



MINISTRY OPERATIONS MANUAL

Follow-Up Best Practices

Timelines, Communication, and Discipleship Connection

DOCUMENT

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CITY OF REFUGE BIBLE STUDY CENTER

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DOCUMENT CONTENTS

Table of Contents

01	Why Follow-Up Matters
02	The 72-Hour Principle
03	Building a Follow-Up Cadence
04	Communication Approaches
05	Connecting People to a Local Church or Study Group
06	Difficult Follow-Up Scenarios
07	When to Close a Follow-Up Record
08	Reassignment & Team Coverage
09	Self-Care for the Follow-Up Worker

SECTION 01

Why Follow-Up Matters

The Great Commission is often preached as a call to evangelism — go, preach, reach. But Jesus did not say go and reach. He said, "Go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19). The verb is *discipleship*, not *contact*. And no one becomes a disciple in a single encounter.

"What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it?"

— Luke 15:4 (KJV)

The Cost of No Follow-Up

When a person is reached but not followed up with, several things happen:

- **The seed planted has no water.** Jesus' Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13) describes seed that springs up quickly but withers because it has no root. Many people respond in a moment of emotion but need ongoing care to take root.
- **The person feels forgotten.** A common complaint from new believers is that someone prayed with them, said "we'll keep in touch," and was never heard from again. This damages trust in the church far more than the original encounter ever helped it.
- **The Kingdom gains a name on a list but not a life.** Records without follow-up are vanity metrics. They mean nothing eternally.

The Heart Of It

Follow-up is not a task to be completed. It is a relationship to be entered. The person you contacted last week is not a record — they are a soul whom God brought across your path for a reason that extends beyond a single moment.

SECTION 02

The 72-Hour Principle

The first follow-up contact should happen within 72 hours of the initial encounter. This is not arbitrary — there are spiritual and practical reasons.

Why 72 Hours

- **The encounter is still emotionally vivid.** The person remembers your face, your name, and what was discussed. After a week, those details begin to fade.
- **Spiritual interest is most active.** When someone has just had a meaningful conversation about God, the Holy Spirit is often working actively in their thoughts in the days that follow. A timely follow-up meets them in that work.
- **It demonstrates seriousness.** A follow-up within three days says "I meant what I said." A follow-up two weeks later says "this was lower priority."
- **The enemy is also active.** Mark 4:15 reminds us that the enemy comes immediately to take away the Word that was sown. Quick follow-up is spiritual warfare.

What the First Follow-Up Should Be

Keep it simple and short. The goal is to re-establish connection, not to extend the original conversation. A typical first follow-up:

- A short text or phone call
- Mentions you by name and the place/circumstance of the encounter
- Asks how the person is doing
- Offers continued prayer
- Leaves space — does not push for anything new

SECTION 03

Building a Follow-Up Cadence

A single follow-up is rarely enough. Discipleship requires rhythm. The BSC recommends the following cadence for ongoing follow-up:

STAGE	TIMING	FORM	FOCUS
First touch	Within 72 hrs	Text or call	Re-establish connection, offer prayer
Second touch	1 week	Call or visit	Deeper conversation, share Scripture
Third touch	2–3 weeks	Personal visit if possible	Invite to study group, church, or fellowship
Fourth touch	1 month	Whatever they prefer	Confirm spiritual home, transition to discipleship
Ongoing	Monthly	Relational	Regular care, prayer, mutual encouragement

Flexibility

Cadence is a guide, not a rule. Some people need more frequent contact in the first weeks; others appreciate space. Read the relationship. The cadence above is a rhythm to hold, not a checklist to enforce.

SECTION 04

Communication Approaches

How you follow up matters as much as that you follow up. Different people respond differently to different channels. Always ask the person what they prefer.

Text Messaging (Most Common)

- **Low-pressure.** Allows the person to respond when they have time.
- **Keep short.** Three sentences maximum for first messages.
- **Sign your name.** Even if you texted before — they may not have saved your number.
- **Send during reasonable hours.** Not before 9 AM or after 8 PM unless the person has indicated otherwise.
- **Don't expect immediate replies.** A 1–3 day response time is normal and not a sign of disinterest.

Phone Calls

- **More personal.** Better for deeper conversation, prayer, or relational care.
- **Ask permission first.** Text first: "Is now a good time to call?"
- **Have a purpose ready.** Don't call without knowing what you want to say.
- **Leave a clear voicemail if they don't answer.** Identify yourself, the BSC, and a callback time.

In-Person Visits

- **The most relational option.** But also the most demanding for both parties.
- **Always pre-arrange.** Never drop by unannounced after the first encounter.
- **Go in twos.** Same principle as initial outreach.
- **Bring something small.** A printed Scripture, a book, or homemade food shows care.

Email

- **Use sparingly.** Email feels formal to many people.
- **Best for sharing longer Scripture studies,** articles, or invitation details to events.
- **Don't use email for emotional or urgent matters.**

SECTION 05

Connecting People to a Local Church or Study Group

The goal of follow-up is not to keep the person in dependence on you — it is to see them rooted in a healthy spiritual community where ongoing discipleship can happen. You are a bridge, not a destination.

"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together..."

— Hebrews 10:24-25 (KJV)

When to Make the Connection

Typically, after the third or fourth follow-up touch — once you have established trust and the person is showing genuine openness to ongoing spiritual community.

How to Make the Connection

- **Ask about their preferences first.** Denomination, worship style, location, family considerations.
- **Use The BSC's partner directory.** Identify a church or study group that fits their context.
- **Make the introduction warm.** Don't just give them an address — offer to come with them the first time, or introduce them personally to a contact at the church.
- **Follow up after the visit.** Did they feel welcomed? Will they return? What was their experience?
- **Don't take it personally if they choose differently.** Some people will not connect with the first church they visit. That is normal.

SECTION 06

Difficult Follow-Up Scenarios

The Person Stops Responding

After two unanswered messages or calls, pause. Wait a week or two. Try once more with warmth and no pressure. If still no response, mark the follow-up complete with a note: "Outreach attempted; no response. Praying for continued movement of the Spirit in their life." Continue praying. The seed was planted. God will water.

The Person Asks Hard Questions You Can't Answer

Be honest. "That's a great question. Let me think about it and come back to you with a better answer than I can give right now." Then research — ask a pastor, consult The BSC team, look up resources. Return with a thoughtful answer.

The Person Shares Trauma or Crisis

Listen without judgment. Pray with them. Do not try to counsel beyond your training. Refer them to a qualified pastor, counselor, or crisis service. Notify your team coordinator. Continue to be a friend, but do not become their therapist.

The Person Wants More Time Than You Can Give

Some people, once spiritually engaged, want frequent and lengthy contact. This is good — but it can overwhelm a single team member. If you cannot sustain the level of contact the person needs, talk to your coordinator about bringing in another team member or transitioning them to a small group setting where care can be shared.

The Person Becomes Hostile or Rejecting

If someone becomes openly hostile to the Gospel or to you personally, do not argue. Withdraw with grace. Send a brief message: "I respect your decision. I'll stop reaching out, but I want you to know I'll continue to pray for you and your family. If you ever want to talk again, you know how to reach me." Close the record with prayer, not bitterness.

SECTION 07

When to Close a Follow-Up Record

Every record in the Impact Registry eventually reaches a resolution. Closing a record is not abandonment — it is acknowledgment of where the relationship has moved.

Close With "Discipleship Connected"

The ideal outcome. The person has been connected to a local church or study group and ongoing discipleship is now happening through that body. Your active follow-up transitions to occasional check-ins.

Close With "Ongoing Personal Relationship"

The person prefers continued personal follow-up rather than connection to a church or group. Maintain monthly contact. Document each touch in the Impact Registry.

Close With "No Response After Sustained Effort"

After several attempts with no response over a reasonable timeframe (typically 60–90 days), close the record with a prayer note. The person remains in the Prayer Map if appropriate.

Close With "Declined Further Contact"

The person has clearly indicated they do not want further contact. Respect that. Close the record. Continue silent prayer.

Closure With Honor

Closing a follow-up record does not mean the person is forgotten. They remain in The BSC's prayer rotation through the Prayer Map. Closure is operational — prayer is eternal.

SECTION 08

Reassignment & Team Coverage

Life happens. Team members travel, get sick, take leave, or encounter seasons where they cannot sustain follow-up. The BSC operates with team coverage so no person reached is dropped because one team member is unavailable.

How to Request Reassignment

- **Notify your coordinator promptly.** The sooner the better — do not wait until follow-ups become overdue.
- **Provide context.** Brief summary of where each relationship currently stands and what the next agreed-upon step was.
- **Hand off warmly.** If possible, introduce the receiving team member to the person being followed up with: "I want to introduce you to my colleague who will be checking in with you while I'm away."

When You Receive a Reassigned Follow-Up

- **Read the record fully before reaching out.** Understand the history.
- **Identify yourself clearly.** "My name is [Name]. I'm a colleague of [Previous Team Member] at The BSC. They've asked me to stay in touch with you while they're away."
- **Honor the existing rhythm.** Don't suddenly change the cadence or approach the relationship has had.
- **Pray for the person before your first contact.**

SECTION 09

Self-Care for the Follow-Up Worker

You cannot pour out what you have not received. Follow-up ministry can be deeply rewarding and deeply draining. The same care you offer to others must be offered to your own soul.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

— Matthew 11:28 (KJV)

Practical Self-Care

- **Limit active follow-ups.** No more than 8–12 people in active follow-up at any one time. Beyond that, depth suffers.
- **Take Sabbath rest.** One day a week with no ministry tasks. The Lord modeled this — so should you.
- **Process with your coordinator.** Regular check-ins about how you are doing — not just what you are doing.
- **Watch for compassion fatigue.** Cynicism, dread before follow-up calls, emotional flatness — these are warning signs. Step back and rest.
- **Stay in your own Bible study.** You must remain a learner, not just a teacher.
- **Receive prayer.** Ask others on the team to pray for you regularly.

A Word For You

Your value to The BSC is not measured by how many people you follow up with. It is measured by your faithfulness, your love, and your own walk with the Lord. Care for yourself the way you would care for someone you are discipling.

QUESTIONS OR SUPPORT

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