

## *Immediate Follow-up of New Believers*

*AOBLTGH: Assurance, Opposition, Baptism, List, Testimony, Gospel, House*

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These are the first 7 steps we take in India and Nepal, and should be taken with every new believer. They can also be taken with any believer you meet, to get him on a growth fast track. These steps will launch him into a life of joyful intimacy with Christ and fruitfulness. We do our best to take all seven steps on the same day a person believes. If we cannot finish all seven on the first day, we continue on the second day and third day, trying to complete all seven steps as soon as possible. When a woman gives birth to a baby, she does not care for it only once a week, or once a day. She is nursing him every two hours, through the night, and caring for him lovingly at great inconvenience to her own comfort. Similarly we must care for newborn spiritual babies. Jesus said, “Do you love me? Tend My lambs”. Jn. 21:15

### **A - Assurance of Salvation**

Rev 3:20 and 1 John 5:11-13. Jesus promised that if you open the door, He will come in. Did you open the door of your heart and ask Him to come in? Then where is He, according to His promise? He's in your heart. According to 1 John 5:11-13, do you have the Son? Then do you have life? Can you know for sure that you have eternal life? V.13 says you can know.

*Phil. 1:6. Who began the good work in you? God. Who will perfect it until Jesus comes back? God will.*

*John 10:28 – 29. Who has you in His hand? Jesus. Who can snatch you out? No one. Who else has you in His hand? The Father. Who can snatch you out? No one – not the devil, not even you!*

*1 Peter 1:5. You are kept by the power of God through faith. Whose power? Not yours, but God's. You are kept for salvation. God keeps you saved!*

*Eph1:13, 14 You heard the gospel, you believed, and you were sealed by the Holy Spirit, God's mark of ownership and guarantee of protection. The Holy Spirit in you is also God's promise to you of an inheritance. You will inherit God's riches!*

### **O – Opposition**

Teach this immediately, before the enemy comes in on them. Opposition will come, but you must endure it with grace, patience, courage, and love for your opponents.

*2 Timothy 3:12 “Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”*

Sometimes your family or friends might oppose your new faith because they don't understand why you have come to believe. You must very patiently and respectfully help them to understand. Sometimes they will think you have forsaken them. Explain that you have not, but that you are still a loyal member of your family, community, and nation. You have not changed your nationality or family. You have only changed your heart. You plan to be a better family member, a better friend, and a better citizen, because God is making you a better person.

But sometimes it happens that people oppose because they don't love the God you love, or they live in a manner contrary to His word. In that case, you must love them and pray for them even if they are harsh with you or unkind to you. This will bring conviction into their hearts, and sometimes they will also want to follow your faith, because of your changed life and your love.

## **B – Baptism**

Teach this to the new believer, then baptize him immediately.

Baptism is the first step of obedience to your Lord Jesus Christ. He is not only your Savior, not only your Healer, not only your Deliverer, not only your Provider – He is your Lord and Master. Therefore you must obey Him. You will be very happy and blessed if you do. Jesus said, “Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, but you do not do what I say”. He is grieved when people call Him “Lord”, but do not follow Him in baptism. Baptism is for your benefit, not His. He commands it because it will help you. It will give you a clear conscience and help you move forward in your spiritual growth. I Peter 3:21 says that “...baptism is an appeal to God for a good conscience”. You should be baptized immediately for that reason.

Every example in the New Testament shows believers taking baptism the same day they believe. They never waited one day, one week, or one month. They took this step of obedience to Christ right away. Baptism seals your commitment in your own heart, and shows others you are serious about your commitment to God.

Acts 2:41 How many people believed on the day of Pentecost? 3000. How many were baptized that day? 3000. Why did none of them wait? Were they right or wrong?

*Acts 8:36-38 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?” <sup>37</sup>And Philip said, “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” <sup>38</sup>And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.*

What was the only requirement placed upon this new convert in order to be permitted to be baptized? “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” Believing with all the heart is all that is required. No baptism classes, and no waiting to prove repentance or faith, no waiting to be perfected. Was Philip right, or wrong to baptize him so quickly?

Does anyone have the right or authority to add conditions to baptism to the Word of God? No. Jesus rebuked the Jewish leaders for neglecting God's commands and holding to their traditions:

*Mark 7:7-8 ‘But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’ <sup>8</sup>“Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.”*

*Acts 10:47 – 48 “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we did, can he?” 48And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.”*

*What was the deciding factor upon which Peter ordered them to be baptized? While Peter was preaching, they were believing, and as they were believing, the Holy Spirit was falling upon them. Immediately Peter ordered them to be baptized.*

*Acts 16:14 “Lydia... was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. <sup>15</sup>And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.”*

Lydia was listening to Paul preach, and the Lord opened her heart to respond. Immediately she and her household were baptized. (We assume that her household also believed). What was the prerequisite for her to qualify for baptism? “The Lord opened her heart to respond.” Nothing more. Do you see any other requirement written in the context?

*Acts 16:30-34 he said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” <sup>31</sup>They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” <sup>32</sup>And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup>And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. <sup>34</sup>And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.*

How soon after the jailer believed was he baptized? “that very hour of the night”. The jailer and his household were pagan, idol worshipping Romans. Yet they were baptized immediately upon believing.

*Acts 18:8 Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.*

“Believing and being baptized.” That is the pattern in the book of Acts. It should be the pattern today. Notice that they never waited for a church meeting. They never waited for a pastor to come and conduct the baptism. They never waited for a lot of people to believe and then schedule a baptism. Paul didn’t even wait for daylight to baptize the jailer!

Is it possible that if immediate baptism is practiced, someone who is not a true believer will be baptized? Yes, that is possible. It happened in the first century, in Acts 8.

*Acts 8: 13 Even Simon [the magician] himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip...*

*Acts 8:18Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, <sup>19</sup>saying, “Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit.” <sup>20</sup>But Peter said to him, “May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! <sup>21</sup>“You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. <sup>22</sup>“Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. <sup>23</sup>“For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.”*

Here is a case where a non-true believer was baptized. Does the Holy Spirit, who inspired the writing of this scripture, condemn the baptizer? No. Does any fault lie with the baptizer? No. The fault is all on the head of Simon the magician. Peter rebukes him and no one else. Philip was not God. He could not see into the heart of Simon to discover that Simon had not repented. He believed but did not repent. He did not have saving faith. He was like the demons who believe and tremble in terror, spoken of in James 2:19.

Judas repented, but did not believe. Simon the magician believed but did not repent. Neither man had saving faith. But Philip baptized Simon because he professed faith in Christ, and rightly so. He did the right thing. The scripture does not criticize him, or correct him. He baptized just the same as the apostles did in Acts 2, when they baptized 3000 upon their profession of faith.

In the parable of the sower in Mat 13, there are four kinds of soil, four kinds of hearts. Only one type of soil is good soil. Only one kind of heart out of the four is a good heart. Yet three of the soils look good on the surface. Three out of four hearts make professions of faith. One is shallow, one is full of worldliness, and one is a good heart. But the apostles baptized all who professed faith in Christ, immediately upon their profession of faith. They never waited. They never added requirements before baptism. They were correct. They were right to do as Jesus had instructed them. Neither should we add conditions before baptism. These are traditions of man, not God. We must follow the New Testament pattern in all things, including baptism.

In a Hindu context, or any culture where idol worship is practiced, it is wise to preach the gospel thoroughly so that the listeners understand that true repentance includes repenting from worshipping other gods and idols. If preaching in a public setting where there may be radical idol worshippers present, it may be wise to call those interested aside and explain to them thoroughly that to truly repent and put their trust in Christ means to stop worshipping other gods and idols, and get rid of them. One must explain that as long as they worship other gods or idols, they are breaking the first and second commandments.

After explaining this true repentance, if they commit to turning away from gods and idols, and to trust in Christ alone, then they are ready for baptism. Their profession of repentance and faith is all that the Bible requires before baptism.

It is true that in some contexts such as parts of Nepal and India, some people might feel they should make a profession of faith in Jesus either because they fear us or because they hope to please us or get some benefit from us. These same problems exist in parts of America and other nations of the world. But we can take steps to diminish these wrong motives and fears. First we must be very gentle and patient when sharing the gospel so that people will not fear us. We must exhibit joy, love and peace. We must be humble and not give them reason to believe that we think we are better or higher than them. We must explain that they are not believing for us, but for God. Second, we must make it clear that they will not get any financial benefit from us if they believe in Jesus. We must make it clear that we do not pay people to believe in Jesus. We must make it clear to them that Jesus is not just their Savior and Healer, but their Lord and Master, and that if they profess to believe in Christ, they must obey Him and follow Him. Then we can have confidence they are making a true confession of faith.

The apostles of the New Testament had the same problems to contend with. Some people thought Paul and Silas were gods and tried to offer sacrifice to them, Acts 14:11-15. Only with intense effort did Paul persuade them they were only men like them. Felix often called Paul to talk with him because he hoped to get money from him, Acts 24:26. But none of these things stopped the apostles and believers from baptizing converts immediately. Neither should we wait to baptize because of these wrong motives. Instead we can expose them and correct them.

### Household baptism - Baptizing the whole family together

Whole households believed and were baptized together on five occasions in the Book of Acts:

Cornelius and his household - Acts 10:47; Lydia and her household - Acts 16:15; the Philippian jailer and his household - Acts 16:33; Crispus, his household and many Corinthians - Acts 18:8. We can also reasonably assume that on the day of Pentecost, when 3000 believed and were baptized, that whole households were present in some cases, and heard Peter preach. They believed and were baptized together - Acts 2:41.

What was true of their culture in that time is also true in some cultures in our time, which is that heads of households and their families make conversion decisions together. We can derive from this pattern that it is wise to reach out to the heads of households, and win their minds and hearts over to Christ. It is wise to try to reach whole families at once, and especially try to not leave the heads of the households out. For just as you would react if a Hindu converted your child to Hinduism without your knowledge, so also Hindu and Muslim fathers react when you convert their children to Jesus without their knowledge. We can avoid creating this reaction by targeting the men as a priority.

Baptizing a man's wife or child without first explaining the gospel to the husband or father can induce an even more hostile reaction. So my suggestion is that as soon as we lead someone to faith in Christ, go with them straight to their home and teach the gospel to the whole household including the male leader. Then we will have a good chance of winning the whole family, and baptizing them at the same time.

### **L – List**

The Oikos list. “Oikos” is a Greek word that means “household”, or extended network of relationships.

Help the new believer write a list of all the non-believers in his household and circle of friends immediately upon conversion, even the same hour that he puts his trust in Christ. You can say to him, “Now because you have trusted Jesus, you’re going to heaven. But what about your family and friends? Wouldn’t it be great if they could go to heaven with you? The best way to bring them with you is to first write their names on a list so you can pray for all of them.”

The biblical basis for this is that God saves whole households. We see it with Noah, Gen. 7:1. We see it with Lot, Gen 19:16. We see it with Rahab, Joshua 2:18-19. We see it with Lydia and the jailer. Acts 16:14-15, 30-31 “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, you and your household.”

The List is of every unbeliever they know. Even if they don't know names, they can write, "milk seller, veg seller, laundry man, cleaning lady, petrol seller", etc. The purpose of the list is to intentionally and systematically bring these people to faith in Christ. We call it "The Blessing List", because the purpose is to bless the people on the list. The specific next step is to share one's testimony with these people. Of course, other next steps are to pray for them, and show love to them by serving to them, listening to them, helping them in crisis, and sharing the gospel with them. Some will believe right away, because of your testimony and loving influence. Others might take more time, and in those cases, it will help if you start a "Discovery Group" with them and discuss the gospel of John or Mark, or misconceptions about Christianity, or objections and obstacles to faith in Jesus.

In a T4T group, the members choose 5 names on their list each week to tell their testimony to. We have found over the many years of utilizing the oikos list, many people on the lists come to Christ, and some do right away.

## **T – Testimony**

Immediately upon conversion, we must teach the new believer how to share his testimony. Teach them how to write it in three parts:

1. Before – what life was like before believing in Christ. Write down, sins, fears, troubles, and feelings.
2. How – What happened that caused you to believe? What was the catalyst that made you choose to put faith in Christ?
3. Changes – What changes have come into your life since you believed in Jesus?

I have asked this question to new believers within ½ hour of their decision to receive Jesus, and they have said, "I have peace". This is their testimony! As the days go on, more changes will come and their testimony will grow.

These three parts in this order are the best way to tell your testimony.

There are powerful examples in the New Testament of people giving testimony, with great results. John 4 tells of the Samaritan woman at the well, who went back to Samaria and told the people of her encounter with Jesus the Messiah. As a result the whole town came to see Jesus.

Mark 5 tells of the man with a legion of demons and how he was delivered by Jesus. He wanted to get in the boat with the Lord, but Jesus said, ""Go home to your people and report to them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He had mercy on you." 20And he went away and began to proclaim in Decapolis what great things Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed."

The effectiveness of his testimony is seen 3 chapters later when 4000 people from his home area came to see and hear Jesus.

After the new believer writes his testimony, have him practice telling it to you. Help him practice telling it over and over until he is confident he can tell it to others.

## **G – Gospel**

Do your best to teach every new believer as soon as possible how to share the gospel. We teach a gospel presentation using pictures and illustrations, called “The Bridge Diagram”. There are other good methods of sharing the gospel, and the trainer can teach the method that works best for him. The bridge diagram is available online and from any of our team members. A new believer must practice his gospel presentation over and over and over until he can share the gospel accurately and has confidence he can share it.

## **H – House**

*“Zacchaeus! Quick, come down! I must be a guest in your home today.” Luke 19:5*

Visit the new believer’s house as soon as you can. Try to visit on the same day he trusts in Christ. Why? First, so you know where he lives, and can find him to help him grow. Second, in this new believer, you have found a person of peace. In Luke 10: 7 Jesus taught that you are to stay (Presence), heal (Power), and say (Proclamation). When you come into the house you are bringing the Presence of God. When you heal you are demonstrating the Power of God. When you say, you are Proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. If you are full of faith and the Holy Spirit when you enter that house, very likely others in that house will also come to Christ, if not on that day, soon afterwards. You have found a house of peace. A new T4T group or even a new church can start there. So don’t isolate the new believer from his oikos. Teach him to be salt and light right there in his home, neighborhood, workplace or school.