

Soul Winning: Every Christian's Job

By Dr. Curtis Hutson (1934–1995)

Proverbs 11:30 says, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise."

As I came to go on soul-winning visitation last Thursday, I thought of how the soul-winning crowd continues to change. Sometimes you will have many of the same people coming continually; then new ones will come, and the old ones will drop out. They go through a cycle, and then go out.

It shouldn't be that way. Every individual believer ought to be a soul winner all the time.

Someone once asked Lyman Beecher, the great preacher, "Mr. Beecher, what do you consider the greatest thing a human being can do or be?"

Without hesitation, the famous pulpiteer replied, "The greatest thing is not that one should be a scientist, important as that is; nor that one should be a statesman, vastly important as that is; nor even that one should be a theologian, immeasurably important as that is. But the greatest thing of all is for one human being to bring another human being to Christ."

This morning I call your attention to four things about soul winning.

The Soul-Winning People

I once thought that getting people saved was the business of the preacher. I thought that getting people saved was the business of the evangelist. I thought that getting people saved was the business of the super-Christian. But I have since learned that getting people saved is the business of every Christian.

The Bible says in **Ephesians 4:11,12**:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Paul said He gave the evangelists, the prophets, the apostles, the pastor and teacher for one purpose: 'to perfect the saints.'

The Greek word for perfect literally means "to equip." He gave the evangelist, the prophet, the apostle, the pastor and the teacher to equip the saints for the work of the ministry.

No church is a success in God's eyes until its members are equipped to do the work of the ministry. No church is really pleasing God one hundred percent until it gets the idea that it is every Christian's business to do the work of ministry. Until we learn this and get busy, we will never succeed in what God wants us to accomplish.

Oh, I'll win a few. And others will win a few. But until every one of you is sharing the message of salvation everywhere you go, you are not doing what God would have you do. Until I can stir your hearts to get busy at getting the Gospel out day and night, I've not succeeded as a pastor.

But you say, "I have a speech impediment, and I can't talk."

When God sent Moses down to Egypt and said, "Tell Pharaoh to let My people go," Moses said, "I have a speech impediment. I stutter and can't talk good." But God said, "I still have a message that I want you to deliver. So I will send Aaron along. You tell Aaron, and he will tell them what you said."

Nobody is excused from winning souls.

In Luke 8:4–15, the parable is given of a man who went out to sow. Christ simply said, “A sower went out to sow....” He is an unnamed personality. He is not the preacher, not the deacon, just a sower. Every person in the church should be a seed-sower.

I read the story of a man named Peter Apples in Gipsy Smith’s book *The Beauty of Jesus*. Gipsy Smith told about Peter Apples, a man (during the Civil War) who went into the enemy’s territory. Peter Apples did not know much about being a good soldier. He just knew that when his superior officer said, “Charge!” he was supposed to go. And he was the kind of man who never came back until he made contact with the enemy.

One day his officer said, “Charge!” Peter Apples charged. But they came under such severe fire that the superior officer asked them to retreat, to come back. Peter Apples didn’t hear that, so he kept going. He went across “No-Man’s Land” and finally into the enemy’s territory.

He went down in a ditch where the enemy soldiers were lined up one behind the other, took hold of the first one in the ditch, grabbed him by the nape of the neck, drug him out and started back toward home with him.

The enemy soldiers took aim and started to shoot, but since their own soldier was being dragged behind Peter Apples, they couldn’t fire. About the time they thought they had a shot, their own soldier would get in the way again.

Peter Apples continued to travel with the soldier. Finally he dragged him across “No-Man’s Land” and back into his own territory and dropped him at the feet of his superior officer.

The officer looked at him, took a deep breath, and said, “Where in the world did you get him?”

He answered, “I got him over there in the ditch. There’s plenty of them over there, and all of you could have had one if you had wanted one.”

The truth is, there are plenty of lost people all over Atlanta, Georgia. They are next door to you, they work with you, they meet you at the shops, they see you at the drugstore. All of you could have had one if you had really wanted one.

When I give the invitation, every person in here could walk down the aisle with a soul that you had won to Jesus this past week, had you meant business about it.

A fellow who had never witnessed heard that a relative of his was dying. He came to me weeping and said, “I must go tell him how to be saved. Pray for me. I’ve got to do it.”

After he had gone and witnessed to this relative and led him to Christ, he came back and said, “God saved him! He did it!”

The truth is, God would have done it when the relative was well. God would have done it for his neighbor, for his friend, for the folks he attended school with; but he never tried it until he was desperate and thought his relative was dying and going to Hell.

When we realize that our relatives may die before morning or Jesus may come before sundown, then we too will go and win them to Christ.

I am saying, the greatest thing in the world is getting people saved. God expects every one of us to get people saved.

A young convert asked his pastor, "When should I start in the soul-winning program?"

The pastor answered in the form of a question: "When do you expect a candle to give light? When you first light it, or after it burns halfway down?"

"When you first light it," the convert said.

The pastor then said, "That answers your question. God expects you to go to work now winning people to Christ."

We have a Bible example of that.

In John, chapter 4, when the woman at the well received the living water, without a soul-winning lecture or hearing a soul-winning sermon or attending a soul-winning conference or hearing a Sunday school lesson or a sermon, the first thing she did was to run into town and say, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

The most effective soul winners are new converts. They get the idea that the whole world ought to be saved and can get saved—that if God saved them, He will save their friends.

The Soul-Winning Power

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said,

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

I'd rather die than ever try to preach again without the power of God. I'd rather die than ever to preach a sermon and it be dry and dead and have no power in it. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you...."

"...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."—Zech. 4:6.

You will run into somebody who can out-argue you, men may be able to out-reason you, but they cannot out-argue or out-reason the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts the sinner.

I give a soul-winning lecture and show folks how to use their Bible and present the plan of salvation. We ought to do it; but in the final analysis, the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and convicts the sinner.

I remember the night I was saved as an eleven-year-old boy. Somehow the Holy Spirit dealt with my heart, and I thought I would die that night. You have had that feeling—some of you—I'm sure. Or you have been in the pew when the preacher preached and your heart beat fast and there was a desire to go forward; but something said, "Don't go."

Something else said, "Go." You battled with that until you gave in and went.

You remember when they sang, "Just as I am, without one plea, but that Thy blood was shed for me," and something inside you said, "It's time to go. It's time to go."

I remember it so well. I would talk back to God: "Lord, not on this verse. But if they sing one more verse, I'll go on that one."

I was always careful to tell God, "Lord, I'm not saying 'no' forever. Someday I intend to receive You as Saviour, but not this time." And I was careful to add, "Don't quit dealing with me."

That is the Holy Spirit. Maybe God spoke to you at the death of a loved one. Or maybe He spoke to you through trouble or some sorrow or in a church service when the choir or the soloist sang. I don't know when, but God speaks to sinners. I am saying, the power of soul winning is the power of the Holy Spirit.

We may as well close our doors unless we recognize this. We may as well send the choir home, give the musical instruments away, sell the property and go out of business, because we are not in business unless we recognize that we must have the power of the Holy Spirit in our services.

A company was building a bridge. As the construction men were drilling down to set a post to support the bridge, they ran into a sunken barge. They decided it had to be moved. So they tried everything they could to move it, but to no avail. They got cranes on barges and tried to lift it up, but that didn't work.

Finally they had almost given up when one fellow standing by observing the whole thing said, "If you will give me a contract, I'll move that thing in twenty-four hours."

They said, "All right. We want it moved." The contract was signed to move that barge for several thousand dollars.

He went to work. He had them bring in six barges. He hooked them all together. He put them over the top of the sunken barge, and he sent divers down. These divers took chains and hooked them onto the sunken barge. They secured it with many strong chains. Then, when it was all ready, he stood back and said, "Now, it's just a matter of time until it will be moved."

They asked, "What do you mean? What are you going to get in there to pull those six barges?"

He said, "We're not going to pull them; we're going to leave them there. The way I figure it, in a few hours the tide will be in, then she'll come up."

They stood by and waited. Sure enough, the tide came, and these six barges began to pull. They creaked, groaned, cracked and popped; and the sunken barge came loose. He floated it out into the Atlantic, sunk it, collected his thousands of dollars and walked away.

What man could not do with all of his power, this one man did by harnessing the power of the Atlantic Ocean.

We have the power of God available in everything we do. What we can't do, God can do!

The Soul-Winning Program

The soul-winning people, the soul-winning power, then the soul-winning program.

The Great Commission says, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature"—not just some, not most, but "all."

In Ecclesiastes 11:6 we read,

"In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good."

And Isaiah 32:20 says, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters...." We are to sow everywhere, "beside all waters," not only in the church, but in the street, on the job, at school—everywhere.

One of our church ladies had an accident and was knocked unconscious. An ambulance was called. On the way to the hospital she came to, and the first thing she asked the man sitting in

the back with her was: "If you died today, do you know that you would go to Heaven?" She led that man to Christ before they got to the hospital. Sow everywhere.

At a wedding rehearsal here several years ago, some of the party were late coming in. We waited and waited.

I asked, "Is this all the people?"

"No, there are some others to come."

"Well, let's not waste this time. You sit down, and I'll practice my Sunday sermon."

One of the fellows said, "Yeah, let's all sit down and let him practice his Sunday sermon," thinking he would embarrass me and I would say I was just kidding. They all sat down.

I said, "Get over here in the center." I sat down on the edge of a table. I said, "'As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.' The Bible says that 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.' You are sinners because you inherited the sin nature." I went through the whole plan of salvation!

I've forgotten now how many, but a good number of those people received Christ as their Saviour at that wedding rehearsal! I baptized some of them later.

I'm saying, sow everywhere.

Late one night I couldn't sleep, so I got in my car, went by and picked up a friend who had told me if I ever wanted anybody to go soul winning with me, call him. I called him at one o'clock in the morning. "This is the pastor."

"Yes?"

"You said if I ever wanted anybody to go soul winning with me, any hour of the day or night, to call you."

"Yes. What time is it?"

"One o'clock."

"In the morning?"

"In the morning."

I got a two-gallon gas can, put it in the back of my automobile and picked up my friend. He thought we were going to the jail or going to the hospital or going to visit someone who had been in an accident or something.

We went over on I-85. (Back then it ended at the Old Suwanee exit.) He was really curious. He kept asking, "Where are we going?"

"You'll see. Just wait."

We got on I-85 and started up toward Old Suwanee exit. After riding for a few minutes, I saw an automobile. I pulled up behind it and stopped. A disgusted-looking fellow was standing at the back of his car.

I asked, "You out of gas?"

"Yes, I am."

"I've been looking for you for fifteen minutes."

He looked at me rather funny and said, "You've been looking for me?"

"Yeah. I've been looking for a fellow out of gas. Is that you?"

"That's me."

I went to the boot of my car (that's "trunk" for you sophisticated folks), got the two-gallon can of gas, opened up the gas cap and poured in those two gallons.

He said, "All right, what do I owe you? You probably want ten dollars for that two gallons of gas. You're going to make a fortune over here tonight on this expressway."

I said, "No sir, not ten dollars."

"Then how much?"

"Nothing."

"Ah," he said, "you want something. There's some kind of catch. What do you want?"

I answered, "Nothing. You can't give me a quarter. You can't give me a dime. It's free. I brought it especially for you." Man, he thought I was a nut!

He said, "Well, is there anything that I can do for you? I don't know what to say."

"You don't say anything. I would like for you to sit down and just listen to me for a minute or two."

He sat down. I asked him, "If you died tonight, do you know that you would go to Heaven?"

"No, I don't know that."

I asked his wife and the children in the back seat the same question. I gave them the plan of salvation and led the entire family to Christ on the side of the expressway at two o'clock in the morning, after giving them two gallons of gas!

It was the best time I ever had in my life. We shouted all the way back to the service station! I mean, we had a hallelujah time! We bought another two gallons of gas and hunted others all night. From one car to another we witnessed.

I'm talking about the soul-winning program—you do it everywhere.

Another thing concerning God's program is that we are not only to sow everywhere, but we are to sow all the time. Ecclesiastes 11:4 says, "He that observeth the wind shall not sow." It is saying, "If you wait for all conditions to be favorable, you will not sow."

I've had people come to me and say, "Now, when I get this taken care of, I am going to start witnessing to people." No, you will not.

I've had people say, "When I learn a little more about the Bible, then I am going to start going to soul-winning visitation, and I'm going to become a soul winner." No, you will not.

Somebody else said, "When the children get a little older so that I can leave them by themselves, I'm going to start winning souls." No, you will not. 'He that waits for all conditions to be favorable will never sow.'

Don't you know the Devil is going to see to it that there is never a time when everything is just right? He is going to fight you every inch of the way. And if you wait for all conditions to be favorable, you will never sow.

In the soul-winning program, we are to sow everywhere, and we are to sow all the time.

Then, we're to sow in tears. Psalm 126:5,6 says,

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."

This does not necessarily mean that you have to weep as you talk with people, though there would be nothing wrong with that; but it means that you are to be compassionate. You are to care.

Does it bother you that you don't love lost souls any more than what you do? Does it bother you that you can pray for sinners with no broken heart and no tears? It bothers me when I pray and my heart doesn't break.

When somebody asks, "Will you pray for my lost brother or my lost uncle?" and I can pray, "Dear Lord, bless this man's uncle and in some way send somebody to witness to him so he will be saved"—when I can pray and my heart is not touched nor broken and my eyes don't weep, that hurts me.

Remember Paul said, "I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:31). Remember what Jeremiah said? "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears" (Jeremiah. 9:1). Our hearts ought to be broken. We ought to weep over people who are not saved. When we look at our own little children who are not saved, do tears come?

One of the men here in our church came to my office early one Sunday evening before the service. He and his wife were all excited and wanted to tell me about leading their son to Christ.

They had had dinner together, and the father had witnessed to his son. After explaining how to be saved, the father prayed. And as he prayed, he began to weep. And he wept until his son also began to weep. Then he asked the son if he would accept Christ as Saviour then and there, and the boy was saved. The wife rejoiced as she said, "Oh, pastor, it was the tears that did it!"

I'm saying, if somehow we can show concern enough that tears fill our eyes, then we can get them saved.

The program: we are to sow everywhere; we are to sow all the time; we are to sow in tears.

Soul winning includes everybody. Soul-winning power is the power of the Holy Spirit. The soul-winning program is everywhere, all the time and in tears.

The Soul-Winning Purpose

Number one, it causes rejoicing in Heaven. Did you know that Heaven does not rejoice when we build big buildings like this? When we have big offerings, we get excited; but up in Heaven the streets are not just paved with gold—they are pure gold. The gold in Heaven that the streets are made from is so pure that it is as transparent glass. Man has no way of refining gold that pure. There is not a single impurity left in that gold. It is so pure you can see through it, like glass. We get excited about offerings. We get excited about buildings. We get excited about attendance. We get excited about music. But they don't get excited about any of those things in Heaven.

Wait a minute! When we give an invitation, they look over the battlements of Heaven with interest, for they are interested in sinners. And when some little child gets up and comes down to the front and one of the pastors meets him and takes his hand and the child says, "Mister, where is the getting-saved place?" and one of our personal workers says, "You sit down right here; we will take the Bible and show you how to be saved," up in Heaven, they are standing on tiptoe, looking down at that sight. And there is more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.

I'm saying, soul winning is the only thing that causes rejoicing in Heaven.

Did D. L. Moody lose his concern for sinners when he died? No. He looks back with interest and rejoices when sinners are saved.

Do you think John Wesley, of whom it was said that he was out of breath in pursuit of souls, lost his desire to see people saved when he went to Heaven? No. He still looks back with interest.

Do you think Billy Sunday lost his desire? Or Gipsy Smith? No, they still look back, and they're interested.

The soul-winning purpose: it not only causes rejoicing in Heaven, but it promises rewards. Daniel 12:3 reads,

"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

Who is really going to shine in Heaven? Soul winners. I haven't found a reward offered in the Bible for the fellow who preaches a good sermon. There is a reward offered to the pastor who does not serve for filthy lucre and is faithful, but there is not one offered for good preaching. There is not one offered for good singing. But there is one offered for soul winning. 'They that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars forever and ever!'

When you have won people here, it will be wonderful up in Heaven when God says, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." You will shine forever and ever.

Soul winning not only promises rewards and produces joy in Heaven, but it pleases God too.

Two thousand years ago God sent His Son into the world. He came all the way from Heaven on a mission. He had one thing in mind when He came here—saving sinners.

"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."—Luke 19:10.

"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."—Mark 10:45.

Jesus did not come to make a better world, contrary to public opinion. Jesus did not come to help social conditions. He came for one reason and one reason only—to save sinners.

The soul-winning purpose: it produces joy in Heaven; it promises rewards; it pleases God. And it produces finances.

God instructed Peter to go fishing, saying, "The first fish you catch—take the money out of its mouth and go pay our taxes."

When we get serious about fishing for men, God will take care of the finances.

But soul winning produces something else. It produces love. In John 15:16,17, Jesus said,

“Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain....These things I command you, that ye love one another.”

The command is to produce fruit. The fruit is to remain. And, of course, the fruit is souls that we win to Christ. And when we’re producing this fruit, we will love one another.

I’ve never seen two people who won souls together who did not love each other.

It not only produces love, it produces joy and warmth in a church. If you want to keep the service warm, keep the people happy and keep joy in the services, then keep people coming down the aisle for salvation. The soul-winning church is a happy church.

Soul winning. It’s the greatest business in the world.

This sermon and others like it may be found on the Sword of the Lord website:
<http://www.swordofthelord.com/archives/>

Dr. Curtis Hutson (1934–1995)



In 1961 a mail carrier and pastor of a very small church attended a Sword of the Lord Conference, got on fire, gave up his route and set out to build a great soul-winning work for God. Forrest Hills Baptist Church of Decatur, Georgia, grew from 40 people into a membership of 7,900. In 1972 the church was recognized as the fastest-growing Sunday school in America; and the last four years of his pastorate there, the Sunday school was recognized as the largest one in Georgia.

After being a pastor for 21 years, Dr. Hutson--the great soul winner that he was--became so burdened for the whole nation that he entered full-time evangelism, holding great city wide-area wide-cooperative revivals in some of America's greatest churches. As many as 625 precious souls trusted Christ in a single service. In one eight-day meeting, 1,502 salvation decisions were recorded.

At the request of Dr. John R. Rice, Dr. Hutson became Associate Editor of THE SWORD OF THE LORD in 1978, serving in that capacity until the death of Dr. Rice in 1980. At the time of Dr. Rice's death, Dr. Hutson became Editor, President of the Sword of the Lord Foundation, and Director of Sword of the Lord Conferences. Dr. Hutson was at the head of the Sword ministries when he passed away in March, 1995, all these ministries literally changing the lives of thousands of preachers and laymen alike, as well as winning many more thousands to Christ.