:13-28), or follow similar stories in Mark.
Let them go.	Invite them to select a quiet-time plan to use on their own: Plan 1: Read one story in Mark each day. Plan 2: Read one story in I Samuel each day. Plan 3: Read one psalm each day. Plan 4: Read one chapter of Proverbs each day.	

—Becky Brodin

questions about your senses, however, you could draw meaning from the passage by considering, *Is there an example for me to follow? A command to obey? An error to avoid? A sin to forsake? A promise to claim? A new thought about God?* Or you could reflect on a passage using the Apostle Paul's two

questions from Acts 22:6-10: Who are You, Lord? What do You want me to do?

When reading a psalm or other poetry in Scripture, you might try to identify the emotions and circumstances the writer describes. Be creative. When I worked with a new believer who was an artist, I suggested that

she paint the psalm we had been meditating on. The next time we met, she brought two beautiful and haunting paintings that captured the emotions of the passage. She couldn't wait to express her feelings about other psalms in the same way.

Whatever method you choose, the key

is to show a new Christian how to use it before you move to the next step.

*Do it
with them.*

Practicing a new activity with those you're discipling helps them to understand it and solidifies the basic skills they need to do it. Of the five steps, this one often takes the most time and planning, but it is worth every second.

Tracy and I agreed to meet for a 30-minute quiet time three mornings a week for the next two weeks. For the first three meetings, I took the lead, using stories from the gospels I picked out in advance. At the end of that week, I gave Tracy the references for three more stories and asked her to lead during week two. After our last joint quiet time, I debriefed the experience by asking Tracy questions such as, "How would you explain a quiet time?" "What do you like about this activity?" "Would you like to continue on your own?" "How do you think quiet times will help you know Jesus better?" "What might keep you from having a quiet time?" These questions broadened Tracy's grasp of this activity and prepared her to succeed on her own.

*Let
them go.*

The last step—letting Tracy go—didn't mean dropping out of her life. I remained in the picture, but I did so in ways that encouraged her to develop a devotional habit for herself.

Since Tracy was unfamiliar with the Bible, I gave her a reading plan that provided three readings a week for a month. We agreed to check in regularly with each other over the next month to discuss what we were getting out of our devotions, and we arranged to have an additional quiet time together at the end of the month.

During that month-end quiet time, I offered Tracy three general plans that she

could choose from to help her continue devotions on her own. Whenever we spent time together after that, we caught up on what she was gleaning from her time with God. These conversations assured me that she was developing a good pattern and growing spiritually.

*Simple
but Flexible*

I've shown how these five steps work when passing on a skill or activity. I've also found them effective in introducing new Christians to qualities that I hope will become part of their character. For example, to teach someone about serving, I would first tell her *what serving is*. Then I would show her *why serving is important* by looking at John 13, where Jesus told His disciples to serve others as a way of demonstrating love.

Next, I might help her brainstorm ways she could serve her spouse, a friend, or a family member that week. In this way, I *show her how* she can serve another. Later, with her permission, I'd arrange for us to serve together at the homeless shelter or another service-oriented outreach. That's step four: *serve with her*. Finally, I would *let her go* by finding ways to encourage her to continue serving others on her own.

Tell them what, tell them why, show them how, do it with them, and let them go. These five steps have served me well as I've helped people grow in their relationships with Christ. I hope they'll help you as well. ☺



about the author

BECKY BRODIN lives in Minneapolis, where she is working on a doctorate in education leadership and serves with *The Navigators*.

For fun, she likes to bike, read *L'Amour* westerns, and pull weeds.

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