

Foreword

At last! Someone who shares my concern for old-fashion soul winning!

For too long I've been searching for a public champion who cares more about the Savior's commands than society's comments. Over the past generation evangelical America has been seduced by so-called experts who have convinced us that soul winning is out of step with "real world Christianity." As a result, the 20th century church has lived off the spiritual capital of the past with no vision, no leadership, and no strategy for implementing the Great Commission.

Until now.

David Wood's *The Jerusalem Factor* overturns the negative thinking of the '70s, '80s, and '90s and collapses every objection into a single, well-known edict: Just do it. In fact, David's heart won't let him do anything else. He's that burdened for the lost.

The Jerusalem Factor not only gives us a sense of mission but also the power tools necessary to build an effective soul winning ministry. Here is a step-by-step manual that any Christian can follow and any church can capitalize on.

And *The Jerusalem Factor* doesn't sidestep the sense of urgency. That may sound ruthless, but so is the clock. And believe me, there is a divine

timepiece winding down even as you read these words.

So read, learn, and imitate. Take my word for it, your life will never be the same again.

—Dr. David Gibbs
President, Christian Law Association

Preface

Somewhere along the way a great idea was lost. During the 40 days between Jesus' resurrection and ascension, He gave His disciples instructions on how to build the church and win the world.

He basically said, "Go... win... baptize... teach."

The first generation of soul winning Christians couldn't stop themselves. They nearly turned the world upside down, but by the late 20th century, the term "soul winning" had become so maligned that the church had reined in the excitement and the victory known by those first Christians. Churches had become so enamored with other approaches and so sure of other definitions that they lost sight of God's original intent.

At David Wood Ministries, we believe it's time to recast soul winning. God never suspended His Great Commission. He remains everywhere looking for faithful servants to overcome the world, not be overwhelmed by it. We believe that just as our Lord's message has not changed, neither has His methodology. Moreover, if we enacted the four-step methodology that Jesus taught, there would be such a revival in our cities that they would resemble first-century Jerusalem all over again.

That's why soul winning is at the heart of everything we do at David Wood Ministries, and why

it's our goal to again make it the operative word of churches everywhere.

Since 1900 the number of churches in the U.S. in proportion to the population has declined 43%. Today, 44% of our population is considered unchurched. A correlation? Absolutely, if we're willing to admit that our churches have become distracted from the Biblical approach to winning others to the Lord.

Over the past few decades there has been a subtle movement throughout society (and even within some Christian circles) in which non-soul winners redefined soul winning. The image of soul winning, it was argued, had become out-dated, out-worn, and out-lived in terms of usefulness. Critics used terms such as "button-holing," "elevator conversions," and "easy-beliefism." Personal responsibility and even involvement in soul winning became scarce. Numbers of churches chose to redefine soul winning from the silent witness position using terms like lifestyle evangelism and seeker-sensitive methodology.

In fact, soul winning had become so fundamentally different from God's design that what was once the apple of His eye is now called "picking green fruit." Which is why churches were harvesting barren ground.

God's Model

Here's an interesting thought: "Missionary," "missions," and "Great Commission" are never

mentioned in the Scriptures. But soul winning is. Not only is it a biblical word, but it's a biblical principle.

If we adhere to the truths not explicitly mentioned in the Word, why would we ignore a command given five times by Jesus in the Gospels and the Book of Acts? This command enhances all of the truth intended in the para-Biblical words and the methodology from the building of local churches to the winning of the world – in our day.

Soul winning has always been close to the heart of our Savior, and if the world is still to be reached, it will be done by Christians who go, win, baptize, and teach.

In the Book of Acts there is a soul winning model for every church, whether first or 21st century. Note how the early church systematically grew from 120 members (Acts 1:15) to 3,000 (2:41) to 5,000 men (4:4) to a multitude (4:32). Most biblical scholars believe 120,000 people (about half the population of Jerusalem) were reached for Christ within two years of the Great Commission!

Those early Christians knew that a strong soul winning ministry was vital for building—or rebuilding—a church, and they followed three simple growth words:

- **Add.** You win someone to Christ and add their name to the Lamb's Book of Life.
- **Multiply.** You train your convert to win others to Christ.

- **Multiply greatly.** You train your convert to train his converts to win others to Christ.

This model for church growth cannot be duplicated by any other formula or definition. You can't win others unless you have been won, and you can't disciple others unless you have been discipled. In short, Jesus taught us nearly 2,000 years ago how to get the job done. How can we improve upon that?

God's Will, Our Purpose

If people could sum up your life in one sentence, what would they say? Would it include soul winning?

As we begin this new millennium, it's our strategic goal to recast soul winning into the Biblical roots from which it came—God's way. We take our Lord at His Word when he said, "...he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30b). Join us today to reach as many and train as many as we can.

Introduction

“The Jerusalem Factor”

One of the most important questions about the Bible is constantly evaded by traditional, safe responses.

The question: “How did the church of Jerusalem reach 50% of their entire area for Christ and grow at such an unprecedented rate?”

The traditional, safe answer: “At the beginning of every new thing that God does, He works in a supernatural way in order to provide a pattern.”

As in all such answers, there is an element of truth. The inference, however, is devastating to Christians! The inference is that God did something in Jerusalem that was for that day only. Or, how about, what happened in Jerusalem is not for our day. Or, even more crippling, we are just not to “expect” such results, or any percentage thereof.

These responses are the result of complacent ministries which have shifted in their emphasis from biblical mandates to contemporary ideas and approaches.

One has only to look at the “church growth” movement of the last few decades to see a confusing barrage of ideas. Many of them are confusing because they major on only American culture with no biblical basis. Many experts offer even contradictory approaches.

What really happened in Jerusalem? Had the faithful 120 simply “happened” upon a different approach? Did graphics, publishing, conferences, seminars, locations, data control, and the like cause the approach to succeed and never to be achieved again? Did God do a one-time special work to form a display which can be re-visited but never reproduced?

I believe none of the above. So, what was it? What was the special ingredient, if you will? I call it “*The Jerusalem Factor*”

The Jerusalem Factor, simply stated, was this: A group of believers listened to the methodology that Jesus taught and then they instantly obeyed it.

The implementing of this four-step methodology (The Great Commission) is biblical soul winning.

Here’s an intriguing concept: **The Christians in that first church never focused on church growth – their focus was on being obedient to our Savior and to The Great Commission.**

If a local church will focus on biblical soul winning, growth will take care of itself!! Our job is obedience. It is God who gives the increase.

Imagine what would happen in any church that had 20, 40, even 100 trained soul winners who regularly went, won people to Christ, got their converts baptized, and then taught them to do for someone else what had just been done for them.

There would be an explosion!! This is exactly what happened in Jerusalem.

The question is “How do I begin this in my church?” Is it mechanical? Is it found in vision? In implementing programs? No, the answer is BURDEN—being broken over the lost. The brokenness must begin at home and extend worldwide.

Get this: **BURDEN produces PASSION. PASSION determines VISION. VISION creates a STRATEGY which will then FOCUS our PASSION.** Our burden must be to the world!

This is not an option. Obeying and glorifying our Lord depends on it, as well as the eternal destination of thousands of precious souls. Everything David Wood Ministries is doing is focused on this task.

It’s not a question of whether soul winning works, but whether we do! Ours is not to question the power of a limitless God, but to use to the limit the power God gave us. In other words, soul winning is not an option.

It never has been with David Wood Ministries. Since our inception in 1984, we’ve preached to more than one million people with about a quarter of those making some kind of decision for Christ, including more than 130,000 precious souls saved. We use the same, tested, tried-and-true plan for all soul winning situations. And it works!

Of course, as soul winners, we are never too far from our skeptics. A universal soul winning plan that works? How can we be so sure that’s God’s will for every believer?

Easy. Let’s go to the final authority—His Word. First, read the three parables of Luke 15 and tell me

you don’t come away impressed with how God is trying to leap into our hearts and stretch our understanding over His great concern for the unsaved. God loves every unsaved person who dies and goes to a sinner’s hell. Unfortunately, with so many preoccupations in life, Christians get sidetracked and don’t realize His great longing for the lost person to become saved.

Next, read Paul’s testimony in 1 Timothy 1:15: “This is the faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.”

Now consider the words of our Lord in Luke 19:10: “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.” If it behooved the Lord Jesus to seek out unsaved people, certainly you and I should be doing the same.

Let me repeat that. The primary reason Jesus came was so lost people would not have to go to hell and that heaven could be filled with the redeemed. “For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance,” (Matt. 9:13). Jesus is saying that He has come in order for people to see themselves in their lost condition and to recognize their need for a Savior.

Take a moment to review the Great Commission. It’s found in all the Gospels and in Acts 1. Never forget that word “commission” is not given just to missionaries as they go overseas. It is a responsibility of every born again child of God. We are to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. And that world can encompass the

farthest reaches of the globe...as well as the neighbor across the street.

Now take another moment to consider the power of Jesus. In my three decades of preaching the Gospel and dealing with people on a one-to-one basis, the one fact I've never lost sight of is the power of the Word of God. By this I mean the Word of God is able to do the job the Holy Spirit claimed would be done.

Jesus reassures us that "All power is given unto me." Not some power or limited power, but all power. God will never ask us to do anything for which He does not equip us. If he has all power then He has the ability to help us accomplish what He asks of us.

I sometimes tell people that Satan is powerful, but that God is all powerful. He is the Almighty. And greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world. So anyone surrendered to the Christian life can lead a victorious soul winning life.

Invariably, someone tells me, "I'm too defeated by sin to be a soul winner." No, you choose to be defeated by that sin. Next, the person argues, "I don't have the power to be a soul winner." No, you choose not to take the power that's been freely given.

And then, in desperation, that individual gets to the crux of the matter: "I don't know how to lead someone to Christ!"

That, dear friend, is the whole reason behind this book. More than anything else, *The Jerusalem Factor* is a workbook. For the Christian who has the desire to be used of God as a proficient soul winner, here is your manual. And because it is a workbook, it's designed for use. Scribble in the margins. Dog-ear the page corners. Refer to it time and time again until you smudge the ink. It's a tool—a tool designed to help you put *The Jerusalem Factor* from the example of the early Christians into full play in your life.

Which brings up one of the book's unique features. At the end of each lesson is a department called "Toolbox." These are hands-on, roll-up-your-sleeves, hang-your-hat-on principles for your personal soul winning needs. Use them. Put them back. Get another. They won't break, but they'll fix your particular concerns. In fact, in very short time your soul winning walk with the Lord will change forever.

So let's get started!

Chapter 1

It's All About Attitude

Peter had pulled an all-nighter but came up empty. You would think that in a warm-water lake 14 miles long and 9 miles wide that he could have caught at least one fish! But it was morning and the crew was tired, grouching about their bad luck as they cleaned their nets.

Then Jesus had the audacity to tell them to cast their nets in a certain place. Now anybody who knew anything about fishing in that tropical clime knew that Jesus' suggestion bordered on the ridiculous. They were already in the best spot—at the north end by the Jordan River. The only other remotely successful place would be out in the deepest section of the lake. Besides, Peter knew the habits of these fish. You don't snare them in the daytime. And if they listened to Jesus, they'd have to clean their nets

again. So why even consider listening to a carpenter from landlocked Nazareth tell you about fishing?

It took a great leap of faith to obey Jesus, but that was always Peter's trademark. He was the first disciple to believe and follow the Lord, and he obeyed here. Within moments the nets were engorged with their catch and both boats began to sink because of the weight!

Time and time again this seems to be God's pattern, not just in the Bible but in our personal lives, too. If we would just obey God, our "catch" would be astronomical. Basically it comes down to attitude. Anyone who is wrong in his or her attitude can never be an effective soul winner. But if we obey God and practice His techniques, we can draw in those around us.

In order to lead productive soul winning lives, there are 5 critical lessons we have to master before we venture out. Each deals with attitude.

Lesson 1

Always Pursue Ultimate Dedication

During an insightful interview, a very successful professional football coach revealed his daily training schedule: Rise at 6:00 for exercise, jog four miles, eat light meals throughout the work day, exercise again, go to bed early. His final comment was the most

illuminating: "I demand 110% from my players, but I always give it myself."

To see that kind of spirit in soul winning!

A concert pianist practices until his fingers are sore and his back throbs. A baseball player monotonously hits the ball hour after hour. A quarterback practices until a rubdown is necessary. And all of us know the stories of successful businessmen and women who worked incredibly long hours—sometimes with great sacrifice.

Was the sacrifice worth it? Whether or not it was, these people wanted it badly enough to pursue it single-mindedly. That type of dedication is a must if the highest goals are to be reached.

The word is dedication. Consider that the Olympic gold medals are not always won by the best athletes, but by those who spend outrageous amounts of hours in training. Their secret is complete dedication. It keeps them getting up each morning.

Certainly a Christian would never ask "Is soul winning worth it?" We know that it is. It's just that the main requirement for success in soul winning is dedication.

I am reminded of what Jesus said in Matthew 4:19. "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." This isn't just a command, but a promise. The command is "Follow me." The promise is "I will make you fishers of men." The promise is also a process. We become better soul winners week by week, month after month. How? Through a commitment to become a better soul winner. The phrase "I will make" is present durative action. That

means the one following Christ is continually being made a more proficient soul winner. As an athlete trains day by day, month by month to increase his effectiveness, so should a soul winner prepare through studies, prayer, soul winning, more study, more prayer, more soul winning, and so on. Through this kind of dedication comes success in soul winning.

You might interject that it's not easy to win souls. It's hard. It takes time and effort. All true, but what of lasting value doesn't take time and effort and, yes, even occasional sacrifice? Our ability to achieve our goals is directly proportionate to our attitude. For what do you want to use your life?

God help us all to be dedicated to this supreme task of the Christian life. Yes, my friend, it's worth it. Great dedication—many souls. Little dedication—few souls. No dedication—no souls.

While waiting for a haircut I wandered back to the shoe shine area and chatted with an elderly gentleman. After a few moments I asked him point blank, "You probably plan to receive Christ as your Savior one day, don't you?"

He bowed his head a bit and mumbled, "Well I hope so."

"What I mean is, you don't intend to die with out Christ and spend an eternity in hell separated from Him. Is that right?"

He looked at me and said, "No, I've always intended to find out how to go to heaven. I just never have."

Talk about the Holy Spirit's leading! I went through Scriptures with him and in a few minutes we bowed our heads in prayer. He gladly received Christ as Savior. Later as I was leaving the shop, he stopped me and said, "Thank you for talking to me about Jesus!" What if I hadn't?

There are people everywhere waiting for someone to tell them about Jesus. I think about a young man in Seattle—27 years old, married with a small child, lead singer in a top rock band, and a \$500-a-day heroin addict. A while back he shot himself in the head in the hallway of his \$1 million estate. His wife and friends said they were all trying to help. One told the media, "He just always had a fascination with death, because he said there is nothing good for him in this life."

How tragic.

A Christian must be dedicated to soul winning in order to win souls regularly. There's no substitute for this kind of commitment. By commitment I do not mean that you believe other Christians should win others, but that you regularly work at it.

Nothing takes the place of persistence. Talent will not. Our churches are filled with talented men and women who never win anyone to Christ. Genius will not. Nor will education. Only commitment takes a person from belief to action.

Anyone who has ever worked at soul winning knows what it's like not to "feel" like witnessing or going on visitation. Commitment moves one from a plane where feelings dictate actions to one where

actions determine feelings. The difference between these two planes is called results.

Several years ago I made a commitment to train a man in soul winning. In addition to teaching him, we were going out soul winning for three hours every Monday evening.

On one particular Monday, I was tired from conducting several training sessions and still more meetings. I had been going nonstop every night for several weeks. I honestly thought of calling him, canceling out, and staying home just for one night.

Nevertheless, I got dressed and went to his house only to find that he was sick and couldn't go! Again, my natural thought was to return home. Hadn't I been more than obedient? But I made a commitment, and I went out alone. The first home I visited was a family of six who attended church the day before. They welcomed me and said they had been waiting for someone to come. I couldn't even get on the subject of salvation before the husband said, "We've been discussing the question you asked in church yesterday—if you should die, are you 100% sure that you'd go to heaven? Preacher, would you tell us how we can really be sure?"

I forgot all about my exhaustion. All six accepted Christ. Then the entire family was baptized and joined the church.

Again, what if I hadn't gone? Like Peter, I could have trotted out a lot of legitimate excuses, especially the one about exhaustion. But Peter shows us the right example. Obey God and your nets will strain. It's all about attitude.

Enthusiasm

Cultivate enthusiasm for your life and work. Often I'm asked about boldness in witnessing. I reply that enthusiasm is the key. Without it, ambitions crumble, commitment decays, and personal confidence is shattered.

People can sense when you're preoccupied with your troubles. Who wants to be around—let alone like—a person who is swamped with negative feelings? Attitude determines faith and enthusiasm is our faith in action.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" (Eccl. 9:10).

"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." (Luke 9:62).

"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it," (Ps. 118:24).

After completing a crusade, I was waiting to board a flight to Chicago. A man looked at me and I said, "Good morning. It's a beautiful day, isn't it? (I always speak to anyone who makes eye contact with me.)

The man mumbled politely, "How you doin'?"

"Fantastic!" I responded.

He grunted. Guess who I was seated next to on the plane! As we took off he finally blurted out, "How can anyone be so happy so early in the morning?"

“Well,” I answered, “There are four verses in the Bible that help a person to understand the answer to that question. Can I share them with you?”

He considered his situation and finally yielded. In the next few minutes I had the privilege of leading him to Christ.

Cultivate enthusiasm... it can be contagious!

Lesson 2

Drive Out Fear

“If I present the Gospel to this person, I’ll be embarrassed.”

“What if I come across as a religious fanatic, another Jim Jones?”

“I don’t think I can win that person to Christ; he’s a doctor and very intelligent.”

After 30 years in the ministry, I’m completely convinced that Satan keeps most of us from personal soul winning because of fear. In fact, I’ll be more bold than that. Without a doubt, the greatest hindrance to personal soul winning is fear—fear of being turned down, fear that someone will ask a question we can’t answer, fear of failure, of rejection, of not doing a good job.

Sometimes the fear is very personal. You carve out time from an already hectic schedule to go out on visitation. You line up your prospects, locate the street on a city map, drive for 20 minutes, find the

street, then the house, knock on the door, and somehow get invited in. After opening remarks you get on the subject and then do a fairly good job of presenting the Gospel—only to hear a “not now” or an “I’m not interested” response.

We’re told it’s our duty to witness even if the person responds negatively, but it sure does take a lot of the joy out of a situation. Even if the person is rejecting God, not you, it still doesn’t help you turn the corner of enthusiasm.

First of all, let me say you’re not alone. All of us have experienced negative thoughts when we know we should present the Gospel to someone.

I finished a week-long crusade on the west coast and was preparing for a four-hour flight back to Detroit for my next meeting when we were notified of a two-hour delay because of a bomb threat. When we eventually departed everyone was still a bit uneasy.

A few minutes after take-off I began to think about what a good time this would be to witness. I had a horde of negative thoughts, but I prayed and asked God for power. (Remember that word?) I moved from seat to seat, meeting different people. After some initial light talk about the incident that we all had gone through, I started witnessing. Four hours later, several had turned Christ down, but five received Him as Savior.

To be a consistent soul winner you have to overcome fear—the fear of starting—of actually dealing with a person about his or her soul. So let’s

take a few minutes and debunk three of the more prevalent fears you'll face.

First is the fear of rejection. These thoughts come from Satan. The person is rejecting God, not you. And even if the person turns Christ down, the experience will not be unbearable. God will bless you for your faithfulness and the Gospel seed will have been sown in the heart of an unbeliever.

It's been my experience that rejection can be the best teacher in that it hones your soul winning skills. You must have this teaching in order to grow and mature into the kind of soul winner you are capable of becoming. In other words, every time you deal with a prospect who is negative, it leaves you with the chance to present the Gospel even better. You grow in your capacity to deal with people, as well as getting practice with your plan. Even if you don't win someone to the Lord (but you will in many cases), this type of challenge will give you practice.

I've seen many occasions when by persistence and sticking with a clear Gospel plan a person's objections grow weaker, and eventually the Word finds a lodging place in his heart. Always remember that a person has a need and you have the glorious opportunity of presenting the Gospel to a businessman on a flight. His response was absolutely obnoxious. I remained persistent, but nice. He didn't receive the Gospel but I left with a keen satisfaction of being able to present a simple, clear plan of the Gospel.

A little later, I was on another flight and started to present the Gospel very clearly to the man seated

next to me. In a few moments he responded by bowing his head and receiving Christ as Savior right there in the midst of the flight. I couldn't help but reflect how the Holy Spirit had prepared me to win the second man by what I had learned in dealing with the first.

We never "lose" regardless of the response of the person. There are many opportunities in soul winning. Even if the person turns you down, you still have the opportunity of learning, and most of all, you glorify our Lord by being a faithful witness.

A second common fear is one of incompetence or perhaps a lack of confidence. For instance, most Christians will not witness to a person they don't think they can win. So many will never witness to anyone because they don't think they can win anyone. Others pass up opportunities to witness to professional people such as doctors or lawyers because they're convinced they'll fail.

In soul winning it's extremely important to watch this attitude. After all, in Proverbs 23:7 the Bible says of man "For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Remember that God will never command you to do something that He doesn't have the ability to equip you to perform. That's why the soul winner has the wonderful assurance that he can witness to and win anyone at any time. "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

And it's important to understand that our attitude is a direct reflection upon past experiences. As you witness and win others, your faith and confidence in God, the Bible, and yourself will increase.

Several years ago I had a dear attorney friend who was unsaved. I had all the usual “no-confidence” thoughts concerning witnessing—He’s not reachable... he’s too educated... he’ll run off. But finally I decided to go ahead regardless of the reaction. I called his office and made an appointment, asking for 30 to 45 minutes of his time.

A few days later I entered his office, looked at him, called him by his first name, and then told him the burden that had been upon my heart to talk to him about the things of God. He smiled and said that he would be very happy to discuss these issues with me.

I began the 13-point step-by-step approach, and 20 minutes later asked him if he would bow his head with me in prayer. He did so and I had the joy of leading him to the Lord. After he was saved I began to give him some verses to ground him in the ways of God. When I finished talking and was ready to leave, he said, “David, I’ve wanted to talk to you about this for several months, but I thought it might affect our relationship.”

To this day I still laugh a little when I think of how Satan had used fear on my part and his part in keeping this man away from the Savior.

That thought dovetails into the third typical fear. Most soul winners have had people warn them not to witness to someone because “you’ll run him off.” These advisors are sincere because they fear that if you witness to their friend or family member, it will only harden that person to anything that has to do with the church or the Gospel.

However legitimate the concern, there’s a major underlying fault: The person will never be saved unless we get them under the Gospel. If someone is unsaved, where can you run them off to? They can’t go to hell #1 or hell #3! If they’re lost, they’re already “run off” as far as they can go.

I believe wholeheartedly that the Word of God, coupled with the ministry of the Holy Spirit, is what convicts, convinces, and draws a lost person to Christ. A compassionate soul winner usually impresses a person on a positive note, even if that person rejects the Lord.

Occasionally I’ve had this thought in reference to folks I’ve wanted to win. It’s usually Satan striving to intimidate me as a soul winner by causing fear that quenches my boldness or faith.

Obviously, we should never go to a person to “put them down” or to “tell them a thing or two.” Pride will turn anyone off. But we should never fear when giving out the Gospel plan from a compassionate, concerned heart.

One Sunday morning during my first pastorate in South Carolina we had an attractive young lady come forward and receive Christ as Savior. She was tremendously excited but in talking with her after the service tears welled up in her eyes. “Pastor, please don’t visit my husband. It will turn him off to the church. You see, he was raised Mormon.” I assured her that I would do my best to gain his friendship and present the Gospel as compassionately as possible.

The next week I went by and met the young man. Satan had painted a good picture of how arrogant,

hard, and ugly the man would be. However, when I met him, I found him to be very congenial and polite.

I mentioned at the door that I pastored the church where his wife had attended the previous Sunday. I asked if I could come in and visit with him for just a moment to get to know him. He invited me in. After winning his friendship, I began the same plan I used for years.

When I got to the part where I asked, “Could I take just a moment to show you how you can know for sure that you’re going to heaven,” he said, “My wife and I have been talking about this since she returned from church on Sunday morning.” A few minutes later I had the privilege of leading this man to a saving knowledge of the Lord! The next Sunday, they both came to church, walked the aisle, and followed the Lord in believer’s baptism. He has since become a tremendous servant of the Lord and a friend to me in my ministry.

Remember: We may not win everyone to Christ. But no reasonable person is turned off when you are a compassionate soul winner who gives a clear presentation of the Gospel.

Once I was in a pastor’s office listening to a medical doctor present areas in which people should be involved in order to help stop abortions. Within minutes I knew that he was a Catholic with a compassionate heart.

I wanted to witness to him and proceeded to do so. It wasn’t easy. I thought, “He’s here for another reason and will think less of me if I present Christ to him.” Then I thought, “You can’t deal with him, he’s

a doctor.” After I shared the Gospel I thought, “Don’t press him for a decision; you’ll offend him.”

Thank the Lord that I’ve learned that these are negative attitudes from Satan. The doctor listened and responded like a child—no hesitation, no argument. A few minutes later he bowed his head and received Christ as Savior.

Later he mentioned that others told him he needed to be saved, but none had asked him to accept Christ! I often wonder if they simply thought he was unwinnable.

Always check your fears at the door. We have a sufficient Savior who can meet and exceed our expectations.

Toolbox

Assumptions

Because the greatest enemy of the soul winner is fear, you’ll naturally begin to assume things in reference to the prospect because of a basic fear of dealing with people on this subject. It’s human nature.

Many times I’ve heard people say they began to talk to a person about his soul but then automatically assumed, “He’s already saved,” or “He’s not ready to be saved.” Occasionally I hear, “If I deal with him, I’ll offend him,” and even, “Maybe he was saved when he was younger.”

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Unfortunately even the most sincere soul winner can allow themselves to assume the wrong things. That's why there are three "right" things to assume as you witness. Note that each right assumption is followed by a very important "therefore."

First, assume that every person is lost. Therefore, never ask you prospect if he's been saved before and never begin to deal with him from the stand point that he might be a Christian. Instead, lead him to the point where you will share the Gospel with him.

Second, always assume your prospect is eager to hear the Gospel. Therefore, approach with authority and excitement, not with a timid, apologetic demeanor. Don't be locked up with fear when presenting the sweet message of the Gospel. A person whose heart has been prepared by the Holy Spirit is anxious to know God's remedy for sin.

Third, always assume your prospect will accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. Therefore, don't hesitate when it's time to ask the person to bow his head and receive the Lord.

Assume the right things and fear won't cripple your efforts.

Lesson 3

What Will Keep Me Going?

Do you recall the time in David's life when he lost everything he had, including the loyalty of his

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men? Re-read 1 Samuel 30. David and his band were away from their camp for an indefinite period. They finally returned to Ziklag to find that their belongings had been plundered and their families kidnapped. Nothing remained except the bitterness of his troupe. They even talked of assassinating him! What was David's response? He encouraged himself in the Lord! (And, yes, he tracked down the Amalekites and recaptured his family and possessions.)

Are there Amalekites at work in your life? Let's say you're highly motivated to really work at soul winning. You go out at least one night each week on visitation. You carry a New Testament with you at all times. You regularly give out Gospel tracts or leave them in key places. You look forward to soul winning with excitement and anticipation. But after a while some of the joy departs. Witnessing becomes a chore. You want to reach others and you are happy when people are saved, but some of the thrill is gone. Unlike David, nothing dramatic has caused you to veer away; maybe it's just a slow leak in your dedication.

Welcome to the real world! Every soul winner faces this. In fact, in all my experiences around the world I've never known any successful soul winner who hasn't had these feelings and who hasn't dealt with this critical area of the Christian life. So accept it, live with it, but deal with it.

Sometimes in dealing with this feeling our greatest problem is a lack of understanding. We feel that we are the only ones facing this struggle. This produces spiritual insecurity.

Want to know the truth? You're not insecure, you're a great target. An active soul winner is always a primary target of Satan. If he can hinder you, cause you to doubt yourself, or even make you sit down and give up, then another of God's soldiers has been disarmed.

Let's repeat: Every Christian who has ever worked at soul winning knows that Satan will go to any extreme to stop him, slow him down, or divert his energies. The devil stands on the sidelines and rejoices as another Christian is on the verge of becoming ineffective.

Friend, Satan's greatest battle against you is in your mind. And defeat is certain if you are not mentally and spiritually prepared. So understand that discouragement is one of Satan's strongest weapons against you. No one is exempt, and no matter how you feel, you are not more susceptible to discouragement than others.

It's easy at times to forget that we, "wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world," (Eph. 6:12). I remember an old saying from my college days: "There are three ways to ensure you never feel the attack of Satan and this world. Have nothing, be nothing, and do nothing." It stands to reason that the first person Satan would want to stop is the Christian busy about the Savior's business.

This is especially true about the earnest soul winner since soul winning is the main business in a Christian's life. It's the foundation of the Great

Commission and is very dear to the heart of our Savior. Therefore, Satan's strongest opposition will be aimed at the soul winner.

Discouragement for the soul winner can also take the form of personal rejection. If you present the Gospel and are met with an unshakable "NO," it's so easy to feel personally rejected or put down. Feelings begin to surface such as, "I made a poor presentation," or, "I don't blame them for not responding to me." Perhaps it's, "I didn't do my best," or, "I didn't do it right."

The truth is that all of us have room to grow as soul winners. But you're not personally responsible for the decision another person makes to either accept or reject the Gospel you presented. Keep foremost in your mind God's promise to Isaiah: "So shall my word be that goeth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing where to I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11). The person who refuses you is not rejecting you; he is rejecting God.

Let me reveal my worst soul winning experience. Many years ago when I was pasturing in Grand Rapids, Michigan, I took a first-time soul winner from the church out on visitation with me. Naturally I wanted a good prospect so I chose the home of a lady who had visited the church the previous Sunday morning.

When we knocked on her front door, it was opened immediately by the sweet-faced, smiling lady. I introduced myself and my partner and asked if we could visit with her for a moment or two. As she

opened the door for us to enter, her husband, who was roughly the size of a bulldozer came to the door screaming profanities about churches, preacher, God, and anything else. He threatened to physically beat both of us if we did not leave. He pulled his wife inside and slammed the door.

We decided that, under the circumstances, it was best to leave and were heading down the driveway when we heard the lady's soft voice calling from the side door, "Please, I need to talk to you." Before we could respond, the husband once more pulled her inside, ordered us off the property, and slammed the door.

I really had no idea what to say to this first-time soul winner. I tried to say that they weren't all like this, but I'm not sure he believed me.

Later that night the husband, in a drunken rage, took out his shotgun and tried to shoot his wife. He succeeded in shooting off her hand. Two days later I visited her in the hospital and she received Christ as Savior. End of story? Hardly.

For two years that lady never stopped praying for her husband, even though he had since left her and there was no forwarding information. Then one Sunday night I was about 10 minutes into my message at church when a rough unshaven man walked in and sat down. When we began the invitation he walked down the aisle—and never took his eyes off me the entire time. He accepted Christ, and when I introduced him publicly later, the lady who had lost her hand came forward crying, "Thank God my husband's been saved!"

After the service she approached me. "Brother Wood, I would have given my hand again to see my husband saved!"

If there was ever an initially discouraging visit for a soul winner, it was ours. But you never know when or how God will use your efforts.

What we do know is that it is God's will for the soul winner to return from his labor with rejoicing (Psalm 126:6). The obvious question is how. How do I keep a merry heart? How do I rejoice and not become a drop-out to discouragement?

One of the best ways is not to let your joy, excitement, or happiness be built on circumstances, but rather on God's forgiveness, your salvation, and His great love for you. Never get over being born again.

During a stay in Ohio I was walking by the desk at the motel when the clerk said "You seem very happy."

"I am," I answered, "I've just seen several people let the Lord Jesus change their lives and give them a new start."

She dropped her head. "That's good," she mumbled, "I need to get back into church."

I stepped over to her desk and said, "You know, a person can get things right with God anytime anywhere. Let me show you what I mean." I opened my Bible, and several minutes later she was won for the Lord. Actually, I remained 40 minutes without any major interruptions (which was a miracle in itself) to ground her in the Bible and fellowship with her.

There is nothing that motivates me more to win the lost than to see other people accept Christ. I'm more fortunate than most because I have the privilege of seeing scores of people accept Christ in crusades every week all over the nation.

A man in Oklahoma came to me after a Sunday evening service and explained how he went home after our morning worship and led his sister to Christ. Why then? Because when he saw 28 people accept Christ that morning, he knew his sister could be saved, too.

Every soul winner should know what motivates him to regularly witness and win others to Christ. What is it that motivates you to present the Gospel to others? I sincerely hope it's the joy you have in the Lord and the spirit of rejoicing over the salvation of others.

Toolbox

Saturation

No Christian is as constantly under attack as the soul winner. After all, he's the one who literally attacks the very gates of hell to snatch souls of men and women from an eternity without the Savior.

Satan will not only fight to keep the lost person from hearing, responding, and receiving the Gospel, but will fight the Christian to keep him away from regularly presenting the Gospel.

Speaking from experience, the tool you need most at these times is saturation. Immerse yourself in the

Word and in prayer. Sound too obvious? Do it anyway. Here's how:

- * Take joy in daily Bible reading and prayer. These are critical if the Christian is to grow and maintain a regular burden for the lost. Meditate on the reality of hell. Read the Bible passages that teach about hell—its torment, separation from God, and its duration. All who go there are doomed. No hope, no pardon, no second chance. This may help you keep witnessing in the right perspective.
- * Review Calvary and all the greatness of salvation. Think of the value of the payment Jesus made. Remember the difference it made in your life and how other lives have been changed, homes brought together, and people imbued with hope.
- * Be compassionate. The Bible tells us in Jude 22 that we must have compassion for this is what makes the difference. Pray for a person by name and visualize his face as you pray. Realize what eternity will be for him if he dies tonight. Make a list of the people you don't want to go to hell. Now ask God to help you reach one and mention him by name.

Coming home from a meeting I took a moment away from the notes I was writing and observed the people everywhere in the airport who will be in hell

if they aren't reached. I turned to the man next to me and asked him his final destination.

"Boston," he replied. Before I could clarify my question, he asked me what I was writing.

"A religious article to help Christians show their friends how to know they're going to heaven." Not waiting for a reply, I pressed on, "Could I take a minute and show you how it works?"

"Sure," he answered.

I took out my New Testament and lead him to Christ. I witnessed to three more people and gave out several tracts. One lady told me she was a Christian but had never led anyone to Christ. That, she assured me, would change.

Nothing succeeds like success. Although I've forgotten who made the statement it has always helped me to remember that the actual doing of something leads to greater participation, excitement, and activity.

- * Consider 1 Cor. 10:13: "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man." Every soul winner of every age and every level of maturity has faced the same highs and lows. If we are to be faithful and effective, we can recognize this and deal with it.

Remember: It's normal for every soul winning Christian to lose his initial joy and be tempted to quit. Be different. Being different will make all the difference.

Always Be Folksy

I was holding a crusade outside of Washington, DC. I had just finished teaching a morning soul winning seminar and had given the people the good, workable, 13-point plan. While lunching with the pastor, we eased into a discussion about door-to-door soul winning. I suggested we go after lunch.

We soon stopped at a housing development and began knocking on doors. At the second house the lady opened the door a crack.

"Good afternoon," I began pleasantly. "I'm David Wood and this is Pastor _____, from _____ Church, just down the street. We stopped by to invite you to our revival meetings and to talk to you about the Lord."

"I'm not interested," she yelled, and started to close the door.

I stuck out my hand to hold the door only for a moment. "Ma'am, I'd like to apologize."

"For what?" she hesitated.

"For some Christian who has needlessly offended you or treated you wrongly. It could have been a member of your family or someone you met in public, but someone has told you about the Lord and then offended you to the point that you don't want to hear anymore about Him. Am I right?"

She nodded.

I continued, “I am truly sorry this happened because it has ruined your chance of finding out how wonderful life with the Lord can be.”

With that, she reopened the door and asked us in. Minutes later she bowed her head and accepted Christ. That evening she came to our service and walked the aisle to make her decision public. I’ll never forget her comment to me at the close of the service, “Preacher, thank you for being considerate of my feelings.”

This type of situation usually doesn’t have a happy ending. Most of the people who have been offended are bruised to the point that just the mention of the Bible, religion, or God sends them running.

There is no one harder to win than a person who has been injured by another soul winner. I can’t even begin to count the times I have begun dealing with someone about eternity and before I could even start the plan, they shut me out completely—usually in anger.

You would think that a soul winner would never attempt to win the lost and not be nice. My experience teaches differently. As a new Christian at a conference on soul winning, one of the first notes I ever recorded was, “Be Kind.” Ever since that time I have made a conscious effort to treat the prospect with dignity, respect, and kindness.

We sometimes feel that the best way to impress someone with the Gospel is to be hard and exact. However, the opposite is true. In fact, the worst thing a soul winner can do is to not treat someone with

Christian love and character. I remember evangelist Carl Hatch saying, “Soul winners must love people.”

During one particular January I watched a variety of people accept Christ: a leading brain surgeon in that state, a professor who headed up a mechanical engineering department, the mother of a preacher (he had prayed for her for 21 years), a young Orthodox Jewish mother, and a professing Jehovah’s Witness lady.

Each came to the Lord because someone else cared enough to bring them to one of my rallies. Because of love, kindness, tenderness, and personal respect, a friendship was built that enabled the unsaved person to have enough respect the soul winner to attend a rally and hear the Gospel message.

How often have we seen relatives or friends who were nearly unreachable because of some bad experience they had! Many times the unsaved people are nice but become cold and hard at the mention of the Gospel because of a Christian who was less than kind and loving in his presentation.

At a luncheon several years ago, I heard the pastor of a large church remark, “I want to be very careful that every member of my church who goes out on personal soul winning is trained so as not to offend the people of our town. We do not have enough prospects to offend anyone!”

I believe this is one of the fundamental character truths in the development of a great soul winner. You see, most people do not accept Christ on the first presentation. Sometimes it’s months or years before they respond. If your idea of soul winning is

something that involves making one presentation and offending that person if he does not say yes, you're in trouble.

As you read through the Gospels, you can't help but be impressed with how Jesus met people where they were in every realm of life. With everyone He encountered, He exhibited tenderness, love, kindness, and gentleness in communicating the great truth of His Father. Nicodemus. The woman at the well. A Pharisee. An inquiring scribe. A rich young ruler. Peter and Andrew. Matthew. Simon the zealot. Zacchaeus. Jesus practiced personal soul winning regularly and won all kinds of people from all different walks of life.

The word folksy is a word I've used often in soul winning training to help people learn to be themselves, relax the person to whom they are presenting the Gospel, and to be interpreted as someone who are genuine, not mechanical.

The opposite of folksy is stiff—someone with a religious front who portrays something different than what Christ has done in his life. The obvious interpretation by the unsaved person is that they want nothing to do with that kind of religion. It leaves them stiff and uncomfortable, too.

It's so important that the soul winner learns to smile and, if possible, help the other person actually engage in a conversation before he gets to the subject of the Gospel.

Once I had the opportunity of going out and participating in door-to-door soul winning with a young man I had been training. Finally it was his turn

to greet the people and present the Gospel. As soon as the lady answered the door he instantly stated his name, my name, and that we were visiting from the local church. Without taking a breath he blurted out, "If you should die tonight, do you know for sure that you would be going to heaven?"

The lady recovered, half-mumbled a positive response, and volunteered a bit of her religious background. The young man accepted her response, invited her to our area crusade, and was on his way to the next victim when I took a step forward and offered to shake her hand.

She smiled and responded. I asked her the title of the book she was reading. She told me the title and that she was always home at this particular time of the day. She then launched into several paragraphs of information about her personal life and children. Our talk ranged from her childhood to church background to marital status and even to the simple beauty of the day.

Then I gave my testimony and simply repeated the question my friend had asked. This time she dipped her chin and stammered, "Well, I'm not 100% sure, more like 90%."

I asked her if I could show her how to get that other 10% and she agreed. A little later, she bowed her head and accepted the Lord.

I believe the difference in many soul winners being able to win people to Christ and growing in usefulness to God has to do with being friendly and folksy—relaxing the person and making them feel you are standing where they are.

Still, I am aware that sincere brothers and sisters will offend others. Two common traps come to mind and it's my prayer that you learn from these mistakes.

The first snare is the most serious, and occurs when someone asks a question about doctrines, rules, or denominations and the soul winner allows himself to get off track. An argument ensues. From then on, everything becomes pointless. According to the Bible, the prospect cannot understand other truths unless he understands the truth of salvation. The soul winner can argue a point and prove himself correct, but he simply wins the argument and loses the soul.

In teaching soul winning, one of the first questions that I recommend asking is, "What is your church background?" Obviously the answer could be anything from Mormon to Catholic to Baptist to no church at all. It's a vital question to ask...but a dangerous one.

I was once out soul winning with someone else when the prospect announced he was brought up a Mormon. My partner instantly began to criticize the Mormon Church and harshly brought out all he knew about their errors of doctrine. A verbal battle then commenced and nothing was accomplished in the presentation of the Gospel.

I often teach that you can say something positive regardless of what religious background they have. If Lutheran, compliment the red doors that most Lutheran churches have. If Mormon, compliment how well the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sings. If no religion, you could say, "That's great! At least you don't have to unlearn anything."

A couple of years ago while in a meeting, I was out visiting regular prospects with the pastor. It had been determined that I would be the soul winner at the next house. After knocking and being invited in, I asked him the opening question, "What's your church background?"

"Jehovah's Witness," he answered, then continued, "I suppose you want to criticize me."

"No," I replied, "In fact, Jehovah's Witnesses put many other people to shame in their zeal to get the message out."

He smiled and asked me to continue. Several minutes later, after a careful presentation of the Gospel, he bowed his head and received Christ. Later he commented, "I had often wondered what people like you believed about the Bible, but I had been unable to discuss it with anyone. Every time I tried, it seemed to always end in an argument."

Soul winning is exciting. It's the ultimate portrayal of Christian compassion. It's a level of obedience in the Christian life and concern for the world that most Christians never enjoy. As you go out with God's plan for salvation, remember that those you meet may have different backgrounds. Don't criticize them, don't run them down, and don't discourage them.

Very seldom do they ever cross paths with someone who is kind, compassionate, understanding, not self-seeking and genuinely wanting to benefit the other person. If the prospect can't see Jesus in you, he'll never listen to what you tell him about Jesus. I like to keep in mind that an evangelist friend of mine

says, “Lost people don’t read the Bible, but they do read the people who read the Bible.”

A second major pitfall to avoid is persistence. Not perseverance, which is biblical, but the kind of persistence that’s interpreted as hounding or bugging a person about their spiritual condition. The soul winner loses no opportunity to tell the person that he is bound for hell unless he receives Christ and that he better turn from his wicked ways or God will punish him.

This is not a loving way to present God’s wonderful plan of salvation. No wonder people want anything to do with the Gospel, much less the person presenting it! I don’t like being nagged either!

Being considerate of the prospect’s feelings is not only civil but also vital if we are going to be the soul winners God has commanded us to be.

Toolbox

Sensitivity

A soul winner will always want to improve and learn on the how-to of meeting people where they are. So remember this all-important key to effective evangelism. Every time you deal with someone and for whatever reason he is not receptive to the Gospel, leave him with a good feeling about you and what you were saying.

God’s timing is not to be questioned. It could be God is using you as the seed sower (1 Corinthians

3:5-8) and will bring the harvester into that person’s life later.

Be the gracious example Christ was. If you can’t win someone, leave him so the next soul winner can.

Lesson 5

God’s Attitude Toward the Lost

Probably the most overlooked consideration of soul winner is God’s viewpoint. Do you remember the parable in Luke 15 about the lost sheep? In between the lines of that story Jesus is asking each of us to make a personal spiritual inventory of where our emphasis is, particularly in our ministry.

Here is a man who has 100 sheep and loses only one. That’s a pretty good statistic. But he was so concerned that he left the 99 and went after the lost. Where was his emphasis? On those that were safe or the one that was lost?

Notice where he left the 99. I would have thought he could have persuaded another shepherd-friend to watch his. But he didn’t. Nor did he employ sheep dogs or corrals. He left the 99 in the wilderness. Seems like an irresponsible act, but that’s not the point. God wants to show us the emphasis He puts on one unsaved person.

Sadly, many Christians are content with the status quo. That's not the attitude of the Word of God. The emphasis of Scripture is to go out and get every unsaved person and present them with the Gospel. Preach salvation, value the blood, let them know how hot hell is and how long it is, and then introduce them to the wonders of heaven and the redeeming grace God made possible through His Son.

Interestingly, this parable also asks for an inventory of our time. Time is perhaps the only ingredient in life that every person has in identical abundance. We may have different responsibilities but we all have the same allotment of time. How are we going to spend it? Are we too busy to go soul winning but not too busy to catch a program on TV? Ever try to comfort someone who suddenly realizes they have a relative in hell?

A couple of years ago I began to read every message I could get my hands on that Dr. John R. Rice had written. He had a profound influence on my life and I wanted to look for his emphasis, to know where his heart was. As I read his messages I found over and over the one philosophy of that man's life that kept sticking with me and pointing to my heart: No amount of labor is too great when the soul of one man is at stake. God used Dr. Rice to the extent that he did because the burning compassion of his heart was to get people saved.

I once talked to a man who started a youth ministry in 1942. He probably gets as many people saved in that ministry as anyone I know. I asked him why he was still being used by God. What was the

underlying principle of his ministry? He said, "From day one my motive behind everything I do has been to get teenagers saved."

He sees things as God does. And what all great soul winners see is more than lifestyle evangelism. Yes, we are to live a clean life and be good representatives of Jesus Christ, but people are not going to flock to us and beg to get saved by watching our lives. We have to go out and take the Gospel to the world.

But there's something you better realize. Witnessing can cost you. In order to witness you may have to leave out some things, perhaps TV, a meal, some sleep. A real commitment to the Lord is where He comes before everything. God doesn't want leftovers, but a total commitment. In other words, don't quit trying to get people saved.

In the next chapter we'll take you deeper into the art of soul winning. As you venture with us you'll quickly discover two things on which we depend. The first is prayer. The Word of God says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," (Jas. 5:16).

I'm convinced souls are won because someone prayed. And yet in order to pray effectively, the soul winner needs to have at least a basic knowledge of prayer. In prayer there is confession, petition, praise (or adoration to God), intercession, and the spoken word of faith. Each area is important and should be utilized.

A Christian cannot develop much in prayer without understanding the place of confession—

agreeing with what God says about sin. Confession leads to repentance and leaves the soul winner clean and useful to the Heavenly Father.

Petition is probably the most used area of prayer. A definite need is brought before God. A soul winner should have a prayer list with names of the lost for whom he daily petitions God.

It seems strange to include praise or adoration as a part of the soul winner's prayer life. But this is basic. We recognize God for who He is and what He's doing. Remember that the Philippian jailer came to Christ (Acts 16:30) as a direct result of praise on the part of Paul and Silas.

Intercession is that vital part of prayer where the soul winner sees the need and prays. This moves him to identification with that need and then to surrender to cooperate with God to help meet that need. Without intercession all Christianity would stay at the level of those who sit by doing nothing while the world rushes to hell. Maybe this helps to explain why less than 5% of those who are saved never do anything to help win one lost soul in their lifetime.

Sometimes in prayer we are moved to the spoken word of faith. Please read carefully Mark 11:22-24. It is at this point that we stand firm in prayer until the lost one is saved. Here is a mighty truth in praying. Many have been saved because the Christian stood firm in claiming their salvation.

Some time ago I was holding a meeting in Louisiana. On one particular night I challenged the people to become broken-hearted over the lost and

determine not to give up until they had come to Christ.

After the service one lady left and drove five hours into Texas. She didn't return until the third evening. God had broken her heart for her lost relatives. She had cared for years; however, during that service she became burdened. She saw her responsibility.

Two nights later, with very little sleep, she returned to the service and stood to give testimony that 11 of her lost relatives had come to Christ! She then made known that she had called several of her friends and they had prayed without ceasing until she returned.

As you begin to become mighty in prayer, to the end that the lost would be saved, note carefully 1 Timothy 2:1-4. Among other great truths in that passage note that God "will have all men saved."

A second action the sincere soul winner needs to take is to memorize the Word of God. Why, you ask, when you always have a New Testament and Gospel tracts available? Because there will be times when you can't use any printed material. You will have to know from memory the Gospel plan as outlined in God's Word.

Several years ago I was out on regular church-wide visitation on Thursday evening. My partner was my trainee for a 13-week period. On this particular evening, we visited a man who wanted nothing to do with the Bible. I don't think I had ever seen anyone just like him. He gave me his church background and he didn't know for sure that he was going to heaven.

Then he snapped, “I don’t want anyone opening that book in my home!”

As my partner looked on with a nervous cough, I asked again if I could show him from the Bible how he could know for sure. Nothing doing. Asking God for help, I suggested letting me simply tell him the way. To my amazement he said, “Yes, as long as you don’t use that book!”

I lead him through my plan without citing verses or even saying it was from the Bible. Several minutes later he said, “Now that makes sense. Where did you learn that?”

“Can I show you?” I asked. When he said yes, I opened my New Testament, sat beside him, and went through the plan again, verse by verse.

With embarrassment he muttered, “I should have looked at that a long time ago.” A few minutes later he was saved.

Mark Twain was credited with saying, “You never need to memorize anything you can look up in a book.” I know of at least one exception! Regular Scripture memory is vital part of one’s daily devotional life. For soul winning in particular, we need to hide God’s Word away in our hearts. You never know when it’s all you’ll have.

Romans Road

When you find yourself in a position where, for whatever reason, a Bible is inaccessible, use what I call the Romans Road. These four verses from the book of Romans (3:23, 6:23, 5:8, and 10:13) represent the Gospel in miniature. Memorize them and watch them work.

Chapter 2

Strategic Planning for Strategic Results

Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem accompanied by throngs of people caught up in a number of emotions. Some were enamored by His miracles; others sought justification for their political biases. There were probably a fair amount of simple curiosity-seekers, too.

At some point on the trek Jesus turned to the crowd and in His characteristic honesty told them, in effect, to count the cost. He didn't want followers whose commitment ebbed and flowed like the Sea of Galilee. He desired fishers of men.

Then He recounted a story of a builder who began a vineyard tower to watch for those who would steal the harvest. But the builder misjudged the construction costs and the project stood half-finished and the harvest ungathered.

Planning is crucial to the Christian life. Yes, there is always room for improvisation, but even God has a master plan for the universe and humanity. Yet I fear too many Christians approach soul winning without counting the cost: planning. Good intentions become derailed for one or more reasons and the result is a half-completed commitment that serves no purpose but to attract scorn.

That's why this chapter is devoted to strategic planning for strategic results. Anything worthwhile will be accomplished only through planning. So it is in soul winning. A person who does not plan to go, who does not have a regular time to go, who does not anticipate going, will never end up going. There is no substitute for planning. A Christian life half-built then abandoned is a terrible indictment.

Lesson 6

Spiritual Time Management

Tomorrow morning your bank deposits \$86,400 into your account with no strings attached. Spend the money any way you like. The only stipulation is that whatever you don't use that day will not carry over. The next morning the bank deposits another \$86,400. The same conditions are at work with one extra proviso: At some point the bank will suspend its generous practice and confiscate any

unused portion. Your conclusion? Make the most of every dollar every day.

All of us have that kind of account because each morning God credits us with 86,400 seconds—these make up moments that can be invested in eternity or wasted on the trivial. Hours that can be devoted to doing something that's good or toward something that's better.

Time is the great common denominator for Christians. Many assume that the great soul winners—whether evangelists or preachers—were successful because they had more opportunities or time. That's a huge fallacy. True, we may not have the same abilities or backgrounds, but we have identical amounts of time each day, and life's successes and failures are measured in how we use our hours.

No wonder the Word of God instructs us to walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time because the days are evil (Eph. 5:15, 16). Those who are without are the unsaved. "Redeem" applies to the best use of a situation or talent. In other words, make use of every opportunity to reach the unsaved, and be wise with your time because it is limited.

Correct use of your time is vital to every area of Christian growth, but especially so in soul winning. Sometimes the easiest things for us to neglect are the seemingly small or unimportant tasks that, in reality, lead to the greater accomplishments of life. So it is in soul winning. Many times we fail to recognize that if we are going to be used of the Lord in this

tremendous endeavor we must set aside a regular time to actually go out soul winning.

That's our first principle in this lesson: Make time to go. Good intentions don't count. Go. Just do it. The early church didn't wait for favorable conditions. They took the initiative and came close to winning the known world for Christ.

Let's be brutally honest. If we value something, we will set aside the time. So why not for soul winning? If you listen to the preaching or read the writings of great soul winners past and present, you'll discover that they urge you to carve out time from your busy schedule to go soul winning.

Does this put you under the law? Of course not. Don't we preach and teach that every person should read the Bible every day, pray every day, and tithe every week? Since when does soul winning become less of a command? The Bible says, "God ye into all the world and preach the Gospel."

Before entering full-time evangelism I pastored for more than 19 years. Without fail I always encouraged every Christian to go soul winning on church-wide visitation each week. We sponsored a soul winning club (Operation Go) that went out three hours a week. Sunday school teachers also had to visit three hours a week and bus workers had to log four! I never pastored anyone who became a preacher, built a great Sunday school class, or did effective bus route work who didn't commit to fulfilling these basics.

In fact, I'll go so far as to say that sincere Christians who have a broken heart for winning the

lost will manipulate their personal schedules in order to have time to win others to Christ. When's the best time for you to go? There are too many variables to give one all-encompassing answer, but let me urge you to set aside the same time period every week.

Try an afternoon, an evening, or even an entire day. Consider going with your churches weekly visitation program (If your church does not have an organized program, it's in trouble!). Let nothing interfere with your time for personal soul winning.

There are several advantages to having a definite time to go. Above all is the underlying truth that unless you have a regular time to go, you probably won't go at all. That's simply human nature. Also you have the rest of the week to pray for the people you'll see during that block of time. You'll build spiritual momentum.

I have always set aside a definite time to go on personal soul winning visits and I have a second time period that I commit to those that I am training. I try not to stray from either obligation and here's why.

Several years ago I had a block of time set aside for a man in our church I was training in personal soul winning. It was one of those nights when nothing went right. First, I honestly feel like going out. When I arrived at my partner's home I found him too sick to come. So I went alone and knocked on the front doors of three homes. No one was home at any of them. Now I was really discouraged and I asked God to help me cross paths with someone who needed Christ.

I saw three teenagers sitting on the hood of their car at a convenience store. I pulled in alongside them and asked for directions to a street that had to be somewhere in the neighborhood. When they steered me in the right direction I followed the Lord's leading. "Since you have been so kind in giving me clear directions to where I am headed, I wonder if it would be ok to give you directions?"

"To where?" grilled one of them.

I responded that a major portion of my life had been spent giving clear directions to as many people as possible on how they could know for sure they were going to heaven. In the next few moments two of the three accepted Christ and went on to become active members of our church's youth department. Many times I think about those three boys and how I would never won two of them if I had not had a definite time to go—and stuck with it.

Again, this is a critical point. One of the greatest barriers in soul winning is time. If you don't schedule a set hour and guard it carefully, you won't follow through. Your soul winning will be up and down, on and off, and the only constant will be your sense of failure. Don't let anything steal this time.

Remember: The days are evil.

At this point you may raise a legitimate point: What if I don't feel like going? Won't I make a poor witness? I also have a question. Do you feel ill or just complacent? That's not meant to be judgmental, just honest.

Some of the most prosperous soul winning times have been those occasions when I either didn't

want to go or didn't think I had the time to go. But because of my regular weekly commitment I had the discipline I needed to go.

When I was very young in the ministry and at my first pastorate, I had promised one of the young men in the church that I would go with him on a Monday night. Our time would be spent on his bus route and door-to-door. At the fifth door we met a man who had visited our church once before. He regularly sent his children via our bus ministry, and he and his wife had promised themselves to start attending on Sundays. After a few minutes he accepted Christ and on the following Sunday he walked the aisle. Within a short amount of time he became an effective bus worker and soul winner.

A couple years later I received a late night call. There was an accident and this man was now in heaven. It was a bittersweet time. I had lost a friend, yet I had memories of a man who radiated joy over his salvation, his growth in the Lord, his desire for soul winning; a man who shed tears for the children on his bus route.

Many times I've had the privilege of seeing folks come to the Lord when I really wasn't up for it. As Christians we cannot live according to our feelings. Emotions change, fatigue passes. Besides, on the field the joy of the Lord is greater than anything.

So should you go even when you don't feel like it? Emphatically, yes! When I'm tempted to back out of a soul winning commitment, I look back on times that I didn't feel like going but still went. I am able to recall these actual events:

- * Winning a drunken husband who later became one of the best soul winners I have ever known
- * A man and his wife who brought more visitors to church than anyone else for our big day celebration
- * A man who has become one of my closest friends
- * Several people who became a financial blessing to God's work and the ministry
- * A young man who now pastors a church

In fact, many Christians have thanked me for encouraging them to go soul winning every week at a regular time, and invariably they point to that period as when they really started to grow in the Lord.

If the first principle is to **always make time**, then the second one is to **always take time**. There's a subtlety at work here because too often Christians, in their zeal to become schedule-conscious, forget to remain soul-conscious. And I'm the first to admit I sometimes have this trouble.

Understanding priorities is difficult because we marry ourselves to a schedule in order to have time to go soul winning but then fail to win someone because we've shifted from purpose to method. Methods are great, but they shouldn't take our eyes off the purpose, which is winning souls.

I entered the Nashville airport for a meeting in Kansas City. As usual, I was hard pressed for time. While in the terminal I met William and after a moment of light conversation I knew I should present the Gospel. But what about the time? My flight was minutes from take-off.

I followed my heart and presented William with the way of salvation. He surrendered his heart within minutes, joyfully thanking me for my witness. I rushed to my gate only to find I was 52 seconds late! The plane was loaded, the engines started, and no one else could board.

After a moment of inquiry the airline referred me to a competitor with a flight leaving for Kansas City in 15 minutes. I hurried to that gate and, as the Lord would have it, there was room. The flight stopped in St. Louis to take on additional passengers and one of them was a teenage boy who sat next to me. He looked right at me and said, "I'm not supposed to be on this plane."

"Neither am I," I answered, "What plane are you supposed to be on?"

He began his sad story of a broken home. His mother was living in Texas and his dad in Kansas City. He hadn't seen his dad in three years. He was excited, but had some mixed emotions. He lost his ticket on the way to the airport and missed his original plane. The airline routed him to this flight where he sat next to me.

I quietly listened to him then said, "I know why we both missed our planes."

"You do?" he asked.

“Yes, I believe that God wanted you to meet someone who could show you how you can know for sure that you will go to heaven when you die.”

Somewhere in those Midwest clouds that young man accepted Christ and I had a glorious time answering all his questions.

But what a glorious sense of time our Savior has! If I had not taken the time to win William in Nashville I would not have missed my plane, and I would not have met this 15-year-old. I even arrived in Kansas City 10 minutes ahead of my original flight!

Time is what soul winning is all about. Every lost soul spends forever in hell. We must watch our time, but always bend enough to win a soul to Christ. Be busy, but never too busy to present the Gospel to anyone at any time when that opportunity is available.

This is hard, I understand. Have you ever been immersed in your schedule and then felt the Holy Spirit impress you to see or talk to someone? Maybe you responded with, “I’ll be late if I do.” Or, “I don’t think I can handle one more detour.”

To be honest, each of us has those feelings. But to be more honest, if everyone responded to God’s leading in that positive light, we’d have revival in America overnight. It starts with you.

God drove this home to me in a motel room in North Carolina. It was Sunday evening. It had been a good day with many saved, and that night I preached on being broken over the lost. God blessed as nearly

three-fourths of the congregation responded to the invitation. It was a special time of real revival.

At the conclusion of the service I did something I seldom do. I asked Christians to stand and pledge to look for someone lost that week and make a clear Gospel presentation. What a sweet spirit prevailed as nearly 90% of that crowd rose to its feet.

After returning to my room God dealt with my heart about the same matter. I knelt in prayer and promised God that I would turn from anything that week to present Christ to a lost soul. Over the next two days I was extremely busy but I still presented Christ to five people, three of whom accepted Him as Lord. In each case I was too busy, but I took the time. To this day I don’t even remember what I was doing that caused me to be so busy, but I do remember each of those precious souls and the joy that followed their salvations.

Think of the scores of people who cross our paths every day. Most of the time we’re on a schedule and simply pass by these people who desperately need the Savior and who are set to listen at that moment. Actually we’re on our normal self-imposed schedules that don’t allow us the flexibility to be soul-conscious.

After meeting some dear Christian friends for fellowship and planning, I drove to another city where I was preaching the next day. Late into the night I stopped at a motel for a few hours sleep. The next morning I left 30 minutes later than I planned. As I hurried down the corridor I saw two maids and said, “Thanks for having such clean rooms. It’s a

tremendous help for those people like me who travel so much.”

One of the ladies returned my smile with, “That’s okay.”

By then I was at the end of the hall and ready to hop into the van for my very important ministry commitment. Right then, I felt that unmistakable call of the Holy Spirit leading me to witness. “But I’m already at the door and ready to get in the van,” I protested. “Besides,” I then argued, “They’ve already gone into another room to clean.”

So I climbed into the van. But after having second and even third thoughts, I retraced my steps, found the maids, and asked if I could have a moment of their time.

“Ladies,” I began, “I know you are busy but I want to take a moment and share something with you that has transformed my life.” I gave my testimony and then asked if they should die tonight would they know for sure they were going to heaven.

Neither responded except for a sideways shake of the head. “Let me take another moment and show you how you can know for sure.” Within a few moments each had accepted Christ. As I resumed for my appointment, I realized it had taken less than 30 minutes to go back to those ladies and lead them to salvation. When I reflected on my excuses, I couldn’t help but realize that the schedule I was trying to keep was mine—not God’s. That’s why I believe that in most instances we’ll have plenty of time to present the Gospel and still accomplish what’s on our agenda.

Goal-Minded

Remember that Depression-era ditty, “Brother, can you spare a dime?” I feel the catch phrase for our new century and beyond is, “Brother, can you spare some time?” It’s surprising how extravagant we Christians can be with our time.

Understanding that life is short will help you better use your time. Re-read Psalm 90:12 and then ask yourself what can you do to effectively number your days. What steps can you take to become a better soul winner?

I suggest creating a system that outlines your goals within a given time frame. For instance, have an annual goal and a weekly one. If you set an annual objective of reaching 50 people a year, then pray, visit, and work toward a goal of one person a week.

Lesson 7

Be Spiritually Prepared

The Bible describes the Christian life as a battle, an ongoing warfare in which we are soldiers in service to the King. Scholars will debate if the victory always goes to the most talented, but I know it always belongs to the spiritually prepared. That’s especially true in soul winning because we are never

more actively engaged in spiritual battle than when claiming a soul for our King.

Yet it's surprising how many of us prepare to do battle without any advance preparation. Too many Christians take spiritual preparation for granted. They enter this conflict without daily Bible reading, prayer, or seeking God's power, and then wonder why they are defeated. Soul winning is the ultimate spiritual battle contested on the doorsteps of hell against the devil himself and all his forces. That's why a good soul winner is a good soldier. Always ready, always armed, and always on the alert.

In Paul's three-fold declaration of Romans 1:14-16, he opened his heart and gave a sincere picture of what prepared and motivated him for the great job that lay before him. While these three declarations represent an unbeatable combination for today's soul winner, I am especially fond of the middle one: "I am ready."

In our lives we are ready for banquets, sporting events, meetings, committees, Bible studies, and music practices, but few of us are thoroughly prepared to fulfill the most important job of the local church—the winning of our friends, neighbors, and cities to Christ.

Spiritual preparation depends on many things, but I believe the filling of the Holy Spirit is the most important prerequisite. Take a moment before the Lord and ask Him for power in your life. What a blessed privilege to know that as we go soul winning we do it in the power of our precious Lord.

Next you need a basic plan. By plan I mean a step-by-step approach where you get on the subject, present the story, lead people to Christ, and get them grounded in a local church. I am convinced that hundreds of Christians want to win souls regularly but do not because they have never been trained and, therefore, lack a plan.

Recently I had a privilege of teaching soul winning to a large group in a local church during a three-day revival. The response was terrific. Several committed to a plan that week while others won their first soul during the meeting. Person after person came to me and expressed gratitude about gaining a workable plan that could win their friends and relatives. Some were even shocked that they never before been given a plan.

A plan gives you confidence and assurance. While you are out witnessing about God, Satan will flood your mind with distractions and questions. You are literally invading the stronghold of hell when trying to win someone to Christ who is doomed forever unless he receives the Savior. The battle is really in the mind. All kinds of thoughts will rush in when talking with an unsaved person: Is he ready? What will happen next? Am I qualified to be a soul winner? Every proficient soul winner must have a good workable plan to give him confidence.

Several months ago I met a salesman in an airport, and as I started to witness I encountered, "I'm not interested in somebody telling me about religion." So I shared with him that I had the privilege of teaching soul winning across the country

and presenting to people what I call a 13-point, workable, soul winning plan. I asked him if it would be alright to show him the plan so that he could critique it. His interest was stirred and he consented. I began very slowly and in the middle of the plan, as I was presenting the Gospel story, I began to see the interest mount in his eyes. A couple of minutes later he bowed his head and received Jesus Christ. Then he asked if I would teach him the plan so he could return home and present it to his family.

A third area of preparation is the awareness of distractions—things that quench your enthusiasm for soul winning and begin to slow you down or even cause you to stop altogether. These “spiritual detours” can come in a number of disguises:

- * Some Christians quit because they were chosen for a church office such as deacon or Sunday school teacher. Suddenly they are too busy or under too much pressure to do both. Guess which area is chosen and which is neglected. If a person can do only one thing, let it be soul winning!
- * Sometimes money stops a soul winner. Things get tight, offerings drop, and bills mount. What do we do? Stop soul winning and develop a “leveled” ministry—something “balanced.” Yet where is it written that money is required to do visitation? Remember Paul’s interactions to young Timothy: “Be instant in season, out of season,” (2 Tim. 4:2). When the Lord’s disciples needed tax money, He sent them fishing.

- * Other times there’s a dramatic change in scheduling, especially at home. A different work shift, a significant change in the age or development of the children, or a sickness that breaks the routine can take us out of the loop. Satan doesn’t care what it is, he only wants you to stop.
- * An increasingly popular distraction is the notion that a Christian life of worship and service should be built on feeling. Do everything possible to build good experiences and feelings in our lives. Without exception, when Christians do what feels good they’re indistinguishable from the secular world. They love to glow but never go.

The key that makes soul winning function is simply “go.” Every church has scores of people who once went soul winning but now don’t, and all of the promotions, conferences, tapes, books, organization, and money in the world is too no avail if they don’t go soul winning.

The early church went out daily “in the temple and in every house,” (Acts 5:42). Paul built churches by teaching “publicly and from house to house,” (Acts 20:20).

How many churches begin by reaching out to all people, inviting friends, bringing neighbors, canvassing residential areas, winning loved ones and going out at least once a week on soul winning visitation? How things have changed!

I was with a dear pastor in a good meeting. Attendance was high, many were getting saved, and God was blessing. However, he seemed down and there was no joy in his countenance. After an evening service I asked him to go soul winning the next day. We did and God blessed us with two couples accepting Christ. After a few hours this dear man of God smiled and shared the joy that he had in our going out together. He then began to open his heart about a particular problem and how that one issue had detoured him from regular soul winning.

Is this true of you? Consider a great truth: The needs of man have not changed, it is the soul winner who has changed. The fields are white unto harvest more today than ever. Whatever has slowed you down, whoever has discouraged you, the need has not changed. Hell is just as hot, sin is just as awful.

Finally, a key element to spiritual preparation is having the right tools. I am always asked in soul winning conferences about what tools a soul winner should take? Simple. A New Testament, tracts (some on salvation and others that address certain issues you may encounter), church brochures to help people become aware of the ministry of the local church, blank cards or a notebook, and a pen or pencil.

Some of these tools are obvious choices. Who would want to go without God's Word? It's like being out of uniform. Leave a pen at home and you won't be able to take down a name or phone number.

Only eternity will reveal the value of Gospel tracts. While I have never met a Christian who was against them, I have encountered plenty who never

used them. What a shame! We should habitually practice the leaving and giving of Gospel tracts. If you have to leave a note for someone, think of the value of leaving it on a tract. I've won many people using just a tract and then reinforced their decision by writing the date on the cover.

On a plane traveling to a meeting in Louisiana, I overheard a passenger tell the flight attendant, "I don't see anything interesting to read." After the attendant left, I reached across the aisle and said, "Let me offer you this short Sunday school lesson." (That's what I call a tract in public). "It tells a person how to know they are going to heaven. It's the most interesting subject that I know of."

After he read it I moved to the adjacent seat. "Could I show you a couple of verses that really helped me settle my relationship with God?"

"Sure," he answered. A few minutes later he trusted Christ. Then I used another tract, my New Testament, and paper and pen to get his address for follow-up.

I also carry a special notebook, and I recommend you do the same. It keeps track of my prospects and results. **Remember:** It's not the church's responsibility to give us soul winning prospects. We need to learn to gather these ourselves.

For years I accomplished that by using a small note pad to list all prospects. I dated each entry as I visited that person. Then, when I lead someone to Christ, I entered their name and date in the Hallelujah section at the back of the pad.

I remember once I was on my way to pick up my trainee soul winning partner for several hours of “on-the-field” visitation. Before arriving at his home I reviewed my prospect book. To my surprise there was the name of a man I had not visited in more than six months—somehow I had been skipping him. I decided it was time to call on him again. When we arrived at the home we found that he and his wife were in a terrible fight. He had been drinking and was very angry. He recognized me and said, “I guess my wife called you.”

“No,” I responded. “Something in the car told me to come.”

He was puzzled and asked for an explanation. I told him to come out to my car and I’d show him. Once there, I took out my prospect book and showed him where I had listed his name awhile back. “I owe you an apology,” I said. “I should have come to see you again much earlier and maybe tonight’s problem would never have happened.” He dropped his head a bit and I continued. “Let me show you why.” I then took him through the Romans Road and he accepted Christ right there at the car. We went inside and told his wife and a few minutes later she, too, accepted the Lord! I am convinced that we would not have won that couple to the Lord if I had not kept an accurate prospect record book.

I’ve also seen these books used in the most unusual ways! When I was pasturing in South Carolina, I went visiting with one of our Christian school teachers. We had made several stops and God had blessed in wonderful ways. We came to the last

door for the afternoon and a young woman answered. She had visited the previous Sunday. I introduced myself and my partner. She hesitated to let us in and then explained, “This is my daughter’s ninth birthday. You’ve caught us right in the middle of her party.”

Without missing a beat my partner asked, “Has anyone given a Bible lesson at the party?” The lady said no. Then he pulled a blank book from his pocket and asked, “Do you think it would be all right to go through a very simple Bible lesson with the children?”

She agreed and after we were introduced my friend took the blank book and began to go through a step-by-step presentation. When he asked people to bow their heads, six responded, including the mother who greeted us.

I don’t recommend that everyone go that far out on a limb, but on that occasion a brand new pocket notebook was a well used tool. My partner was prepared.

Toolbox

Major on Soul Winning

I have found that Christians who regularly use one statement in describing their areas of service to strangers will open numerous doors of opportunity to lead others to Christ. People always ask what you do in life, and if you’re in the ministry they invariably ask what kind.

I always try to respond to any inquiry by giving the person the theme of my ministry before I give a description: “We major in helping people know for sure when they die they’ll go to heaven.”

Some people respond by saying that’s an issue that’s been on their hearts for a long time. Or they ask me to visit friends or relatives to share my testimony. Some even ask me for pointers on how they can lead others to Christ.

I was sitting in the foyer of a motel waiting for a pastor to pick me up for the evening service. I listened to two men across from each other discussing how much they liked to listen to a certain local pastor. I asked, “Are you active in local ministry?”

They said they were part of a convention for training Sunday school teachers and then asked if I was interested in Sunday school!

I said that I had been in the ministry a number of years and recognized the importance of a good Bible Sunday school.

“What part of the ministry are you in?” asked one.

“We major in helping people to know for sure that when they die they will go to heaven,” I answered.

“That’s interesting,” he said, “My 12-year-old son has been asking me that question for some time. Do you think you would have a moment to talk to him about that?”

“Certainly.” He called his boy from the restaurant and had him sit on the couch. The youth was tremendously responsive and in a few minutes I led

him to the Lord. Both men were excited and wanted to know more about how to win a lost person to Jesus.

Develop a “major.” It will open a lot of doors.

Lesson 8

Prospecting

A sales company or marketing firm would never have success without a prospect list. Yet many Christians—and churches—have none. The secular world works at attaining a list for only one reason, we should for another. But both are interested in the same thing—people.

It can be very discouraging to soul winners to set aside their time to go out on the field and then have no prospects. Soul winners with good prospect lists will have lost of people to visit, will keep a broken heart over the needs of the lost, will review their lists daily, and will see their prayer lives increase in intensity as they claim the lost for their Savior.

One question I’m frequently asked by Christian leaders who train soul winners is, “How do you get enough prospects for your soul winners?” I have to resist the urge to sound flippant because I want to say, “How can you run out of prospects? They’re all around you.”

Early in my soul winning experiences I secured the “new move” lists of utility companies. These were the names and addresses of newcomers in the

area who needed basic services. I'd send a letter of welcome and then follow up with a visit.

I also made sure visitors to our church were recognized in every service and asked to complete a registration card. We followed up these leads on our regular visitation night.

Also, watch the paper for the names of those who have had death or tragedy in their families. They are usually open to the Gospel.

During a series of meetings in a good, soul winning church, I was approached by the pastor who told me he had run out of prospects. My first instinct was to give him the city phone book—with a smile. That night at the end of the service I passed out slips of paper and asked people to give us names, addresses, and phone numbers of anyone they would like the pastor to visit. The church secretary then typed visitation cards and the next day the pastor and I and two other teams went out. Eleven people were saved that day, and many more in the weeks ahead!

There is a spiritual truth at work here, and it's principle that's utilized by the secular world, too: referrals. Salespeople from major companies get their best prospects from referrals. Their satisfied customers will supply the names of friends and other acquaintances who need the same product.

Long ago I realized something. No one is happier than a person who has just received Christ as Savior. And because the new convert has a desire to see relative and friends share the same salvation, I began asking each person I led to Christ, "Do you have

friends, neighbors, or relatives who you would like to see accept Christ just as you have?"

I really believe business is ahead of us in this area. Most of us have experienced someone selling us a product and then asking for the names of five or more friends who also need the benefits of this item. In other words, you have just bought something, you believe it is good, so how many other people do you know who would benefit from this product?

I know it's not deep, but the same is true in soul winning. The person has just been saved. He or she knows the tremendous urgency of settling this spiritual issue. Within that person's sphere of influence there are a number of people who also need Jesus. We have always called these friends and relative of a convert the fishing hole. That is, we have already been able to catch one precious soul so there must be others in the same place.

It's always amazing to me to see how often Jesus told those whose lives he touched to go and tell their friends and relatives "what good things God had done for them." It's also the principle in Mark 5:19. The maniac of the Gadarenes was commanded of the Lord to "go home to thy friends and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee."

Dr. Bill Rice, that wonderful evangelist of the past several decades, used to ask converts to tell five friends and family members of their decision to trust Christ.

After I've secured an active list from the convert, I ask the person to help me schedule times when it would be appropriate to visit those names on the list.

I also ask the person to accompany me and help with the introductions. This accomplishes two goals: The new Christian grows in grace by seeing others come to the Lord and grows in confidence by learning how to become a soul winner.

Once I was directing a 13-week soul winning club during which my partner and I went to the home of a Christian lady. She was already a member of the church so our concern was her husband. We had the privilege of winning him to Christ.

Then we asked about other members of the family and secured quite a list. We went back the following week to meet the teenage son. He made his decision just as he was about to enlist in the Army. Then we returned on Saturday morning to meet the married daughter and won both her and her husband to the Lord. On four occasions we returned and won several people to Christ. At the end of 13 weeks we saw a total of 17 people saved because of this one person's list.

Many years ago another soul winning partner and I had the privilege of visiting a man named Jack, whom we led to the Lord. Then we asked him about his friends and relatives and ended up with another complete list. Over the next three weeks, four from his immediate family were saved plus three of his friends. In fact, it was three months before we had gone through all of those names and we literally had to recount the number of saved people! Plus, our prospect list continued to grow by the referrals given by Jack's friends and relatives. (By the way, Jack is regularly in church and out on soul winning

visitation, leading people to Christ through his own personal witness.)

Again, while churches should keep accurate records on every person who attends any service, it's not the responsibility of the church to supply a soul winner with prospects. In any area of sales it is a vital part of training to teach salespeople how to do their own prospecting.

Alongside referrals, a second great way to secure leads is through old-fashioned knocking on doors. I have always found door-to-door visitation as one of the most rewarding times in effective Christian service.

In fact, I feel door-to-door visitation is more a commandment than an option. The Bible makes it a critical part of personal witnessing. "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house," (Acts 2:46). Did this bring results? Note the next verse: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Note also Paul's testimony and reminder to the elders at Ephesus. "I...have shewed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house," (Acts 20:20).

There are many Christians who will visit prospects and commit themselves to winning friends and neighbors. But very few visit door-to-door. This is sad because door-to-door work is enjoyable, exciting, and rewarding. It builds confidence and boldness and follows the example of New Testament

Christianity. And as someone has observed, it costs less than riding all over town for hours!

Naturally, door-to-door visitation is not a guarantee of instant soul winning success, but it is an initial contact that leaves the door open to future visits when you appear and say “remember me?” You’re invited back into their home and after some moments of fellowship you present the Gospel.

When approaching a home cold, have a supply of tracts and brochures handy that describe your church and the programs you offer for every age. Also have a small notebook and pen ready.

When someone answers the door, introduce yourself, mention the church for which you are visiting, say that you want to leave information on the church, and then ask permission to go in. Be sure you visit with the people for a few minutes. Find out where they’re from, how long they’ve been there, where the work, their children’s ages and hobbies, and if they attend church regularly. At some early point ask their name and then use it in conversation. Even the toughest prospects enjoy hearing their names.

As you chat with prospects, mention the location of your church enough times so they have a general idea of its location. Leave some literature and a warm invitation to your church, and offer a ride if it’s needed. Your visit is positive and brief. In the car you write down pertinent information for your return visit.

Some people think you should push a person at the first meeting to make a decision for Christ. Yes, if

there is a great interest or if you feel the leading of the Holy Spirit. But most of the time this is not the case. You will find people to be restrained and formal at first, but your lack of pressure will help you get into the door the next time around.

Suppose they refuse to let you in? Then from the doorway conduct your business as cordially as if you were sitting down over a cup of coffee. And again, if the Spirit leads, introduce the plan of salvation. Ask permission to go in after they tell you to show them how to be saved.

Suppose they will not let you deal with them at all? Then leave politely. Write the name and address on a card when you return to the car and add it to your prospect list. Then go back as many times as needed, build a friendship, lead them to Christ, and get them into church. Whatever you do, don’t give up.

A dear man visited the church I pastured. A week later I visited his home and lead him to the Lord. I asked him why he visited. His response was enlightening. “Someone came to my door last week. I wouldn’t let him in. He offered church literature, but I turned it down. So the man put the literature behind a light on my porch. I forgot about it until later that week. In the midst of an upsetting problem I picked up the brochure and determined to be in church on Sunday.”

My experience has been that with just two hours of nonthreatening visits I come away with three or four excellent prospects.

Once a trainee and I went knocking on 15 doors. I obtained 5 good prospects for the next week's calling time and also had the joy of meeting a gentleman who was visiting one of our prospects. He was the father of the lady on our list and we found out that his daughter and son-in-law did not have a church home in the area. We were able to get information needed for a future visit and during our conversation about his children we were able to witness to him and see him become a child of God.

After soul winning experiences, I firmly believe that door-to-door visitation has a snowball effect. Any Christian who faithfully practices this technique will be able to look back on thrilling testimonies and stories of changed lives. These are memories that can't be matched anywhere else. Even the Apostle Paul looked back and rejoiced over this area of his ministry (Acts 20:20).

Door-to-door visitation also brings to the surface one of the most fundamental and sensitive areas of personal soul winning: how to qualify your prospect. How do you determine if the person is saved or lost? We refer to this as screening the prospect.

This is important because if you decide people are saved when in reality they are not, you've not only lost the opportunity to share the Gospel but this person remains without eternal hope. I don't believe people are purposely being deceitful when they think—or say—they are saved, it's just that they've acquired a religious vocabulary that's good enough to deflect our questions.

The sensitive issue arises when people get understandably defensive about their background, especially if we attempt to "straighten out" their theology.

I remember as a young Christian my heart was so burdened for soul winning that I challenged every statement the prospect made if it didn't agree with the Bible. I felt I needed to tell that person what the Bible taught about a particular subject in order for that individual to become a Christian.

Of course, that was neither correct nor biblical. The Bible teaches us in 1 Cor. 2:14a "the natural man receiveth not (understandeth not) the things of the Spirit of God." Therefore in order for a man to get his theology "straightened out" he must first become a Christian.

Perhaps you're discussing church background or attendance with a prospect. He may reply that he was raised in a Mormon home, as a Jehovah's Witness, or in a liberal church or denomination. Your first impulse may be to tell him what's wrong with his background. You would offend him, maybe enter into an argument, and never have the privilege of sharing the Gospel with him.

Remember that a person responds according to background, spiritual experience, or lack of biblical understanding. We are to win souls for Christ, not points in religious arguments. That's why it's important to qualify the prospect...period. Determine whether or not the person is saved. Don't criticize or coerce. Just determine whether someone is headed for heaven or hell.

Basically my first step is to ask church background and then say something positive, followed by my testimony. Then I deliver my key question: “If you should die tonight, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?”

If they respond with something like, “I don’t believe a person can know for sure,” you know the person is unsaved. Then I would ask, “Could I take just a moment to share with you a couple of verses that helped me to know for sure?”

There are a number of other ways I’ve had people respond to my “heaven” question. Sometimes it’s a wistful “I hope so.” I usually say, “Is that right?” and then proceed with my testimony. I’ve also had people tell me, “I’ve done the best I know how,” or “I’ve always believed in Jesus and wanted to do my best.” Your response? “I understand,” and then proceed with, “Could I take a moment and show you how you could know for sure?” If the prospect says, “I believe I would,” I smile and reply, “That’s great! Tell me about it.” When the first answer is not sufficient to give you a definite yes or not, keep asking questions until you have a clear understanding of the person’s spiritual condition.

After a message in which a number of people were saved and many others were rededicating their lives to live Christian growth, a dear lady approached me. “Pray for me,” she began, “I really want to give God my all.”

My first thought was to say, “God bless you,” and then encourage her as a Christian. Instead I looked right at her and said, “It’s wonderful that you want

for live for God. Tell me, are you absolutely sure you’re saved? If you should die tonight, would you know you were going to heaven?”

She began to weep and acknowledged she was unsure. I shared the Word with her and moments later she was saved. My point? I could have assumed from her introductory remarks that she was saved and just contributed to her spiritual confusion. Instead, I wanted to make sure in a tactful manner because I knew her eternity was at stake.

Traveling from Akron to Nashville, I sat next to an 82-year-old lady. When I opened my Bible she said, “You must be a minister.” Then she proceeded to tell me how she and her husband (who had only been deceased for a couple months) had helped build their local church, fund missionary endeavors, and committed to a litany of great projects. It was a natural temptation to assume she was a Christian, but when I asked her if she was 100% sure of heaven, she balked! In fact, it was heartbreaking to see the tears in her eyes. Within a few minutes, she was indeed 100% sure.

Toolbox

Make appointments!

I knocked on the door with a little more anticipation than usual. It was a Monday evening, exactly 7:00. Frank opened the door and said, “Come on in, Preacher, we’ve been expecting you.” I could smell coffee brewing and Frank’s wife had

refreshments on the coffee table. Their two children greeted me and then went to their rooms to study. We exchanged polite news—home, family—and then I turned to Frank and said, “I’ve come tonight with a burden on my heart to show you from the Bible how you can know for sure about heaven.”

Frank nodded. He knew why I was there. Betty was already a Christian and they had visited the church a couple of times. Within a few minutes Frank accepted Christ.

Does this sound too good to be true? It happened exactly that way. I was visiting Frank’s house by appointment.

Frank was a long distance truck driver. I called the week before and found he would return home Sunday afternoon so I made an appointment for Monday evening. On Sunday night I even called to confirm the appointment.

We certainly can’t practice this approach for every soul winning situation but I am convinced that it works more often than not. Think about it. The prospect is always home, he has seen to the needs of his children ahead of time, there is not television conflict, he knows why you’re coming, and the Holy Spirit has had time to answer most of his objections. He may even have refreshments ready!

In fact, one of my colleagues in the pastorate told me that all of the prospects with whom he schedules an appointment, at least 50% come to the Lord!

Here is a workable procedure. Call your prospect. Tell him how happy you were to see him recently, maybe in church, at the store, or with a friend. If he

visited the church, you might say, “We always like to return a visit with a visit to the home. What would be the best night for you, Tuesday or Thursday?” Very seldom will you be turned down. In fact, most people are very impressed by such a call and like to know ahead of time about the visit.

Practice soul winning by every means, but by all means try it by appointment.

Lesson 9

Look for the Other Person

I was leaving home with my wife and son for the airport. We stopped by a local garage to pick up a service man who would repair the car while we were out of town. There were countless things on our minds, and yet I began to think of the opportunity of speaking to this man about Christ even as we headed to the airport. Within a few moments, we pulled the car over and led him to Christ. Later I reflected. Suppose I had made all the preparation to preach, hold a meeting, take care of building a ministry, and yet did not win this man to the Lord? Isn’t that what the Christian life—my ministry—is all about?

The most important aspect of regularly winning people to Christ is to always be ready to win those who cross our path—those whose hearts have been prepared by the Holy Spirit. It seems that so often we believe that the only time to witness is on the regular church-wide visitation night. While this is a tremendous opportunity, there are scored of other

times we can win people to the Lord. We just need to be actively looking for those people.

Many times we seem to miss the obvious; it's easy to do. We go out with a prospect card, looking for a person and an address. During this time we meet and pass several people, asking them for directions or going to wrong doors. I'm convinced God puts these people in our way because of their need for the Savior. And maybe we never do find the address!

How many have we met in the last month and left no witness of God's salvation? The gas station attendant, the grocery store clerk, the newspaper boy, the appliance salesman, a nurse, a friend in the home of the person you went to see, and even a patient in the wrong bed when you visit someone in the hospital. Whoever they are, and hundreds more like them, you may be the only Christian they will ever meet.

During a revival meeting in Alabama I went to a local store to buy fruit. While waiting in line I handed the clerk a Gospel tract and said, "Let me give you a short Sunday school lesson which answers the most important question on earth."

"What question is that?" he asked.

"How someone can know for sure they are going to heaven."

His countenance changed. "Could you show me that?"

"Certainly."

He then motioned for his customers to wait, and within a few minutes he was a Christian. That

evening he attended our revival service and made his profession public and submitted for baptism.

While waiting for my plane in Chicago I decided to give out tracts to those waiting in line at the security checkpoint. I was working my way down the line when a young lady asked me, "Are you a religious person?"

"Why do you ask?"

She stepped out of line and shared with me one of the saddest stories I had ever heard about a broken marriage and life. "Mister, I need someone to pray for me."

We took a seat and I proceeded to share the Good News with her. She accepted Christ and then thanked me profusely for caring.

I was leaving Pennsylvania for West Virginia to hold another crusade when I noticed an elderly lady having difficulty climbing the steps with her small bag. I offered my help and a conversation began. It continued well into the flight until she realized she was dominating the meeting. Almost ashamed, she turned to me and asked a very unusual question: "What do you enjoy doing?"

"I enjoy telling people how they can be sure they're going to heaven when they die."

She was startled, but then smiled. "You must be a preacher."

I nodded.

"I have always thought about that subject and wondered if I could know for sure."

In the next few minutes, I led her through Scriptures and into the saving knowledge of our Lord.

Each of these accidental meetings occurred when I was focused on something else in my ministry. But because I was open to the other person, I was able to lead each of them to the Lord. True, not everyone will be saved. Many may not accept a tract or even a remark about the status of their souls. Soul winning is work, it is a battle. All of hell wants to make us quit. But we can't let anything deter us from possibly being someone's only witness. We may miss precious people who are hungry.

Many times the people we win to Christ are not the ones we set out to visit. Every soul winner has had the experience of visiting a prospect or following up on a new Christian then meeting a friend or neighbor at the house. We must remind ourselves that this new person is just as good a candidate for the Kingdom.

I was conducting a local church crusade that attracted great crowds, including many at the altar. One afternoon the pastor and I went soul winning together. Our first visit was to an apartment and no one answered. In a moment the lady next door explained their absence. We thanked her, talked casually for a moment, and then led her to the Lord.

On our second visit we were talking with a couple when two teens entered the room and then excused themselves. I followed and realized there were four. In a few minutes three of the four were saved.

Then we were visiting a front porch with the lady when a young man passed by on the sidewalk, spoke to her, and indicated he was coming home early because of the heat. I walked over and began talking with him and he accepted the Lord. His comment was, "Now I know why I had to come home early."

Once I went soul winning with a member of a church in a northern state. My first question was, "Who have you got lined up for us to visit?"

"I'm afraid I don't have any good prospect," he replied. I asked him if he had any folks he had won to Christ but who had not been coming to church. "Many," he said. So I asked him to take me to as many of those as he could in the time allotted.

On our first visit we entered the house of a lady who had been saved about a month. We invited them to our special service. I looked around and noticed there were two other ladies who weren't joining in the conversation. After introductions, I asked if all of us could sit together and talk about the meeting, the church, and the decision our hostess made a month ago. I turned to the two ladies and began witnessing. A few minutes later both bowed their heads and accepted Christ.

Then we visited the home of a teenage boy that had been saved and met with an 11-year-old friend. My partner took the boy aside as the teen and I went up and down the street to meet some of his friends. Two teens accepted Christ.

Within three hours seven people came to trust Christ just by visiting people who were recently

saved. By they way, three of them came to church that night and walked the aisle in public profession.

I keep three rules in mind when I'm looking out for the other person:

1. Recognize that every human will spend eternity somewhere.
2. Embarrassment and fear can make us talk about religion but never push personal salvation. Understand that it is your right to make a clear Gospel presentation and that to “confront” the person with the need for salvation. Many times Jesus turned to those He had just forgiven or healed and simply said “Go tell....”
3. Believe God for the power of the Holy Spirit. Claim His fullness before going out then before making a presentation.

During an area-wide crusade, I was also teaching morning soul winning sessions and then devoting two hours to personal witnessing. Many precious souls were being saved every day.

One particular morning my partner and I were visiting a neighborhood and saw a man sitting on his front porch. I turned around and went back. If you're going to win people to Christ then you have to meet people!

We got out of the car, introduced ourselves, and asked him if he knew the location of the church. I discovered he was construction worker and was

waiting for some materials to arrive. I gave him a brochure, talked about our revival, and then gave him my testimony. When I asked him if he knew for sure he was going to heaven, he looked down and mumbled that he did not. I walked him through my New Testament passages and minutes later he accepted Christ.

We met a perfect stranger, presented the Gospel, and won him to the Lord. He then thanked me for turning around and taking the time to speak to him.

I walked into a construction company with a local pastor and he introduced me to several people. One of the secretaries turned to a construction worker and said, “Don has been telling us that he would like to come to the revival meeting at least one night.”

I gave Don a special invitation to the services along with a Gospel tract. He looked at me earnestly and said, “I've been thinking of my need for the Lord and getting my life back on track.”

At a time like this it's normal for a Christian to think about the business of the office and how much better it would be for the person to come to church and hear the Gospel. Or maybe you think the person is just being polite. However, the Christian should seize the opportunity. “Don, would it be ok if I took a moment now to talk to you abut the things of God?”

He said yes, and the manager agreed to a few minutes alone in an office where I was able to lead Don to the Lord. Then he walked out and said to everyone, “I have just received Christ as my Savior. I'm saved. If I die right now I am going to heaven.”

It had a profound effect on the office. Over the next few nights everyone from that construction company room was present at the revival and two more were saved. Don also walked down the aisle.

Many times we pass people whose hearts are broken, who need Jesus, but they don't know how to articulate this need. Think of it. Hundreds of people are just waiting, looking, longing, needing, but could say with the Psalmist, "No man careth for my soul." May they never say that about us. I urge you to do your best to witness to anyone at any time in any place.

There is an important corollary that goes hand-in-hand with the principle of looking for the other person. When ever possible, go witnessing with a second person. First, it's biblical:

- * In 2 Timothy 2:2 the Bible says that the things we have learned we are to commit to "faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."
- * In Mark 6 Jesus sent out the 12 to preach and do the work of the ministry. Note in verse 7 that he sent them forth by two and two.
- * When Jesus was preparing to enter Jerusalem on what we call his official presentation, He, "sendeth forth two of His disciples," (Mark 11:1) and they prepared the way.
- * In Luke 10 Jesus sent forth the 70 for service. Verse 1 says that He "sent them two and two

before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come."

- * In Ecclesiastes 4:9 the Bible says, "Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour."

While holding a meeting in an area where I had pastured for 13 years, I had a telephone call late one night from a young man. He had been saved at the church I pastured and I had the privilege of training him as a soul winner and as a bus worker.

In the middle of our conversation he began to weep. Then he explained that he had just attended his dad's funeral. "Thank you, preacher, for training me to be a soul winner. I remember the night you and I went to the home of my dad and won him to Christ. He's in heaven because of soul winning. I want you to know that there is never a week that I don't go out and work hard at being a personal soul winner."

Witnessing two-by-two is not only biblical but also practical. Every pastor and Christian leader knows the importance of assigning tasks to people with helpers in order to accomplish the project quicker and in a better manner.

How strongly do I believe this? I fear the average person who goes soul winning alone for three hours will generally start late, stop after one and one-half hours at a coffee or donut shop and come home somewhat wilted, discouraged and defeated. However, the same person who takes a partner or a trainee will generally start on time, persevere for three

hours, claim God's power upon his or her life while witnessing, and work hard to see someone saved if for no other reason than to encourage his partner.

Anyone who can't go out soul winning every weekend or to train someone else on a two-by-two basis is too busy. There needs to be a schedule change. In addition, a man going out by himself is wasting the opportunity of being a tremendous blessing to a Christian brother who will reproduce and multiply the efforts of the soul winner in his own life.

Moreover, the second person can answer the door, care for the baby, answer the phone, or deflect any distraction that arises. The second person listens attentively and never interrupts while the soul winner is dealing with a person.

Ideally, you should decide beforehand who will deal with the prospect, and who will be the second person. When entering the house, both should be folksy and join in the conversation, but once the soul winner begins the plan, the second person should be silent. If there is an interruption such as children, pets, or phone the second person can deal with these and leave the soul winner undisturbed.

Several weeks ago I was visiting with a pastor while conducting a local crusade. As he approached a house he said, "Brother Wood, this man needs to be saved, but his four-year-old boy is a terror." We decided I would be the soul winner and he'd act as the second man.

As soon as we entered the house and started talking, I saw what the pastor meant. The boy

brought over toys, a cat, a book—most of the house! He talked as loud and as often as we did. After a few minutes I asked the man if I could show him from the Bible how he could be sure of salvation. Instantly my partner suggested that he and the lad play in the other room. He got up, toys and all, and there were no more interruptions. Minutes later I had shown the man clearly how he could accept Christ as Savior. The young boy ran into the room and shouted, "Dad, I'm glad you have become a Christian!"

Recently one of the soul winners of our church and I were visiting. As we approached a house I said something that I rarely say. "Why don't you be the soul winner tonight? I'll be the second man."

We visited a teenager who had attended Easter morning services. We met in the breezeway of his home. My partner engaged in conversation while I sat and prayed. In the middle of the presentation the dad stepped into the room. I intercepted him and a few minutes later the boy accepted Christ.

Then I approached the parent and another teenage son and my partner became the second man. In the middle of my presentation there was someone at the door. Alertly my partner jumped up and disappeared outside. After I won the dad and boy to Christ (the mother was already a Christian) I returned to the breezeway and saw my partner dealing with four more teenage boys. I sensed that two of the boys were distractions and took them aside a few minutes later two more teenagers accepted Christ.

Driving away from that house one and a half hours later, my partner reviewed what happened.

Each of us had been a soul winner and the second man. We reversed roles continually. By the end of the visit, five precious souls had been saved, a clear presentation of the Gospel had been given, and grounding of the converts had taken place—all without interruption.

Toolbox

Record Keeping

Nothing in life moves forward unless there is an understanding of what has happened. I have always found in the ministry that those who are against records, numbers, and statistics are those who do not need to keep any.

In reading through Scriptures, I'm always amazed at how God included numbers: 12 disciples, 120 in the Upper Room, 3,000 saved on Pentecost. Someone once said that God was so interested in numbers that He so named one of the books of the Bible!

Two Scriptural character principles in soul winning are responsibility and accountability. People must know what is expected of them and they must give an account of how they accomplished those tasks.

That's why I urge you to keep a weekly record of the number of hours you go soul winning, the people you win to Christ, those who make it public in your local church, and the number who follow in baptism.

Keep a record of each person you win in the back of your soul winner's New Testament. Include the name, date, P for public profession and B for baptism. Include phone numbers for follow up.

Once a middle-aged housewife introduced herself at a rally. She said, "Brother Wood, I write down in my New Testament the name of every person I win to Christ. Last night on visitation I had the thrill of leading a Jehovah's Witness to the Lord. I added the letters JW to this lady's name in my New Testament."

What a source of encouragement her record keeping will be at some future date—perhaps when she's going through some difficult times.

One of my pastor friends from South Carolina remarked that he once lead three generations of a family to the Lord—the first and only time it every happened to him. What a story he can tell as he comes across that notation in the Bible.

Remember: God keeps records, too. Is there any listing greater than the Lamb's Book of Life?

Chapter 3

Up Close and Personal

The well was outside the town along the main road. Women, and occasionally men came twice a day to fetch their rations of water. But no one came at midday...except this woman. Probably because of her reputation.

Then she met Him. He was a Jew, she a Samaritan. Not only did He speak to her but He did so in public and asked a favor! She didn't understand His line of questioning but sensed the conversation was always circling back to her. She tried the theological gambit, which He deflected. At the end, her need for God was so apparent that she unhesitatingly accepted Him and ran to tell others. Jesus never did get His drink and the woman never retrieved her water pot.

I don't think there exists a greater example of how to witness to a lost soul than this account from John 4. Jesus crossed every barrier to reach this woman and when she responded for the wrong

reasons, He gently guided her back to the important issues. He never pursued her theological land mines or the Samaritans' centuries-old grievances, but simply kept her focused on her own need for salvation. He revealed her situation with kindness and she responded from her sense of spiritual dearth. Then her personal testimony was so persuasive that the townspeople asked Jesus to stay, which He did for an extra 48 hours.

When Christians get together and begin to talk about soul winning it's not long before someone asks me, "what's the most glaring need facing Christians witnessing today?" Many vital topics flood my mind, but one paramount issue seems to prevent so many well-meaning Christians from leading lost people to the Savior. In fact, this one area is so misunderstood that it may be the greatest problem in doing personal evangelistic work from the pulpit as well as door to door.

The problem? Too many Christians depend on the lost person to know how to be saved, instead of carefully and persistently leading that person to Christ. Let's face it. In our personal soul winning efforts we try to point people in a right direction only to see them go down a false path. We push them only to see them confused by their background or something we've said. We try to recommend Jesus to folks as if He were one of several choices.

How often I have seen a person come forward in a service for salvation or to rededicate a life and then encounter an eager but misled personal worker who

asks, "Why did you come?" Or, "Have you done this before?"

How often I have seen a person in the home come to the point of receiving Christ and then shift to a subject that veers the meeting away for good! Regrettably, I'm convinced much of this confusion is caused by the approach of the soul winner.

Before encountering the woman at the well, Jesus met a fisherman named Peter. Actually, it was Andrew who steered his famous brother toward the Master. In John 1:42 the Bible says Andrew brought him to Jesus. Andrew did not ask Peter if he knew the way, nor did he tell him of Jesus and then leave him to determine how to get there. Andrew took control and made sure an unsaved Peter got to the Savior. That's our job, and it's the focus of this critical chapter.

In James 5:20 there's a phrase that describes the work of the soul winner: "...he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death..." The sinner must be turned or directed, and not left to himself nor left to turn himself. I repeat: The sinner must be turned by the soul winner. This is our work, our commission.

I was preaching in a crusade where attendance was high and souls were being saved. One night a lady raised her hand requesting prayer to be saved. I then asked all who lifted their hands to look at me. She did. I asked them to come forward and allow someone to show them from the Bible how to be saved. She did. One of the ladies from the church went with her to the prayer room.

After the service I went by to speak with the lady. I expressed joy that her salvation, but she just lowered her head slightly. “She did this two years ago,” the worker explained, “and when she joined the church she was baptized.”

I turned to this precious woman and asked, “You came tonight to be saved, didn’t you?”

“Yes.”

“You would like to know for sure that you're going to heaven?”

“Yes.”

“Then here is how you can know.” I took here through critical Bible passages and led her to the Lord. When I asked her when she was saved, she said, “Right now, right here, today!”

Friend, we are to lead people to Christ, and here’s how we do it!

Lesson 10

Whose Job Is It Anyway?

I have a bone to pick with confused soul winners who feel they must play the Holy Spirit. Let me explain. In 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 there are two tremendous phrases that refer to the position the Christian holds in soul winning. First, each of us has been given the ministry of reconciliation. What a privilege to literally bring together men and God. This is why we are called ambassadors for Christ. It

is our task as Christians to give the Gospel to anyone at any place at any time as we are able.

Second, it is the Holy Spirit who takes the message and convicts the heart and it is God who gives the increase—not us. Any sincere Christian who has never worked at soul winning has at one time or another drawn back from presenting the Gospel because he or she is felt the prospect was not ready. Or, after the Gospel was presented, the person was not asked to receive Christ because “his heart did not seem prepared.”

If we are not careful, we will go through our lives sizing up people on the basis of whether or not we feel they are spiritually ready to listen to the Gospel or receive Christ as Savior. Warning: If our soul winning begins to take this approach we become soul inspectors instead of seed sowers. We try to produce a response instead of letting God convict and use His Word.

I’ve known Christians who tell me they feel led to produce conviction in the hearer. Or they sense they are to stop if they don’t see evidence of repentance. Some will say their presentation was not good enough or that so-and-so said a prayer just to get rid of them.

No wonder there are so many confused soul winners and even more confused unsaved people! Granted, these “convictions” look and feel spiritual, but in the end you are playing the Holy Spirit. Moreover, you are disobedient in giving out the message of reconciliation and failing as ambassadors for Christ. Every soul winner would be wise to

prayerfully think through this concept and let the Holy Spirit apply it to their heart.

But, you ask, what if the prospect makes a decision and really doesn't mean it? Here we go again playing the Holy Spirit. We must understand that people can fool us on purpose. We are not infallible. We may be concerned, but in honesty there's nothing we can do to change the situation.

Yes, there will be a few people who take this posture. Most of the unsaved with whom we have the privilege of dealing and who do not accept Christ are very sincere and simply need someone to love and disciple them. I've had three occasions, to my knowledge, where people have accepted Christ in public service and then came to me later and told me that I had been in their home, had presented the Gospel, and even had them bow their heads. They said they prayed the sinner's prayer with me only to mock or laugh after I had left. Of course, I did not know this. I believed that those people were just as sincere as anyone else.

I was in a northern state during a mid-week service and at the conclusion a middle-aged lady came forward to accept Christ. Later in the foyer she shared her story. She had visited the church I pastored in Grand Rapids, Michigan before I entered full-time evangelism. When I visited her later that week I presented the Gospel to her and to several men who were in the trailer with her. She said, "I prayed the prayer just to get rid of you that night." She went on to say that after I left she and the men had laughed at how easy it was to get rid of me.

My first thought could have been that my plan was not complete or I wasn't sensitive enough to be understood. But the fact remained that I was to sow the seed and let God give the increase. The lady continued her story. "From that night until now (4 years later) I haven't been able to get my need for Christ off my mind. I read in the paper where you would be and I came."

It bears repeating that this person could not sleep or resolve the issue. It was almost as if she could not wait to hear the Gospel again and get things right with God. You see, my job is to present the Gospel and give people the opportunity to say yes. Even when someone makes an insincere profession on purpose, the Holy Spirit uses this to bring deeper conviction into their souls. Salvation is of the Lord. He is faithful to His Word and His Word never returns void.

Again, the soul winner must understand—and trust—that it is the work of the Word of God under the ministry of the Holy Spirit that brings a lost sinner to a saving knowledge of Christ. So it's of primary importance to make sure you present Christ with persistence, tenderness, and kindness even if you are initially rejected.

Remember: Negatives can be turned into opportunities. I've led many people to Christ by giving our tracts. When a person would not let me clearly present Jesus, I simply handed them a tract and explained its contents. On several occasions I saw them come to Christ. Sometimes I've had people refuse me altogether so I'd say, "Let's close

our time in prayer.” Then I prayed the Gospel plan to them and some said yes.

Once I witnessed to a deaf person. There was a big barrier initially but I took a piece of paper and began to write notes to the person and led him to Christ by writing out the Gospel plan.

On another occasion a local church had worked hard to double its Sunday morning attendance and many adults were saved at the invitation. One was a man named Pedro. At the time Pedro had a friend with him who didn’t understand English. I often wondered what he thought about during the service. I soon found out! The next day Pedro called and asked if I could come see his friend Jose. I had the unique opportunity of presenting Christ and Pedro gave the interpretation in Spanish. Jose accepted the Lord because he was just waiting to be saved.

As soul winners we fall into the rut of believing we have to be sharp enough, quick enough, or witty enough to out-talk someone in order to win them to faith. No! The Holy Spirit does the convicting, the Word of God is the seed, and the soul winner is the seed scatterer.

Even those considered unreachable can be won. I was holding a revival meeting in South Carolina when one of the ladies of the church asked me to visit her father. “He has been dealt with by everyone,” she warned. “He’s hard.”

My first thought was to say no. Like you, I have feelings such as, he will slam the door in my face. Or, he has run off everyone else who talked to him. Or, if he’s been “dealt with” so much he’s defiantly

not interested in being saved and this is certainly a waste of time. But I turned to the staff member next to me and suggested we go the next afternoon.

When we arrived I found him sitting on his porch. We talked about a variety of subjects that interested him, and I expected him to stop me at any moment. To my surprise, though, he was very nice and enjoyed continuing with conversation. In a few moments I got on the subject at hand and asked him if he was certain about heaven. When he said he wasn’t sure, I asked if I could take a few moments and show him how to become a Christian.

“Certainly,” he responded. I led him to the Lord and that evening he attended our service and walked the aisle. Afterward I asked him why he hadn’t accepted Christ earlier. I will never forget his answer: “Many people have talked to me about being saved, but no one has ever showed me how.”

Isn’t it amazing how very few people understand how to be saved? I think it’s always been that way. A common thread running through the preaching of all great revivalists is that religion has so complicated salvation that very few understand it. Most lost people somehow believe that only a specially trained few can really grasp what eternal life is all about.

This should excite the Christian who wants to win souls. You don’t have to be a Bible college graduate or a theology major. No special gifts are required. No course in public speaking is needed. In fact, sometimes people who have all of the above win the least to Christ. A person with a broken heart who

gives simple but understandable presentation usually sees many people come to Christ.

Unfortunately, we spend much time talking to people about religion and generally leave them with only a new way to look at an already confused subject. A good soul winner must practice and learn to deal with people clearly about their souls. Many times they talk about several subjects but are really interested in getting things right with God.

While traveling to a speaking engagement I stopped for an early breakfast meeting on the east side of Tennessee. The waitress noticed my Bible and wanted to know if she could ask me a question. It was one of those times when I was busy and didn't have much spare time, but I couldn't let anything stand in the way of the most important business on earth!

I nodded and out came a question on a popular social issue. After a statement or two I looked at her and said, "I believe the real question you have is how can I know for sure I'm going to heaven, isn't it?" She hung her head and nodded yes. I took a few more minutes and explained how she could be saved and she accepted Christ.

I have found that to be very typical. Many precious people want to know how to go to heaven but they don't know how to ask the right questions. It's always the responsibility of the soul winner to listen to the real issue inside the question.

Soul winning is not tricking, pushing, or forcing people into accepting Christ. It's using a clear

presentation of the Gospel and letting the Holy Spirit have the freedom to operate through our witnessing.

Toolbox

Simplicity

"I'm afraid that a question will be asked that's too hard for me to answer, therefore I am afraid I'll be a stumbling block to the person to whom I'm witnessing..."

So writes a precious lady in Iowa who loves the Lord and has a burden to win the lost. I don't know if I have ever seen one statement that sums up the fear that is shared by so many Christians who come to me with questions about personal soul winning.

Leading people to Christ is a joy. It is the most rewarding work a Christian can do. And yet we must realize that Satan will use every trick and intimidation to keep us away from this spiritual endeavor.

In order to remove this fear consider one word: simplicity. Always remember that you are the soul winner. Your job is to lead a person to Christ. You are not there to answer Bible questions or to straighten out their lives or religious affiliations. All those things may need to be done but they come after salvation and not before.

Notice the order of 1 Corinthians 2:14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

A man must be saved in order to be spiritual; he needs to be saved before he is disciple.

Let the Holy Spirit do the heavy lifting; you keep it simple. Remember the military acronym KISS? Keep It Simple Stupid! May I respectfully suggest we rearrange it to **Keep It Simply Salvation?**

Lesson 11

When You're on the Threshold— Literally!

You've just knocked on a door and you immediately regret it. You know for a fact that the person will be a Mormon. Or he'll hate the church. Or she's not interested in God. Whatever they type you're convinced you won't be able to deal with it. You're plotting your escape...when the door opens.

If I could suggest one basic thing, it's that you deal with everyone the same way regardless of who they are. Present Christ and salvation simply and thoroughly. Trust the Holy Spirit to do His work and allow the person to respond by decision.

Now let me suggest something else: Learn a good soul winning plan, work on it, and use it consistently until you become a proficient soul winner. Dr. R. A. Torrey was mightily used of God; first working with D. L. Moody, and then independently in training people in the how-to of winning their friends and

neighbors to Christ. One of his great statements was, "Plan to succeed."

Once you have learned a good soul winning plan, be open at the beginning of your conversation to approach people differently until you can get your regular plan. Be flexible. Meet the person where he or she is and then carefully draw the conversation to the place where you can follow your plan. Trust the Holy Spirit for direction.

I was on a plane having a conversation about football with the man next to me. After a minute I asked him, "What do you do for a living?" Normally this makes a person respond kind. Sure enough, after he told me his occupation and chatted about it, he asked me. I said, "A preacher."

He began to open up with a sad story about his home and problems and then asked if I would pray for his family. I said yes but added, "First, I wonder if I might show you some verses from the Bible that will help you know where you stand with God as a husband and a father." He nodded yes and in a few minutes he accepted Christ and I prayed for his family. What a joy to ground him in the things of God and then see him return to his family as a saved husband and father.

But I had a plan. It may have started with football but it ended with Christ. Over the next few lessons let's build a plan for you. First, let's return to the porch and to the person answering the door. Separate that person into two categories: those who have had some prior contact with you or the church, and those who haven't.

Let's take the first group. I knock on the door with just a tract and a church brochure in my hand. The goal is to get the prospect as comfortable as possible before you present the Gospel. This means relaxing them through advance conversation—folksy—but also trying to get them to relax physically, too. Normally you will visit inside the home but sometimes the front porch is the perfect setting.

When the person answers the door, I step back, smile, and say, “Hi, I’m David Wood from Heritage Baptist Church. I believe you visited us this past Sunday morning.”

Usually the person (let’s say a man) will nod his head or smile in agreement. I try to shake his hand and mention how glad we were that he visited. I also tactfully ask his name and use it as quickly as possible. “We wanted to have the opportunity to return the visit, John, but I hope we didn’t catch you at a bad time.”

By now it’s easy for him to say, “No problem, come on in.” In reality most of the contacts I make respond in this manner. On those occasions when a visit will not suit (and I have always found these to be honest reactions), just set an appointment to come back later.

In the second example—someone who has never had any contact with your church—the procedure is basically the same. I have a tract, a church brochure, and an honest approach. My opening statement will have a response question. I knock, the person answers, I step back, smile, and say, “I’m David

Wood. I’m visiting today from Heritage Baptist Church and giving folks information on our ministry. Say, do you know where our church is located?”

Take them slowly from their house to the church. Ask them questions like “Do you know where the high school is?” (Response.) “Great, just turn right there and go....” Comment on other streets or landmarks. Laugh if possible but certainly smile. Be cheerful, be positive. Compliment the house or the yard. Hand them the brochure and the tract and another question: “Like I said, my name is David Wood. What did you say yours was?” Shake his hand and you’re off to a friendly visit.

Now you have to advance according to the situation and how he responded. Maybe you’ll be invited in. Maybe he’s responsive but wants his distance. Leave him some literature and invite him to attend a service. You haven’t led him to the Lord—yet—but you have gained a good prospect for later.

If he is totally uncooperative and opens the door six inches and tells you to leave, oblige him—for now. Remember our earlier lessons? He has rejected God, not you. Leave some literature if possible and fill out any information on your card or in your book. Pray for him and visit him next week.

Let’s pause for a moment. It’s an incontrovertible fact of soul winning that you will encounter the occasional hostile prospect. When you meet an unyielding soul, resist all your natural urges. Never argue. Never put him on the defensive. Never come off as self-righteous. Never be rude. Never lean on him. Why? Because as unpleasant as your greeting

was, you want the welcome mat to still be there for the next soul winner. Many times a prospect is belligerent because another Christian offended him. That other Christian may have had the finest of intention, too, but his approach soured the deal. Don't let it happen to you.

Back to the better prospects: Last year while visiting door-to-door in a Pennsylvania city, a Christian granddad invited us in. He was visiting from out of state and babysitting the kids. He shared how he had been praying for his son and daughter-in-law. We set a time to return and eventually won both to Christ.

Sometimes a cold call is in response to a referral. Again, it's a similar procedure. "Hi, I'm David Wood from Heritage Baptist Church. Your friend, Mark Brown, asked me if I would take a minute to visit with you the next time I was in the area. He thinks a lot of you and wants me to leave some literature on our church. So I wanted to drop by to meet you and get to know you personally." Our prospect is probably a little reserved at first, but he will relax as you enter his home and begin a friendly visit.

Several years back I had the opportunity to visit a man who had attended our church the previous Sunday. I followed my procedure and he said, "I really enjoyed my visit to your church but was only attending the one time as a special favor to a friend."

"I'm certainly glad you came," I responded. "I always like to get a person's response to our service. This helps us in our preparation for effective ministry."

After a minute or two of questions about the service and his response, I changed the subject to his life, business, home, and family. Minutes later I led him to Christ. Then he took me into the other room and introduced me to his wife and two friends. He looked at his wife and said, "I just became a Christian."

Quickly, I took the opportunity and presented the Gospel to her and the friends. She was already saved and had been praying for her husband for some time. But I was able to lead the friends to Christ.

Now let me pause a second time. Satan will try to force you into becoming a silent Christian, either out of fear or embarrassment. Don't listen to those thoughts. Get your eyes off your feelings and onto the needs of the lost. Regardless of how good the reason for not sharing Jesus with others, it comes down to the fact that every unsaved person has the right to know God.

Why do I mention this now? I want to stress the importance of what you're doing when you're standing there on a front porch feeling alone.

I had just finished a meeting on a Tuesday night and the pastor dropped me off at the motel. After going inside for a minute I decided to try the coffee shop for a snack. As I sat in a booth I overheard four young men next to me bragging about areas of sin which they lived. They joked about it and boasted over the most wicked people they had met. After a few minutes I got up and asked them if I could join them.

"Sure," one said, slightly taken back.

I pulled up a chair at the end of the booth and said, “I couldn’t help but hear you talk of the different people who have affected your lives. Could I tell you of one person who made the greatest difference in my life?”

Another of the boys quickly replied, “Sure.” He turned to his friends and said, “He’s older than we are. This should be good!”

I smiled and began to tell them of someone who introduced me to Jesus when I was 19. They sat and listened with great interest. After a minute or two one of them said, “I’ve heard of Jesus but I have no idea as to who He is. Can you tell me?”

For an hour I introduced these four men to Jesus. They were enthralled and three of them accepted Christ. After several more minutes they thanked me for talking to them.

I left the coffee shop exhilarated and dumbstruck. Think of it! Here in America a young man confesses he does not know who Jesus is! The others never had anyone explain to them how they could be saved! The bitter truth of the matter is that very few people ever have the privilege of meeting a Christian who is not ashamed to tell them of Jesus. It’s estimated that over 96% of the population in our country has never met a soul winner face to face! Friend, next time you’re waiting for that front door to open, consider that you may be dealing with one of those 96%!

Toolbox

Flexibility

Jesus used a fishing boat for a pulpit. The apostles preached under the blue canopy of heaven. John Wesley preached on top of his father’s gravestone. Paul stood on Mars Hill amid the temples and statues of Greek philosophers. Philip won a soul by sitting in a chariot in the desert. John McNeil was won to Christ in the office of a railroad station in Scotland where he worked. Moody was saved in a shoe shop. The Apostle Matthew was in his tax office.

My point is that there will be occasions when you won’t be at the front door but can still use your plan. Unconventional places but similar approaches. Just learn to relax and be flexible.

In a hotel lobby I met a lady with her arm in a sling. “I trust your arm is healing without much pain,” I ventured.

“I’m just glad it wasn’t pulled out of the socket,” she answered.

“That’s an interesting statement,” I responded. “I just finished studying how at the Crucifixion of Jesus ever one of his bones was pulled completely out of socket.”

She was aghast. “I didn’t know that.”

From that point on, I had the opportunity of turning the subject of Christ and the reason for the Crucifixion. She accepted the Lord and told me, “If it took my getting a hurt shoulder to learn what Jesus did for me, I’m almost glad I was injured!”

Dear friend, be flexible and be yourself. The Holy Spirit will get you to where you need to be.

Lesson 12

The Approach of the Soul Winner

Sooner or later there comes an uneasy time when the soul winner is in the home of the prospect, has finished making light conversation, and is ready to present the Gospel. Now what? A dear pastor told me his greatest problem in working with others on soul winning is to get them to actually present Christ once they've entered the home.

If you're going to win a soul you have to get on the subject. I call this casting the net. And as any fisherman will tell you, there's a right way and a wrong way. I have found that three simple but workable questions move from the subject from secular to spiritual without offense.

Step 1: What is your church background? All this question does is to take the conversation to a spiritual nature. Don't be negative to his response. When I was young in the faith, I always thought I should help people understand they were in the wrong religious group before I completed my Gospel presentation. I still groan at some of my earlier zeal! No, regardless of his church pedigree, always try to say something positive.

From experience, I have found that now is the best time to give your personal testimony. The overwhelming command of Scripture is to go and "tell what great things God hath done for you." A personal testimony demands attention from the hearer. It's one thing for someone to tell you how to lose weight and become trim, it's quite another for you to look at that person, see the difference, and hear them testify, "This is how I did it." So it is with salvation.

Your personal testimony is a powerful tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit. In training soul winners I always require them to write out their testimony and learn to give it clearly and simply. I recommend keeping it from a low of between 45 and 60 seconds to no more than two minutes. It should be flexible enough to take a person from where they are now to where you want them to be in a few moments. If a person is in a former dead religious environment, your testimony might begin with how religious you were before you were saved and how that you had no assurance of heaven until someone showed you from the Bible how to be saved.

This does two things. It lets them identify with you as you talk of your past religion, which was empty, and it creates a hunger in them to see what someone else taught you. In reality they have always known their religion was empty. Now they've crossed paths with someone who has found an answer and is willing to share it.

So begin as closely as possible to where your prospect is religiously. Be simple, direct, and

compassionate. Don't draw attention to yourself. Your personal testimony represents the circumstances that led to your salvation. It should contain your church background, when you realized you were a sinner, how the Gospel was made plain to you, and when you personally accepted Him.

Here's my abridged testimony: I was raised in a Baptist church, was baptized, and joined the church at age twelve. At nineteen I attended a Gospel-preaching church on a Sunday evening where, after the service, someone took me out for a Pepsi and asked me about heaven.

I refused to talk to that person about the subject. But over the next few weeks, lying in bed, I reviewed his words about my need for Christ and the fact that if I were to die I'd have no assurance of heaven. I went back to that person, heard the Gospel step-by-step, and was saved.

I can't tell you how many times a simple delivery like that will change lives. Several years ago I was with a husband and wife in their home. In my testimony I shared how someone had opened the Bible and showed me point-by-point how I could know I was saved and going to heaven. Before I could ask them if they knew for sure, the man interrupted me and asked, "Could you show us what he showed you?" I smiled and took them through several Scripture passages and a few minutes later both were saved.

While conducting a crusade in a northern state I was visiting in a community with a church staff member. We stopped to see a man cutting the grass

in his front yard. He turned off the mower and stood there talking with us. After a few minutes I said, "Tell me what church you were raised in."

"Methodist."

I told him I was acquainted with the writings of John Wesley (the founder) and proceeded to give my testimony. He stopped me in the middle and said, "That's exactly what happened to me! I joined the church but nobody has ever taken the Bible and showed me how I can know I am going to heaven!"

I asked him if I could take a moment to do so. We walked over to the shade, sat down in lawn chairs, and I had the privilege of leading him to the Lord.

In many instances my testimony has been the key used by the Holy Spirit. Remember He will bring conviction. Your responsibility is to get on the subject, present the Gospel clearly, and give the person an opportunity to receive Christ. Sometimes your testimony is all that's necessary because an individual is so open to listening to the Gospel. But if they're not, then your testimony will serve as a bridge for question number two.

Step 2: If you should die right now, do you know for sure you are going to heaven? All you're trying to find out is if he is lost or not. Never enter a dialogue, especially on the difference between works and grace!

I'm the first to admit that one of the most prevalent problems in leading some folks to Christ is their dependence on personal works. Every soul

winner understands the frustration of attempting to witness to a good prospect only to encounter the brick wall of religious hopes based on church background, baptism, good deeds, treatment of another person, or family environment.

Our enthusiasm to help the person understand biblical salvation is all about turns our soul winning endeavor into a correction of that person's religious understanding. Maybe we oversell, step on some feelings, and turn the presentation into a doctrinal or church issue. It's natural for defenses to go up on both sides. When I was younger I'd give prospects a complete Bible lesson on Ephesians 2:8-9 and why works will not save!

My advice? Gnaw the legs off the table of works—but do so tenderly. Show the person why Christ is the answer. Work on your plan to point where you can remove false hopes of salvation in a very clear and understanding manner. I believe the easiest way to do that is to gather data from the earlier conversation with that person. For instance, listen to them talk of their spiritual background, notice the answers they give, and it becomes obvious they are trusting something other than the shed blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins.

A pastor and I were visiting an elderly Catholic man. He assured us he had a religious experience. He began to talk about how he had been touched and prayed over by someone for a disease in the '30s. He assured us God must love him and be close to him or he would not have been healed. If at this point I began to discuss divine healing or taken and issue

with him over his experience, I would have angered him and accomplished nothing else. I simply stored up this information.

“Sir, if we allow someone to pray over us and then we physically recover, do you think it removes our sins and takes us instantly to heaven?”

He dropped his face and said, “No, I guess not.”

I proceeded with the wonderful story of what Jesus did on the cross and a few minutes later he accepted Christ. At the conclusion of our visit the man said, “Thank you for coming. I believe God sent you by. I don't know that I have ever had anyone express it exactly that way.” What a joy it was to see him come to Christ and not place his hope of eternity on some false religious experience of the past.

I have found that after training scores of Christians in personal soul winning that many still have a tough time believing that the Word of God can do the job without our reasoning and arguments. Regrettably, many Christians will engage in an enormous amount of confrontation with a prospect only to win the argument but lose the soul.

Every sincere soul winner must remember that the Gospel is the “dynamite” of God. In fact, “dynamite” is a Greek word that means “power.” The Word of God is quite capable of convincing, convicting, and winning the lost for the Savior. That's why I can't emphasize enough to cut around arguments and avoid confrontations for the opportunity of just giving people the wonderful Gospel plan. That plan includes our third opening question:

Step 3: Could I take just a few minutes to show you how you could know for sure (about going to heaven)? While asking this I reach inside my coat pocket, remove my New Testament, and open it to Book of Romans. Remember Dr. Torrey? I'm anticipating a "yes." I'm planning to succeed.

Recently I was changing planes in Pittsburgh. It was 5:30 and because I had a 90-minute layover I headed to a restaurant. One booth was available and just as I put my briefcase down, I realized another man was heading for the same seat. I suggested we share it and he agreed.

We talked for a minute, ordered food, and then I asked to pray. He was surprised, but consented. As we began eating he said, "My dad used to pray before every meal."

It was natural to ask him my first question and he said Catholic. I gave my testimony, found out that he wasn't sure of heaven, and the proceeded. Within a few minutes he was sure!

As you can see, it's almost like a ball rolling down hill. Once you begin with question one, you simply listen to the response and then move to question two and three. But be careful: Don't fall into the trap of getting off the subject!

I was recently flying from Detroit to Baltimore to begin a meeting. While on the plane I was "breaking in" a new Bible. I was thumbing through it and opening it to different sections so as not to break the binding when I preached out of it the next morning.

A man across the aisle asked if that was a Bible. "Yes," I replied and handed it to him so he could

inspect it. (I like to do this when people notice I am reading or using a Bible.) He looked through it for a moment and gave it back to me with a thank you. I looked at him and said, "By the way, what church were you raised in?"

He looked at me then cast his eyes down a bit and said, "Methodist."

I started going through my plan but before I could make a clear presentation of the Gospel he shared with me that his father had died and he was going to Baltimore to participate in the funeral. He said it was interesting that I should ask him questions of a religious nature while he was going to his father's funeral.

In the next few moments I had the privilege of leading him to Christ. My point? I have always found that a correct approach will not offend the prospect and will open the door for a clear Gospel presentation.

Toolbox

Myopia

There is a time to be broad-minded, but this isn't that time! When going through the first three steps as outlined above, I encourage you to stay on track.

When leading a person to Christ and a question is asked, look at him and say, "Could I do this? Let me set that question aside for a minute and show you this (pointing to your Bible). After we've finished, I will help you to answer your question. Is that okay?"

I've never had anyone refuse this request and, of course, if they never bring up their question again neither do I!

Without offending that person you are helping him to understand that salvation comes first. Later he can begin to grow and have his questions answered about the Bible.

While visiting with one of our men I was training we came to a house whose owner said, "I have so many questions about the Bible; I am so confused."

I then said something I have never uttered before or since in soul winning, and I think it will help you understanding the importance of getting on the plan and staying on track. Without using the first three steps I usually use when leading someone to the Lord, I looked at him and said, "What are some of your questions and problems with the Bible?"

He raised some very simple but regular questions people have. After he finished I removed my New Testament from my pocket. "Sir, could I do this? Let me show you a couple of verses in the Bible that are very clear and will help you understand the answers to the different problems you have with the Bible."

He said fine and a few minutes later he bowed his head and accepted Christ. Afterward he quipped, "You know, all those other questions were not really very important at all!"

Stay on track. Your soul winning plan is sufficient for giving people all the knowledge they need to be saved.

Lesson 13

The Message of the Soul Winner

Have you heard the expression, "You can't get a man saved until you get him lost?" It's true, and let me explain. A person must know he is a sinner, but it goes deeper. A lost man must see there is nothing he can do to help or correct his position before God. If God had not stepped in to offer salvation wholly and solely of Himself, he would be left without hope under the condemnation of his sin, regardless of what he knows or understands.

So let's assume that in spite of a person's biblical answers to your questions, in spite of his or her life's experiences, you realize that the prospect is unsaved. You've taken (again, let's assume a man) him through the first three steps without correcting or challenging him and maybe your last statement was, "John, that's wonderful. Could I take a few minutes and share with you some verses that helped me settle my salvation?" You're about to take him on what I call the Romans Road because the four central verses are from the Books of Romans. And for the sake of continuity, let's number these steps 4 through 7 to show how

they build on the three questions you posed in the previous lesson.

Step 4: Teach him he's a sinner. "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Note the words "teach him." Many times our presentation is so fast and so pack with rapid-fire Scriptures that the potential convert is confused. Help him understand that "all have sinned" refers to you as well. When you include yourself he doesn't feel you're putting him down.

I always explain to people that before I was saved I used to feel there were big sinners and little sinners. I was a sinner, but not as bad as others. Then I help them see that in God's eyes there's not a difference. Here's a key point: It's important to have the person admit that the Bible is right and that he has sinned against God.

Step 5: Explain how he's going to hell because of his sin. "For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23). Wages are what we get for what we do. I illustrate it by a worker getting paid for so many hours' work. He has received his wages. Now I ask by review how many of us are sinners. "All of us," he replies (hopefully!). Then I explain that the death of

Romans 6:23 is not just a physical death but also a spiritual death or an eternity in hell separated from God forever. It's important that the sinner understands the impending judgment of God and his present state of living in condemnation until he is saved.

Years ago I was holding a revival meeting in a southern state and visited a man who had neither the time nor the need for God. I went through the first three steps and asked him if I could show him how he could know for sure. He replied, "I'm not very interested."

When I persisted he finally said, "Well, go ahead. I'll listen."

I began to teach him that he was a sinner and the wages of sin was death. The Spirit of God so moved in his heart that tears appeared in his eyes. A few minutes later he was saved.

Sometimes an individual feels he's probably a pretty good person who's committed a few sins but nothing too bad, and that he's religious enough to think things are okay between him and God. That's when I say, "Imagine something with me. I have just shown you two important facts from the Word of God: We're all sinners and we're all going to hell. Let's pretend for a moment that's all the Bible says. It's not, but let's pretend. Suppose that's all there is." I shut my Bible and set it aside.

I turn to my partner and say, “I’m sure you don’t want to go to hell when you die.” I turn back to the prospect. “And I’m sure you don’t. But unfortunately each of us has the same problem: We’re without hope.”

I continue my scenario. “Let’s suppose the three of us had to come up with a plan that would forgive our sins. Maybe we could join a church. What do you think?” The prospect most likely will give a negative response.

Bill (my soul winning partner) says, “Let’s get baptized.”

I shrug and turn to the prospect. “What do you think?” (Again a negative response.)

Then I look at him and say, “You know, one of the more popular issues that people bring up seems to be, ‘Let’s turn over a new leaf and promise God we’ll never sin again.’ Could we keep our word? No, even if we could, what about the sins already committed?”

By now the person recognizes there is absolutely nothing he can do to forgive his own sin. He’s lost and without hope, and he’s ready to respond to the love of God.

“John (the prospect),” I say, “Man could never have forgiven himself or made a sufficient plan. But God did. And we can thank Him that this isn’t where the Bible ends but where His plan of salvation begins. God

knew our hopelessness and loved us to step in and make this wonderful plan for us. Let me show you.” I then continue with my next two steps.

I was on a plane from Cincinnati to Richmond and began to witness to a man in his mid-40’s. He was so receptive that I decided to skip the above illustration and go directly to the Gospel. After our heads were bowed in prayer I asked him to receive Christ and he responded, “I’m already a member of the church and I believe in God.”

I saw my mistake. I asked him to look at me again. “I’m going to ask you to pretend...” I continued with what I should have done first. A few minutes later we bowed our heads again and he received Christ. What a reminder to me to help my prospect see himself lost before I try to get him saved!

Step 6: Teach him that Jesus paid the penalty for his sin on the cross. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Help him see that Jesus died in his place as his substitute. By all accounts he—the sinner—should die, be condemned, and suffer hell. But a merciful God sent His Son to die—to be condemned to suffer hell for every

person born. Here is where the sinner begins to see the love of God.

Step 7: Teach him that if he will believe that (Romans 5:8) and receive Christ, then God will save him. “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13). The sinner must see the importance of believing the Gospel account and must respond by personally receiving the Savior in order to be born into God’s family. In other words, the sinner now understands what he must do to be saved.

A pastor and I were out visiting one afternoon and entered the home of a man who was a first-time visitor from the previous Sunday. One of his friends was there, too. After some light talk I got on the subject of the need for Christ. When I asked the question, “If you should die right now, do you know for sure that you would go to heaven?” the friend answered, “I do not believe there is a hell.”

My first reaction was to prove to him there is a hell. But as I said earlier, I believe a clear presentation of the Gospel is the best way to convince and convict a lost sinner. So I simply smiled and said, “There are many people who feel the same way.” I then asked the question, “Could I take just a moment to show you how

you can know for sure you are going to heaven?”

Both men agreed and I went through a clear presentation of the Gospel using the Romans Road approach above. Several minutes later both men bowed their heads and received Christ. I can’t explain it other than to say I am continually amazed that the Gospel really is, “the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.”

I went out on visitation with the local church of which I am a member and I had the privilege of leading three people to the Lord. One young lady was raised a Baptist, baptized and a church member. She felt she had done enough, but still wasn’t sure of heaven. So I reviewed my Romans Road until she understood the real purpose of Calvary and the death of the Savior.

Again, watch out for that trap of answering questions that are unrelated to winning the lost soul for Christ. Your first and foremost task is to win someone to the Lord. Salvation precedes instructions in the things of God. Besides, the lost person must be saved before he can grow.

On route to a revival I was passed on the interstate by a motorcycle. But as soon as he was by me he flipped over several times in the highway! I stopped and was surprised that he

got up and brushed himself off with very little damage. After helping him pull the bike off the highway, I offered him a ride to the next town.

We exchanged some light talk and then I began to present the Gospel. He raised many objections and introduced subjects that could easily have diverted my attention away from the primary task. When I asked him if he was sure about heaven, he replied, “There is no heaven.”

“Then I’m sure that you don’t know that you are going to heaven when you die.”

When I asked him if I could take a moment and show him how he could know for sure, he said, “How are you going to show me how I can go to a place which I do not believe in?”

“Leave that to me.”

When I showed him he was a sinner, he replied, “Sin is a relative thing.”

“You may be a relative sinner but you still sinned against God. Sin has a price tag for eternity—hell.”

“I said I don’t believe in hell.”

I assured him that the instant he died hell would not change its temperature because of his lack of belief. He reconsidered his position and a few minutes later he was saved. He confessed at that point that he knew there was something to religion all the time.

My temptation in dealing with this young man was to prove heaven, hell, and so on. As it turned out, the redeeming work of Calvary answered all of

these objections and the young man made it public in a good fundamental church and was baptized the next week.

Toolbox

Repetition

How about a short tool for this lesson? When reading the Bible to someone, always read the verse twice. The first time he hears it, the second time he listens.

Lesson 14

Drawing the Net

Most of us drop the ball after step seven. Why? Because we show someone how to be saved but don’t extend an invitation!

It’s been said of preachers in the pulpit that a fair message with a great invitation is much more effective than a great message with a poor invitation. The same applies to soul winning. We are to lead people to Christ, not merely make a presentation and walk off.

In fact, the Bible instructs us to compel or persuade. This can never be done effectively without a good invitation. Granted, in some cases the sinner will not be ready to accept Christ, but since we can’t

know what's going on inside his heart, we should endeavor to draw the net and see if he is ready.

The term "drawing the net" is an old fisherman's term for landing the fish. By drawing the net I mean leading the person to Christ after showing him the Gospel. It is at this point that we understand our task and privilege of being a soul winner, and that we do actually lead others to Jesus. I am convinced that many precious souls could be won if only the personal worker would draw the net. In my early attempts at soul winning, I let so many prospects slip through because I did not know much about drawing the net.

Most Christians are fairly confident when it comes to bringing up the subject of salvation, but stop without actually giving the person the opportunity to receive Christ. There must be a time when faith reaches out and accepts the gift that was made available because of Calvary.

I received a letter from a man in southern Florida who said he won a few souls to the Lord but had a difficult time in bringing them to "a point of decision." Most people know how to get on the subject and how to show a person from the Bible what it means to be saved. Many don't know what to do to have the person receive Christ.

Frequently we present the Gospel and invite people to come to church and "give God a chance to save you." Or we ask them to think over what we presented to them but we don't encourage them to exercise their faith in the Lord. Instead, we offer a lame, "I hope you will receive Christ," and we walk

away hoping that someday he might be saved. Some dear Christians are so apprehensive that they sound negative, almost to the point of saying, "You really don't want to be saved, do you?"

No! The prospect needs to act upon that which he has learned. In other words, the soul winner must help the sinner to appropriate what Christ has done for him on the cross. Many people have not come to Christ because no one has led them.

Several weeks back I was on a plane traveling to another city to begin a crusade. I sat next to a young lady who was excited to be going home to see her parents. After I asked about church background and gave my testimony, I asked her if she was 100% sure she would go to heaven. She responded that she was not. I asked her if I could take a moment to show her how she could know for sure. She looked at me and said, "I already know."

I have received this answer many times and, to be honest, most people have no idea whatsoever of what is needed in order to be saved. So after persisting that I share some verses with her, she also continued to declare that she knew exactly what it meant to become a Christian.

Then I asked her if she could just take a moment and explain to me how a person can know for sure they are going to heaven. She said certainly and then proceeded to explain the Gospel as clearly as anyone I have ever heard! At the end I drew in the net. "That's wonderful. Now let's bow our heads together in prayer as I lead us." She nodded her acceptance, prayed, and accepted Jesus.

She looked at me with tears in her eyes and thanked me for helping her with this matter. She shared with me the number of sincere Christians who explained the Gospel many times. I couldn't help but leave that blessed experience wondering if she wouldn't have been saved sooner if some Christian who knew how to explain the Gospel had taken her a step further and led her to Christ. She needed to act upon her knowledge of the Scripture.

Step 8: Once you have shared the Gospel, have him bow his head while you pray. Ask for permission to pray and be sure to tell him that you will pray. Frequently my approach is, "As important as this is, John, let's bow our heads while I lead us in prayer." Let your prayer be simple. This is not the time to be praying around the world but to be asking the Lord to help the person right there receive Christ. Do not say amen.

While heads are still bowed, you are going to ask him to receive Christ. A good question to use is, "John, if the Lord will receive you right now just like you are (and He will) would you receive Him right now as your Savior?" You may have to look up briefly at this point because many times a person will nod rather than say yes. After he has indicated he will receive Christ say, "That's wonderful."

Step 9: Now with heads still bowed ask him to repeat aloud a phrase-by-phrase sinner's prayer to receive Christ as his Savior. Lead him slowly.

During a crusade meeting I went on my usual visitation with a local pastor. We came to the home of a man many in the community had been praying for. I had gone through my presentation and was exactly at this stage when he began to offer excuses as to why he hadn't been saved. I listened and then asked if we could bow our heads while I prayed. Another excuse. I asked again. Another excuse. I asked again. Finally he said, "You really want to pray, don't you?"

"Yes."

"Well, okay."

A few minutes later he received Christ and came to the service that night to make his faith public. I firmly believe that if I had responded to one of his excuses and had not persevered in getting his head bowed in prayer, I would not have won him to the Lord.

Step 10: After he has prayed and received Christ as Savior (heads still bowed), I seek a confirmation—for both our sakes. I might say, "I want to pretend there's no one here but you. Jesus is standing here, looking at you. He asks if you really meant it when you asked Him to save you. If so, then I want you to reach out and take my hand. Take my hand like you would His." What a joy it is at this point to grasp the hand of a determined person who had just received Christ!

Step 11: With his hand in yours, pray again thanking God for his salvation and that he has

received Christ. Now you can say amen and rejoice with him!

Two points need to be reaffirmed. One, always have them bow their heads. It's a position that shows reverence for God and it also serves as a shield against the outside world.

I was talking with a man who interrupted me (nicely) on every point in my presentation. He kept saying, "Here's what I think." I let him through the Romans Road and he continually said, "Yes, but..." Finally I asked if we could bow our heads and I lead in prayer. He was saved! Once our heads were bowed, he quit looking around, stopped talking, and just sat there waiting to be led to Christ!

The second point is closely related to the first: Remove distractions. Satan does not easily give up on the person to whom we are presenting. Sometimes he'll use a distraction as a tool to keep someone from listening to a clear Gospel presentation.

One way to remove distractions is to be aware of the task at the beginning and set the stage before you start. In 1 Samuel 9:27, Samuel wanted to anoint Saul as king over Israel but Saul's servant was present. Samuel said to Saul, "Bid the servant pass on before us, (and he passed on,) but stand thou still a while, that I may shew thee the word of God."

Other times bowing the head will suffice. I was leading a dear man to Christ in his home. There were small children, a television, pets—you know the story. It was so confusing I could hardly wait to get my invitation. So as I asked permission to pray I also

inquired if it would be okay to turn down the TV. "No problem," he replied.

"Could your wife babysit in the other room?"

"Sure." A few minutes later we had the room to ourselves and he received Christ.

Here are a couple more tips:

1. Watch where you are seated in relation to others as you enter their home. It's best to choose a seat across from the ones to whom you will present the Gospel. How many times do we find ourselves trying to lead folks to Christ with someone on one side or the other or even behind us? It leaves us with a lack of self-confidence and not knowing whether the person is paying attention. Sit to maintain eye contact. Also, choose a seat away from the television or a similar distraction.
2. Visit with a trained second person who is ready to deal with any distraction. It's never a question of, "Will there be one?" but, "When will there be one?" It may be a phone, person, pet, child, or tea kettle but your partner should be ready and knowledgeable to handle these while you are free to give a clear presentation of the Gospel.

I entered the home of a family that had visited our church on a Sunday and saw what looked like the father's seat. I was offered it, but asked if the man of the house normally sat there. A teen said yes and that he'd be home in 15 minutes.

I said to save the seat for him. I chose a dining room chair and moved it to the family room where I could sit across from everyone, including the father's chair. When he did arrive he sat in his favorite spot. Because I waited I wasn't distracted when he arrived and the entire household was ready for me to present the Gospel. A few minutes later mom, dad, and two teenage boys accepted Christ.

Toolbox

Isolation

Part of wisdom is being sensitive to the feelings of others when they are around friends and family. Anyone who has witnessed to many people has had the occasion to see a prospect become shy, embarrassed, or even angered because of the pressure of others.

Use the first few minutes of your visit to determine if you should separate the prospect from the spouse or others. If you don't many times he won't listen. Worse, he could rebel or become argumentative because of the presence of others.

There are many acceptable ways to overcome this. Ask your partner to visit with others while you slip into the kitchen "to discuss something privately with him." You might ask him to show you something interesting in the garage and there present Christ. Or you might have to visit with him on the porch.

Once a dear lady asked me to visit her unsaved husband and try to lead him to Christ. I normally visit with someone else but this time I went alone. As soon as we sat down she began to harp, "I want you to listen to Pastor Wood. Preacher, Bill is a good man but he needs to get right wit God." As I shared some biblical truths, she'd add, "Bill I have been telling you that." And so on.

She meant well, but I couldn't deal with him in her presence. In a minute I turned to him and said, "Let's slip into the other room. There's something I'd like to talk with you about privately." The wife left us alone and in a few minutes he accepted Christ. I don't believe he would have been saved if we had stayed in the original room.

Chapter 4

**Keeping What
You Catch**

I was preaching during a Sunday morning rally when a middle-aged man walked into the revival meeting—uninvited and unaccompanied. At the conclusion of the service he and others came forward to receive Christ and were greeted by church staff members. As is my habit I like to chat with as many new believers as possible and made a mental note to seek him out. When I spied him a short distance away I could tell right away something was wrong. I took him aside and spent about 10 minutes with him. When I left his side he was glowing! That night he came back and was baptized. He attended every service of that crusade, growing by leaps and bounds.

What was wrong with him? Something that a less experienced soul winner wouldn't catch and something that can be the hardest thing for a new convert to gain. The man was genuine in his

profession of faith but he had no assurance of salvation. He hadn't been grounded.

You've probably heard the term "being grounded" in electricity. When something is grounded it makes an electrical connection to the earth and avoids danger. The same is true spiritually. I am convinced that many new babes in Christ flounder in their growth because they have not been grounded immediately after their conversion.

There is an interesting encounter in Acts 19 that has invited much theological speculation. But that aside, there is a fundamental truth at work. In Ephesus, Paul came across some "believers" who never made it past the ministry of John the Baptist. Their faith was incomplete in that they had turned from their sins but not toward Jesus. Paul set matters straight and the people were gloriously saved, but I've often wondered how long they languished because no one had grounded them in the faith.

Spiritual grounding involves three principles: giving assurance of salvation, encouraging a public profession of faith, and training the convert to witness to others. If we pursue these goals, John 15:16 teaches that God is not only glorified because we bear fruit (win souls) but also because our fruit "remains." That's an interesting word. It literally means "ripen." In other words, God wants us to win people to Christ and then make sure they mature into the men and women He intended them to be.

That's why an experienced soul winner is also an expert fisherman. He knows how, when, and where to fish, and which kind of bait works under what kind

of conditions. He doesn't go to all that trouble just to throw the fish back in the water. He keeps what he catches—it's the whole reason he's in business!

Lesson 15

Blessed Assurance

Every soul winner wants to see his converts grow immediately in grace. That's why one of the toughest moments is when the new believer trips at the starting gate. Sometimes they pray the sinner's prayer, look up with a smile, and say, "I think I'm saved." Other times they wear a frown and say, "I'm not really sure." There will also be occasions when a convert comes to you two days later and shares his frustration over something that happened—possibly a sin he committed. He is down-hearted and mumbles, "I guess I didn't mean business the other night."

Has the person lost his salvation? Of course not! Salvation is based on the Word of God, not emotions or conditions. Remember that the harvest is the Lord's and He can keep that which He saves. Always leave the results with God.

Then did you press him too much in your approach? Should you slack off in your witnessing? No, and you know by now that just as salvation is not based on feelings, neither is soul winning; it's an obedience to a command. I know of very few more effective tools employed by Satan that will discourage laymen, preachers, and even churches at

this juncture. Never let the devil stop you from this wonderful ministry because of a discouragement.

But what could have happened? Any number of things, and all of them out of your control. Any new believer will eventually sin, maybe in an area he's already been fighting. When it happens he may question his experience.

Remember, too, that every convert brings personal problems to his new Christian life—husband, wife, children, parents, job, finances, etc. As soon as they are saved their growth may become hindered because attention is pulled away from their new commitment to Christ and they try somehow to fit it all together.

Another factor is that many of these people don't have solid church backgrounds, no doctrinal experience, and no practical training in how to live the Christian life.

So how do we meet this challenge? The best way to help is to give the new believer assurance right away. Instant assurance of salvation. It's one thing to disciple a convert in the great truths of the Word and see him grow. It's another for that convert to know for sure that he is saved even 15 minutes after he has accepted Christ.

One of the great words in the Bible is "know." There is an emphasis about the definite things God wants us to know. There can be no security or confidence in the Christian life and certainly no growth and development without a basic and firm knowledge of one's personal salvation. The wonderful little epistle of 1John is loaded with the

word "know." God really wants a convert to know he is going to heaven when he dies.

I remind church workers that personal salvation is not a growth process. It's an instantaneous miraculous act of God which occurs the moment one places faith in the crucified Savior. So it is with assurance. A new believer must come to an instant understanding of the fact that he can know for sure that he is a member of the family of God. It's that important.

I remember not too long ago I led a husband and wife to the Lord. While overjoyed with their new faith, they indicated they had to keep a previously made appointment. Knowing the importance of giving assurance of salvation, I asked if I could have just a few more minutes. I convinced them I had something very important that I needed to share from the Bible. They paused, telephoned, and rescheduled their meeting because I placed such importance on grounding them in the faith. The next evening they came to church, made a public profession, and eventually were baptized. I am convinced it was because they immediately gained assurance of salvation.

In keeping with our previous lessons, allow me to call this:

Step 12: Give him assurance of salvation so he will gain the confidence he needs to become a mature and successful Christian. As soon as he accepts Christ I ask, "Are you good at memorizing?"

"Not too good," is the usual reply.

I take a tract from my pocket and say, “I’m going to ask you to memorize just one verse: Romans 10:13. ‘For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” I circle it on the tract, hand it to him, and quote it again while he looks at it. Then I add, “Let’s imagine we’re in Sunday school. What does the word ‘whosoever’ mean?”

“I guess everyone,” he usually replies.

Do not go any further until you’re sure he understands that “whosoever” means just that: anyone—him, you, everyone. Point out that he just called upon the name of the Lord and so it applies to him.

“Did you mean your prayer?” I continue.

“Yes.”

“Look at the verse again. Does the Bible say ‘might’ be saved?”

“No, it says ‘shall.’”

“That’s right. The operative word is ‘shall.’” Then I help him to see that this verse is a know-so promise directly from God, not from the church or the preacher. “What did God say He would definitely do for the one who called upon Him?”

“That He would save him.”

“All right, according to the Bible are you a saved man or a lost man?”

“Saved.”

“That’s right. And where does the Bible say saved people go when they die?”

“To heaven,” he says with joy.

“That’s right. So according to the Bible if you died right now where would you go?”

“To heaven.” Many times there’s a big smile and more than a few tears as you see assurance begin to come into his eyes and face.

I then ask, “Why?”

“Because I’ve been saved.”

I then conclude by helping him understand that everyone, including myself, has been saved by doing what God’s Word tells us to do. He can then begin to grow in the tremendous joy we have in the Savior.

I led an elderly lady to the Lord who told me at the beginning of our conversation that she went to bed every night afraid of dying and going to hell. After she accepted Christ I gave her assurance of salvation. I’ll never forget the expression of joy that came across her face as she gained the peace of knowing that heaven was her home forever. The next night after the revival service she came to me and said, “I laid down last night for the first time thanked God that I wasn’t afraid to go to sleep.”

A related area you’ll need to address is the concern of “What happens when I sin?” and how that weakness still does not negate assurance. Unfortunately, this area waylays many new Christians because too often a soul winner failed to recognize its importance. We see a person saved on Tuesday night and extract a commitment to attend church the coming Sunday. But he’s a no-show. Why? Because many times something happened to him in those five days and he questioned his sincerity or even his salvation. We simply can’t expect a new Christian to deal with the sin issue ungrounded.

Sometimes I begin with the question, “Do you think you will ever sin again?” Surprisingly, the occasional new Christian will say no—a mindset that indicates why a fair number of converts do stumble shortly after their profession and why the need grounding! But usually I get the response, “Yeah, I guess I will.”

Normally I share from 1 John 1:8 and 10: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.... If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.”

They begin to see that everyone is going to sin and that the only perfect person who ever walked the earth is the Lord Jesus Christ. So I teach them several things in order:

Anyone who claims to be saved and says he never sins deceives himself (8), lacks the truth (8), calls God a liar (10), and lacks God’s Word (10).

I follow up with 2:1 and show him that saved people will sin even if it’s not God’s will that we do. Moreover, before we were saved Jesus was our judge; now he is our advocate (lawyer) and He’s never lost a case!

When you sin, immediately confess it. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1:9). I particularly emphasize God’s “family forgiveness” and cleansing.

As an aside, many times Roman Catholics who come to Christ have a special joy as they realize that confession is not continually made for salvation but

rather it’s the privilege of the child of God to keep his account clean for the Savior.

Once I led a very religious lady to the Lord, but even after her profession she remained cold and negative. I continued with the principle of assurance; she acknowledged the biblical truth, but still displayed no joy. Then I taught her what to do when she sins. There was a sudden change in her countenance, joy flooded her soul, and she wept, “Now I see it! Now I see it! Jesus has forgiven all my sins! I’m in the family!”

Toolbox

Duct tape

From my experiences as an amateur handyman, I can testify to the life-saving characteristics and the multitude of uses for a simple roll of duct tape. It seems to be able to fix anything I un-fix! Spiritually speaking, a soul winner’s toolbox should have duct tape—something that helps the believer stick with the faith. I suggest following five simple rules as you lead the convert through the area of assurance:

- * Dispense with negative thoughts or expressions—yours or his.
- * Believe that what you are doing and saying is right.
- * Use enough time. There's never a hurry when eternity is at stake.
- * Show the importance of everything you say by referring to the Bible.
- * Explain everything thoroughly. It avoids so much anguish down the road.

Lesson 16

What Happened to the Sawdust?

As I criss-cross the country I try to ask each pastor that I meet, “What is your greatest problem after soul winning?” It's interesting to note that 90% of them say: getting people in church and down the aisle once you've won them to Christ.

One church that uses our ministry's trainer-trainee soul winning program (*Operation Go*) has won 1,600 to Christ with 644 walking the aisle to make it public—or about 39%. (That's pretty similar to my personal figures. I've seen about 40% of those I have won to the Lord walk the aisle and make it public.)

Of those 644 who made it public, 466 followed the Lord in baptism—about 72%.

The Bible promises to the soul winner who sows the precious seed with a broken heart that he will return from his labor rejoicing and bringing his sheaves with him (Psalm 126:6). So it's only natural that we should expect to see our converts make their profession of faith public in a regular service, follow the Lord in baptism, and grow in grace.

In Acts 4:27, the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Soul winning in the New Testament is not just a matter of going out and getting people to accept Christ. The people who were won were expected to come to church and be added to fellowship of that church.

In Matthew 28:18, part of the Great Commission of our Lord is to see people baptized once they are saved. In other words, it is not only right but extremely biblical that a soul winner have the attitude that his converts come to church, make a public profession, and follow with believers' baptism.

So why aren't they coming?

Proverbs 23:7 demonstrates the importance of a biblical attitude: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” No one will ever accomplish something that he doesn't believe in his heart. I've heard it said, “What you are speaks so loud I can't hear what you say.” In other words, an outward profession without an inward possession is absolutely empty. This is equally true in the area of personal soul winning.

Unfortunately, many Christians tend to exhibit this new type of spiritual body language. If we don't

believe it's right for the convert to come to church, walk the aisle, and follow the Lord in baptism, then we'll never communicate it to him regardless of what our words say.

It's much like the person who is absolutely frightened of a dog or a horse. He doesn't have to speak their language because the animal picks it up through the unspoken body language of feeling. So it is in dealing with a convert. You must be thoroughly convinced that he walk the aisle, make a public profession of faith, be baptized, and then begin to grow into a proficient soul winner. So our final step becomes:

Step 13: Lead him to make a public profession of his faith in the church house.

If our soul winning is so flippant that we have no desire to see people do anything past a personal acceptance of Christ, then we will not have many people come to church. On the other hand, if we have a consuming conviction that a convert needs more, as much as our children need the safety of our home, then the percentage of those who come to church will grow dramatically.

Several years ago I had the privilege of leading a man to Christ and I followed up about the necessity of making a public profession of his faith in the local church. After a few minutes he made this statement: "If you think it's that important, then I'll do it." I've never been able to get away from that response. My first reaction was that he ought to do it for the Lord, but then I began to understand as a soul winner I was

a representative of the Lord and responsible to help that man know what God wanted of him. The fellow was baptized and began to grow in a good soul winning church.

Because a new believer usually will not make a public profession unless he has been given careful instruction, let me ask you this: Do you believe step 13 is right? Does he need to become a member of a good Bible-believing church? If your answer is weak or you don't feel step 13 is as important as the other 12, then you'll never see good results in this area.

But if you do believe this final step is critical and you want to get converts down the aisle, there are several methods at your disposal.

- * Have him promise God he will make a public profession. Explain to him what that means, and that he can do it at the next service. If he understands that his commitment is to the Lord and not to you, it adds strength and purpose.
- * Call him on Saturday and see how he's doing. You'll develop a friendship and be able to help him if he has a problem. Maybe drop by and see him.
- * Pick him up Sunday morning—make sure you've discussed this with him! Say you'll introduce him to others at church and that you'll show him where his Sunday school class is. If he has a family you'll help each one know where to go. This strengthens the commitment. It also shows

that you care for him. (I've even had those won by me come by and pick me up!)

- * Sit by him in the service. If this is not possible because of your function in the service, then have another soul winner sit with him, preferably someone who understands he's just been saved and is there to make a public profession.
- * Walk the aisle with him during the invitation. Turn to him and tell him this is the time to make his decision public.

A final thought: Sometimes the convert doesn't make it to church. Don't give up on him. Just go by during the week and re-invite him. Many times the second effort is all it takes.

When I was still in the pastorate I led a man to the Lord and his promise to come on Sunday was quick and firm. In fact, on Friday he called to ask if he could drive his car.

"Why?" I hesitated.

"I've just led a friend of mine to Christ and I'm going to pick him up, too."

I thought about it for a moment and then asked him to come by and pick me up after his friend. I explained that I wanted to meet this person. My fears were unfounded. On Sunday both came and were excited about the Lord. It was clear that eh friend had been saved, too. Both sat by one of our soul winners and walked the aisle.

When I first began to win souls I spent the bulk of my time on steps 1-11. The result was that only a few of my converts were walking the aisle. Now having worked at soul winning for a number of years I spend as much time on steps 12 and 13 as I do on 1-11. The results? The number of my converts in church has risen sharply.

Step 13 has a corollary—one that's also loaded with challenges. How do you get the person baptized? I've been approached many times by people seeking help in this area.

First, let's establish the fact that it is the biblical thing to do. Baptism is not an extra, it's a critical part of soul winning and of the local church. The believer is baptized into the fellowship of a New Testament, Bible-believing congregation. We haven't completed our job until we see a person saved, baptized, and taught.

The central question is, When do you push for a commitment? I see two acceptable times to lead a person to an understanding of baptism: in the home after you have won him to Christ and at the church alter after a public profession of faith.

Of course, like any area in soul winning, you must have a plan. Without one, confusion reigns and your best never surfaces. So be ready to choose a path as soon as the person is saved because his spiritual growth is your major concern. But also trust that the Lord will give you wisdom.

I believe the key word is "appropriate." If the person comes from an entirely different background it may be appropriate to give him assurance of

salvation and only push for a public profession at the next service. Once at the alter, church workers can tactfully discuss baptism. But if he asks a question on baptism after you have won him and seems open to it right there, don't hesitate.

When I led a salesman from a trucking firm to the Lord I mentioned the importance of making it public. He seemed hesitant and then added, "I don't want to join the church now." I nodded and realized it wasn't a good time to mention baptism.

He came the following Sunday, though, walked the aisle, and spoke with a worker. The staff member was alert and scribbled on the decision slip that the man had serious questions about being baptized.

I returned to his home the following week and answered every one of his questions. Satisfied, he not only consented to baptism but also expressed a burden to see his family saved. I encourage him to invite all of them to see his baptism. He followed through and seven were saved within two weeks because of his faithfulness in believers' baptism.

Toolbox

Follow-Through

Yes, it's a strange tool, but it's the one that has worked for me time and again in the area of public profession. At a crusade meeting I met a dear lady whom I had not seen in seven years. After the service we fellowshiped and I found out she was the principal of a growing Christian school. She

introduced two of her children with the explanation, "If it were not for this man, Mother would not be serving God today." I was humbled but could not help but praise God in my spirit by saying it was worth it.

What was worth it? Following through. If you win someone out of town as I frequently do, get their name, address, and phone number and write a letter of encouragement. Give their name to a pastor of a good Bible-believing church in their area (Let them know what you've done). Send a follow up booklet and have them write to you and share what's going on in their lives.

A man I couldn't place came up to me after a crusade. "Do you remember me? You won me to the Lord on the display floor of a Chrysler dealership eight years ago." He shared how I recommended a church and sent him follow-up material. He went to that church, was baptized, joined it, and was now winning others!

Imagine if a couple brought a baby into the world and then disregarded it. The same is true with us. God will bless you if you unselfishly take care of His family.

Lesson 17

Don't Add, Multiply

Many years ago my family and I were invited to Sunday lunch with one of the church deacons. After a delicious meal we were fellowshiping in the living

room when a teenage boy dropped by to visit with one of the deacon's children. We met and after a few moments of light conversation I began to present Christ. He listened attentively, God prepared his heart, and he was gloriously saved. I grounded him in his new faith and He promised to come to church that evening and make his salvation public. I was excited.

Evening came, but no teenage boy. I was disappointed. My thoughts were just like yours have been many times. Did he mean it? Was he sincere? Maybe I should stop dealing with people on the spot. And on and on. Worse, all attempts to follow up this young man produced the same results—nothing.

Now I had been here before. Through the years I'd seen many examples of those who accepted Christ and then from all immediate outward appearance it seemed they were not sincere. I also reminded myself that months or years later in entirely different circumstances I just might find that person growing in grace. Finally, I chided myself that only eternity will reveal fully the influence we have on others.

In this case I didn't have to wait that long. Several years later while preaching a revival meeting in Chattanooga I was invited to speak in chapel at Tennessee Temple University. After the service a young man walked up to me and asked that same old embarrassing question, "Dr. Wood, do you remember me?"

I didn't. He said his name and I still didn't! Then he told me his story. "You met me at Mr. Ezell's house. You led me to Christ. My dad would not let

me attend your church. I began to read my Bible and grow. After high school, I enrolled here. God has called me to preach. I'm going to lead others to Christ.

I nearly shouted! Not only for the way his life turned out but because one of the greatest joys of personal soul winning is multiplication—training someone else to win their friends and loved ones to Christ. If I spend my entire life winning people to Christ as often as possible, when my life is over I'll have the total results of my efforts. But if I spend my life winning people and training them to win their friends and loved ones to Christ, when my life is over I'll have multiplied myself many times over through the efforts and labors of others.

This doesn't mean to stop personal soul winning and give all your efforts to training others. It does mean to follow the clear biblical procedures of the Great Commission or of 2Timothy 2:2. In fact, I'm frequently asked, "What manual can I buy that outlines a good approach for the local church to use in soul winning and reaching its city for Christ?" I say it would be difficult to improve on the Book of Acts.

Which brings me to another popular question. "Dr. Wood, do you think something is missing in today's soul winning approaches?"

"Yes, about one-third of the Bible!" I explain that as Christians we're working to win souls and striving to see them baptized, but then we let the procedure stop. We've left out the third step in the Great Commission about making disciples of all

nations. If we adhered to that biblical principle, we'd see a Book of Acts revival sweep across the nation.

Our Grand Rapids, Michigan church was blessed with several thousand converts in a few years. One was a dear man I had let to the Lord five or six years earlier. "Dr. Wood, I'd like you to meet two of your grandchildren." This declaration brought a smile to my face, since my dear wife and I had just become grandparents for the first time. The man introduced two friends he had just won to Christ. It was the New Testament in practice!

How can we incorporate this spirit today to keep our soul winning ministry from leveling out or even tapering off? Simple. Train you convert to win other converts. I recommend a two-step plan.

Throughout these chapters, I have urged Christians to go soul winning two-by-two. And one of the reasons is because you can take someone with you whom you can develop into a proficient soul winner. In other words, multiply yourself through the lives of others.

Lead a less experienced Christians into making a definite commitment to be taught soul winning. Then teach him your workable plan. Write it in his Bible so he can follow easily. Take him with you on visitation and let him watch. Let him know your objectives and explain what you did in certain situations. In a few short weeks you'll have reproduced yourself and you'll begin to experience one of the greatest joys in soul winning.

Suppose every church planned to have soul winners spend the necessary time with other

Christians both on the field and in personal instruction. Within a couple of years each congregation could have 40 to 50 (or more) proficient soul winners out on the field every week winning even more to the Lord. Our alters would be active and our baptismal waters stirred!

Once I led a man to Christ and spent about 30 minutes with him, grounding him in assurance. He went home, took his Bible and explained matters to his wife. Later that night he called his pastor and said, "I just saved my wife." We know what he meant and we rejoiced that before he even made a public profession he was busy winning others!

Let your trainee witness to people and support him as he wins his first soul.

In the mid-'70s I led a man to Christ who came to church the following Sunday and was baptized. I asked him if he'd like to go soul winning with me and let me train him. He was thrilled and for the next several weeks we visited together. I gave him a couple verses to memorize, taught him our 13-point plan, let him see me get into a home, watched me present the Gospel, and saw many come to Christ.

After about five weeks I told him it was his turn. On our first visit he presented the Gospel to a 16-year-old. She was very broken and willingly accepted Jesus. I'll never forget the joy my trainee experienced in winning his first convert. Today this man owns a successful business, regularly wins others to the Lord, and teaches an adult Sunday school class in a growing church. He has also trained

a host of others to go out and win their friends in the same manner.

Sometimes your trainee will hit a snag. One of my partners had a small problem: Every time I asked him to lead, he'd back out. He'd go in determined, but a few minutes later he'd turn and say in front of the family, "Pastor, you do the talking tonight."

Finally, I hit on an idea. We went visiting and I never asked him to be prepared. We entered the house of a family that had visited the previous Sunday. Unfortunately only the man was home, the rest were out shopping. After some conversation I asked him if he should die did he have assurance of heaven. "No," he replied, and added, "I couldn't even answer that question in church last Sunday."

Immediately, I sprung my trap. "If Dave (my partner) could take his Bible and show you, would that be okay?" Poor Dave had no choice this time, but he ended up leading his first soul to the Lord! In fact, Dave was now enthusiastic. He picked the man up the next Sunday, sat by him, and walked with him down the aisle. Later, one of the first people Dave trained in soul winning was that man.

Usually my trainees "fly solo" after five weeks or so. By that I mean they're ready to take the lead and win their first soul to the Lord while I play the second man. But it doesn't always happen that way.

I had a partner who after eight weeks hadn't yet led someone to the Lord. He was anxious and fretting despite my efforts to reassure him that it's God's timetable and He'd reward all efforts. On week nine we went out for three hours. He was

driving and suddenly pulled into a gas station. "Preacher, I know you train us to get our gas in advance so as not to waste time, but I'm nearly out!"

"That's okay," I soothed.

The attendant came and asked if he could be of help. "We need gas to go help people find the answer to the most important Bible question they will ever ask!" blurted out my trainee.

The attendant asked, "And what question is that?"

Without hesitation my trainee said, "That if they should die tonight, would they have assurance of heaven?"

"That's a good question."

The young man got out of the car, New Testament in hand, and led the man to the Lord! Then he said, "You're the first one I ever won!" He then proceeded to introduce his convert to everyone within range, including me! As we drove away, he calmed down only slightly and said, "That's not exactly how you taught me, but it got the job done." By the way, the attendant came to church on Sunday and made it public.

Let's pause to re-emphasize how to revolutionize soul winning in your life. First, if you have never won anyone to the Lord, seek out a soul winning partner who is experienced. Ask him to invest some time in you, and then as soon as possible win your first soul and stick with your plan. Second, if you're already an experienced soul winner, seek out

someone who isn't and tutor him so he can be like you. Believe me, it will change his life and yours forever.

Toolbox

Compounding Interest

Let's say you're an experienced soul winner who could win 1,000 souls to the Lord every hour around the clock. That's 24,000 new believers a day for the rest of your life. It would become increasingly possible for you to win the world.

But, you protest, you can't win 1,000 souls per hour. However, what would happen if you took a new believer, disciple him for an entire year, and then each of you went out and won another person and disciple them for a year, and so on? In less than 40 years you'd win the entire world!

You've heard of compounding interest, whether in credit cards or mortgages. It can work for good, too.

Chapter 5

Public Square Soul Winning

When the woman at the well forsook her waterpot to tell others of Jesus, our Lord instructed His disciples to look at the surrounding fields. They were white for harvest, abounding with opportunities.

In reality the 12 didn't have to look any further than each other. Like the recently departed woman, they were going about their daily routine when they encountered the Lord. Simon and Andrew were casting a net into the sea (Andrew had also been a student under John the Baptist). James and John were mending their nets. Matthew was at his desk. Nathaniel was brooding under a tree.

Later, Nicodemus was in the shadows. The thief was on a cross. Paul was on a highway. The Ethiopian was in a chariot. The Philippian jailer was in his innermost cell contemplating suicide.

The point is that unbelievers can embrace the Gospel presentation at any point in their lives—anytime, anywhere. And, truthfully, in all the people I've ever witnessed to, I've never encountered a circumstance that was not interesting. This should encourage all of us as soul winners.

That's why Chapter 5 is a one-time departure from our established format. My intention is to follow up on our exciting lessons in the first four chapters by sharing, from my own experiences, real-life conversions in usual and not-so-usual situations.

Each person you'll meet over the next few pages is real. And each was doing something else when he or she met the Savior. I call it public-square soul winning and it can happen with you.

She was studying for the pastorate

I was boarded a plane early one morning for Kansas City to begin a crusade. The weather was just overcast enough to delay the plane's departure, so I took out my Bible and began to work on a message. One of the flight attendants came by and said, "That's an interesting book you're reading."

I smiled and said, "Yes, it is. Do you study it much?"

I must admit her answer caught me off guard. "Yes, in fact, I'm presently in school studying to become a Lutheran pastor."

I knew I had a few minutes to witness while the plane was delayed so I tried to get the subject on salvation. "I'll never forget some of the great times I had in Bible College." Without hesitating I

continued, "I accepted Christ as my Savior at 19 and went right off to Bible College. Tell me, how old were you when you were saved?"

She proceeded to give responses that I've heard many times before. 'Her church did not use terms like that.' 'She was always a Christian.' 'She was growing into her salvation.' And so on.

I smiled and nodded, realizing the importance of staying on track. There were so many things she said that were foreign to the Bible. How easy it would have been to challenge her on each point with the Scriptures. But I knew my first task was to win her to Christ.

Then she said something I had never heard before. "My latest step into God's grace of salvation was when I answered the call to preach."

How confusing and spiritually blind people can be when there has been no clear teaching and preaching of the precious Word of God. Boy did I want to challenge that statement! However, I waited until she had finished and began my plan. I didn't need to ask her church background. "Let me tell you how I came to Christ." She was interested and listened attentively. After I gave my testimony I asked very kindly, "If you were to die right now, are you absolutely sure you would go to heaven?"

Again she said her church did not approach salvation that way, and again I knew I had to stay on track. "Let's forget church for a moment—Baptist and Lutheran. Could I take a few moments and share with you some of the Bible verses that helped me know for sure I was going to heaven?"

“Okay.”

I began my plan simply and directly as if I was with a person who was lost. I emphasized over and over that salvation is instantaneous, it's not an installment plan of a few good works and deeds. Then I asked if we could bow our heads in a brief word of prayer, we did and in a few minutes she accepted Christ.

“This puts my study for the pastorate in a new light,” she said.

“Yes, you need to make the Bible your guide in how to serve God as well as how to know Him.”

What joy it was to ground her and refer her to a good pastor in the area who would help her grow and understand the teaching of the Bible.

She, too, was on a plane

It was a beautiful Saturday in July and I was catching a flight from Chattanooga to Greensboro to begin a crusade. After I transferred planes in Charlotte I opened my briefcase and began perusing items that needed special attention. I had quite a bit of work to do that day and to be honest I was quiet preoccupied with my own affairs.

How preoccupied? I never noticed the young lady next to me until she got my attention by commenting on a document in my briefcase. While answering her question about that item I couldn't help but notice her interest in my Bible. “You must have an interest in spiritual things.”

She smiled slightly and nodded. Then I asked her the first question in my plan. “What is your church background?”

She said she attended an AME church in Greensboro when she was in town. She was a flight attendant on leave and returning home after two days of work. I gave my testimony and asked if she should die, would she be certain of heaven? She said she believed in God and certainly hoped that settled the issue.

“Could I take just a moment to show you how you can know for sure?”

She was very happy for me to do so and within a few minutes she accepted Christ.

It was a short flight and I had several things that demanded my attention. I almost stopped short of dealing with the last two steps—giving assurance and encouraging a public profession. I decided her spiritual growth and my obedience to the Great Commission were more important than work so I spent several more minutes covering those points. She was thrilled, and since the church I was to preach at the next day was 30 miles from Greensboro I encouraged her to make her faith public in the church she normally attended. She promised to do so. Within a few minutes our flight landed and we parted company.

The following day saw a tremendous opening rally at the church. After the morning service the pastor, his wife, and I drove to Greensboro to eat lunch. There I felt a tap on my shoulder and was surprised to see the young lady from the day before

beaming from ear to ear. She was dressed in her “Sunday-go-to-meeting” clothes and wanted me to meet some of her friends. I did so and had the delightful experience of hearing her share her faith with the friends who had just seen her make a public profession of Christ in their church.

I came away from lunch convinced more than ever of the importance of following up on our converts correctly.

He was long distance

In between flights at Detroit’s airport I picked up the phone and called a former business acquaintance in Grand Rapids. His secretary answered, then he got on the line and for several minutes we renewed acquaintances.

After some time of saying hello and how long it had been, I told him he had been on my heart the evening before and that I prayed for him. I then asked for about 15 minutes of his time, saying it was an extremely important matter but that if he didn’t have the time now I would call back later. He assured me that if it was that important to me, he certainly could find the time to talk now.

I opened my Bible there in the corridor of the airport and began to share the Gospel. I could tell he was responding in a positive way and eventually led him to the Lord. I couldn’t help but think that this was the very best use of AT&T! After giving him assurance of salvation and grounding him in his new-found faith, I caught my next flight.

In most of our crusades I dedicate one service to the importance of Christians being broken over the lost—seeing their friends, relatives, neighbors, and others receive Christ. I always encourage them to make a list of the people God has laid upon their hearts. In fact, I normally take three or four minutes at the end of a service so they can write down these names. I have always found this to be an extremely profitable time.

But it can’t stop there. In the weeks and months after the crusade these people must work on bringing those names to Christ. This businessman had been on my list and in his case the distance factor was negated by a simple phone call.

Which brings up a related point. Occasionally I run across a salvation testimony that is both amusing and yet instructional. A lady going through our *Operation Go* program went home from training session and asked her husband if she could practice her soul winning plan on him. He was glad to help and become a “prospect.”

The next day he was at work, talking with one of his branch offices in Richmond. He knew the secretary there fairly well and it was very natural for her to comment during the conversation, “There’s just something missing from my life.”

“I know what it is,” he replied. “You need Jesus Christ in your life. Let me tell you how you can receive Him.” He remembered his wife dealing with him the day before and began at step one. However, all he could recall were the first three steps! He said he would call her back in the morning. He went

home and wrote out all 13 steps and practiced them. The next day he called the secretary again and led her to Christ over the phone! That Sunday she attended a good Bible preaching church in Richmond and went forward at the end of the service.

He was at the laundromat

Even an evangelist has to wash his clothes at least once a week! So during a six-day crusade in Ohio I decided on a Tuesday to make that weekly trip to a laundromat.

Normally I leave the clothes in the washer or dryer and come back when they're finished, but on this day I decided to catch up on my reading. I had just begun when a young man came in and started several loads of clothes. I immediately had a desire to win him to Christ, but wasn't sure how to get started. My habit is to use the same plan with just a few variations, but I always try to find a common ground. Then I thought, "What would be more natural than to ask the location of a dry cleaner?" I approached and asked, "Do you live in the area?"

"Yes."

I told him I was from out of town and needed the location of the nearest dry cleaner. He gave me clear directions, but I still asked many questions about the streets as we progressed. (I have found this an excellent way to "break the ice" with a person.)

I then brought up the meeting I was conducting and invited him to church. He began to tell me about the church where he was a member and I commented

on how good it was to go to church. Next I inquired about his church background.

"Baptist," he replied. I followed with my testimony and stayed on the plan. In a few moments he bowed his head and received Christ. Since both of us had plenty of time before our clothes were ready I had a great opportunity to ground him and give him assurance of salvation.

The encounter with this fellow reinforced my belief that Christians miss out on many opportunities to win people to Christ in public and unusual places. By the way, I really did need directions to a dry cleaner!

She was a guest

How many times have you gone to visit a prospect only to find there are guests in the home? Sometimes they are family members from out of state or just friends over for the evening. It has the potential to be an awkward, even tense, situation, because of our lack of preparation we leave the home prematurely and miss a wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel.

Remember: There are no accidents with God. Those people are important—both hosts and guests. If that moment doesn't suit—if they are in the middle of a meal, for instance—excuse yourself and make an appointment to come back later. Many times the guests are simply visiting and within moments an experienced soul winner will not only fit in but will also turn the conversation toward spiritual matters.

And he or she will do so without embarrassing anyone.

While conducting a crusade at a great church in Massachusetts, the pastor and I spend a Saturday soul winning. He asked if he could visit a home where he had personally won the wife and children but where the husband still needed salvation.

When we arrived we were immediately invited in, but we missed the husband by 30 minutes. However, the wife had a friend from northern Maine who was visiting with her two teens. It was a hot afternoon and we sat around a table drinking tea and talking about church, what God had done in our lives, and other items of spiritual interest.

I turned to the visiting lady and asked what church she was brought up in. She was raised a Catholic but had joined a Pentecostal church. Her reason? She lost her confidence in the Catholic church and the priesthood in general.

“Let me take a minute and share with you what happened in my life,” I said, and followed with my testimony and my basic question about heaven. She said she didn’t know for sure, and as we talked more, she prayed and all three came to the Lord. The lady of the house was in tears, rejoicing over the salvation of her friends and telling us she had been praying for them for years.

On what normally would have been a visit where another soul winner would have excused himself because someone was visiting, we had the opportunity to win three souls. Visiting in the home of a prospect where guests are already present gives

you a wonderful opportunity to present the Gospel to several people at once. This not only multiplies the opportunity of presenting Gospel but also increases the possibility of winning more to the Lord. And you never know if those people would ever hear the Gospel again.

He was waiting for a feeling

How many times have you heard this response from a prospect? “I know I need to be saved, but I don’t have the feeling.”

When I instruct soul winners, I try to ingrain four basic concepts about emotions.

1. Understand that feelings always follow actions. Regardless of what an action may be, the accompanying feeling always succeeds it and never precedes it. When we admit we should be doing something that’s been neglected, and then take action on it, there is always a good feeling that follows. But we act first.
2. Each person’s feelings will vary on the same action. And because no two individuals may have the same feelings, it’s unwise to expect a certain emotion. We should simply want to do the right thing (become saved) regardless of what emotion we experience.
3. It’s important to note that one’s anticipation of an event is frequently greater than the actual emotional experience. Perhaps your last

vacation was well-anticipated but didn't quite live up to those expectations. The prospect who delays salvation in anticipation of a feeling—possibly because of someone else's experience—has already exaggerated the genuine emotions and put off the critical decision.

4. The most important thing in life is to do right and not look for a feeling that may or may not follow. The motivation for life should never be built around the expectation of a feeling.

I remember visiting a man who had been on several people's prayer lists. I went through my plan step-by-step. He not only listened but was extremely cooperative. When I asked him to bow his head and to receive Christ he said, "I know I should do this but I just don't have the feeling."

At that moment, even though our heads were bowed, I put my hand on his shoulder and said, "Look at me for just a moment and let me explain a couple of things about emotions that are very important for you to understand." I carefully taught him the four principles from above, and I could see he understood them.

"Let's bow our heads again," I repeated and began at the same step and asked the same question. I reminded him that it was the action—the right thing to do. The emotion was not important but his action would bring forgiveness of sin and salvation.

He hesitated momentarily and then said he wanted Christ as his Savior. What a joy it was to

lead him to Christ and have him explain to me that he felt better and that he also understood it was the right thing to do regardless of how he felt.

Friend, advise your prospect to do the right thing because God commanded him to do it. God will always take care of the blessing if we will do the right things.

He was on visitation

One of the members of our church brought Tim as a first-time visitor to see what visitation was all about. There were about 100 of us on that Thursday evening and we went out two-by-two. I returned about 9:15 and wanted to follow up on Tim's impressions. I asked my friend how the evening went.

"I've had better. We went to several homes where no one was there, and then to several more where people were either saved or wouldn't let me make a Gospel presentation. I was hoping that Tim would have the opportunity of seeing me deal with someone."

Having never met Tim, I decided to practice what I always teach about soul winning: Never assume someone is saved. I asked about his church background and salvation experience. Soon we realized the condition of his soul and immediately led him through the plan and to a Savior.

Later my friend pulled me aside. "Preacher, I've learned a vital lesson tonight." He asked Tim to forgive him for not making sure of his salvation, but Tim was so overjoyed that he was simply grateful his

friend cared enough to even bring him to church! The lesson to each of us? Never assume people's salvation just because of the circumstances surrounding them at that time.

They were at the front door

Sue's brother asked me if I would visit her and try to get the Gospel to her by any means. He added, "She never lets anyone into her home. She's hardened to religion and the Gospel." I did what most of us would do—tried to find an excuse not to go or to pass her off on someone else. In the end I committed to go.

On Thursday my partner and I pulled up to the house and prayed. "Let's just be honest with her," he said to me. We knocked and were surprised at how quickly she answered the door. I introduced us and said, "Sue, your brother asked us to come by and visit with you. We're from (name of church and location) and we know you have vowed not to let anyone in. But, honestly, we are here because we love the Lord and we love you. We genuinely would like to spend a few minutes with you and share a few things from the Bible that we feel would be helpful and a joy for you to understand. Could we reach a compromise? Don't let us in, but let us talk to you a few minutes right here at the door."

She agreed that I proceeded with my plan. I could tell she had a genuine interest and I slowed a bit to let her understand. She even asked a few questions. After a while she bowed her head and accepted the Lord. Instantly she invited us in. I

balked. "Sue, we certainly do not want to take advantage of you."

"Come on in, it's all right." I spent about 30 minutes giving her assurance of salvation and grounding her in the faith. Four days later it was a tremendous blessing to see her in church and walk the aisle.

It's always best to get into the home before dealing with someone about their need for Christ, and normally after a minute of introduction at the door and a simple statement that you are visiting from a church most people will invite you in. Such was not the case with Sue...or with Tom...

His name had been given to me by a church member who was burdened for his salvation. After finding the house I knocked good and loud. A middle-aged man opened the door. "May I help you?" He sternly asked.

"I'm David Wood and this is my partner. We're visiting from Harbor Baptist Church. Do you know where that is?"

"No."

Before he could respond with another syllable I took him street by street and concluded with, "Tom, your friend (name) asked us to stop by and give you some information on the church. We were in the area and I stopped by for this reason."

My pause was intentional and brief in hope he would invite us in. He didn't. "Tom, could we come in and visit with you for a minute?"

"We have our own church and I'm busy tonight."

“I certainly understand that so I’ll stand here and give you some information to look over at a later time.” I pulled a church brochure and tract from my pocket and handed them to him. “Is that okay?”

“Yes.”

“Tom, what is your church background?” Then I was off on my plan. I gave my testimony and led up to the question of his being sure of salvation.

“No.”

I asked if I could show him, and as I asked I pulled out my New Testament.

“Okay.”

In a few minutes he was not only saved but interrupted my “assurance” speech to invite us in! Then we met his dear wife and led her to Christ. Both came to church Sunday and walked the aisle.

They were part of the invitation

One of the most wonderful opportunities to see precious souls won to Christ is during a regular Gospel invitation in a good, Bible-preaching, soul winning church. Think of it. People have to come to church to hear from God, the preacher has faithfully preached under the power of the Holy Spirit, people have bowed their heads to pray, and their hearts have been dealt with by the Holy Spirit. There could never be a better environment for people to be saved.

In fact, I think many people want to be saved but don’t have others there to help them. For some reason this is a missed opportunity by Christians who otherwise genuinely want to see people saved.

Is there a good way to approach people and/or go forward with them during the invitation? Absolutely. It’s a good idea to strategically place veteran soul winners throughout the church audience. When the invitation is given, they can notice and approach prospects around them, perhaps with a tap on the shoulder, and say, “I’ll go up with you and stand by you.” Maybe a gentle tug on the arm could be an extra encouragement to head them toward the aisle.

If the person refuses, let them be. Never, never embarrass them, although I can honestly say that in all meetings during which I personally made this offer, no one has ever been offended.

At a closing rally in Maryland we had 250 decisions, and I encouraged these people to go to their friends and relatives and take a stand for God. After the service I had two very interesting people approach me. One man said through tears, “My son-in-law for whom I’ve been praying diligently for three years was saved tonight.” A lady said, “My mother-in-law who is 82 accepted Christ tonight.” She, too, was weeping because she had been praying for her mother-in-law for 30 years! Both people came to the Lord because the loved ones approached them during the invitation and encouraged them to go to the front.

She was at a restaurant

Whenever I am in a restaurant, gas station, hotel, or similar public place I always look for what I call an open door. An expression of need. A statement which puts the conversation on spiritual ground.

When I find that door, I open it wider with a statement such as, “You know, I’ve found that the most wonderful thing a person can know in life is that they are going to heaven when they die.” Sometimes I’m a little bolder and ask permission to show them how they can know for sure.

If I receive a positive response, I tell them how. I explain very quickly what it means to be saved. Some Christians contend that this is not good because you don’t have the time to sit down and make a lengthy presentation. However, when a heart has been prepared by the Holy Spirit and other things that have happened in someone’s life, they simply need somebody to quickly explain the Gospel.

Finally, do not be afraid to pray in public. Obviously you don’t want to embarrass the person with whom you are dealing, but you can bow your head and lead them to the Lord.

I was in Pontiac, Michigan Holiday Inn eating breakfast and reading a book when the buss boy walked to my table and stood quite near. He was reading the title on the front cover. I moved the book closer to him and said, “It’s certainly good that some people write things concerning God, heaven, and how our lives can be right, isn’t it?”

“Yes, it certainly is.”

“Are you interested in spiritual things?”

He said he was a college student working through school and had been giving a lot of thought lately to his relationship with God. I asked him to step aside with me and take a moment to tell him how he can know things are really right between him and God. I

led him through the Romans Road and asked if it would be all right to bow our heads for a moment, assuring him I would not embarrass him. He prayed and accepted Christ and couldn’t find the words to thank me—for caring and for my tactfulness.

He was in a funeral home

Another of the great opportunities Christians have to win loved ones and friends to Christ is while they are sensitive to death, sin, or problems. Sometimes we shy away, thinking if we witness during these times we’re not polite or we’re taking unfair advantage of the situation. That’s not the case. Many times an entire family is won because of the death of a loved one.

Years ago a lady received Christ under my preaching. She was very faithful and walked with the Lord. Although her husband treated her nicely he wanted nothing to do with God. In fact, in two years he came to church once—on Mother’s Day.

I visited on several occasions and witnessed to him but with no response. Still, we got to know each other well and he was always nice. “Preacher,” he’d say, “I’m not ready, not now. This is not for me.”

Then I received word his father died. I discovered his dad was a church member and maybe saved. The funeral was 70 miles away. The night before the service I drove to the funeral home knowing the family would visit that evening. In a few minutes Bob walked in with the family, tears in his eyes, and stopped in front of the casket. I walked

over and put my hand on his shoulder in comfort. He thanked me for coming.

“Bob, it’s my understanding your dad was a saved man, is that correct?”

“Yes.”

“Would it be okay if we sat down for a minute and showed you from the Bible what happens when a saved person dies?”

“Would you?”

Space does not permit me to list the precious and wonderful promises that I shared with Bob. I made sure he also understood that there was another place where lost people abide forever when they die.

“Bob, that is why it’s important you accept Christ. If you are ever going to see your dad again, it will have to be in heaven.” He wept silently. I took my Bible and once again shared the Gospel. This time we bowed our heads and he was saved...and two of his family members. I nearly floated the 70 miles home! Bob came to church, was baptized, and began growing in the things of God.

He was watching TV

One of the more repetitive questions I face from soul winners is, “When I get into the house, how do I get that TV off?” Friend, sometimes you can and sometimes you can’t so be prepared either way and do your very best under the circumstances. In one recent instance I literally had it both ways.

Jerry visited our church on Sunday and his prospect card listed him as Lutheran. When we visited him he was very receptive and invited us in.

The TV was on, so I seated myself where he would have to look away from the set and toward me.

After some casual talk I began the plan, even though the TV was a bit annoying. I shared my testimony and asked if he should die would he have assurance of salvation. He replied that it was an area of his life he’d never settled.

At this point I asked to turn the TV down. Most people say, “Here, let me turn it off.” Jerry did not. He said he was in the middle of one of his favorite programs. I asked if it would be better for me to wait for the program to be over.

“Oh, no, I’ll listen to both.”

I felt impressed of the Lord to begin dealing with him as though the TV was off. As I went step-by-step he kept looking at the TV then at me. He had a more sincere interest in God’s Word. We got to the point of bowing our heads and he finally said, “Preacher, I think it’s time to turn the TV off.”

I heartily agreed and in a few moments he accepted Christ.

He was in a hospital

Many Christians feel awkward about going into a hospital, visiting with a patient, and trying to lead him to the Lord. Yet it’s one of the greatest opportunities for the soul winner. Think of it. They have been stopped from their schedules, have already thought about death and eternity, are open to Bible reading and prayer, and are normally receptive to someone who will take the time to visit with them.

What better time to introduce them to the One who is the solution to every problem?

Admittedly, our feelings of inadequacy come from the setting. After all, who feels at home in a hospital? You're basically an intruder in an ocean of white or pastels and if you don't fit into one of the regimented schedules, you suspect everyone not only stares at you but will be thrilled when you leave!

Believe me, that isn't the case. Even those in authority appreciate others who think enough of friends to visit them. They also recognize that a real part of physical recovery includes the attitude of the patient, which is usually bolstered by visitors. In effect, a hospital is one of the easiest fields of harvest as long as we approach it with confidence.

Christians should be positive and cheerful when visiting a hospital. Talk to people. Take the opportunity to visit patients not on your agenda. Compliment the nurses in authority. Even speaking to patients in halls may open doors for soul winning.

Generally I follow the same routine. I enter the room and introduce myself, and then spend a few moments to get to know the patient, sharing my concern for their welfare.

When visiting friends in the hospital I like to read a couple of verses and have a brief word of prayer with them. But I always ask their permission and very seldom is anyone negative. I open my Bible to Romans and say, "The verses I will read cover the wonderful subject of how a person can know for sure they are going to heaven when they die."

I proceed, have them pray with me, and more often than not will I lead them to Christ. The experience is natural and rewarding, and I've often wondered if a person couldn't visit a hospital on a full-time basis and win people to Christ.

An Ohio pastor asked me to visit a church member's father who was in the hospital. He had a staunch Catholic background, several had tried to witness, and no one got to first base in their approach. I had some hesitations—we all do: This guy is going to be hard. Everyone has tried, what good will it do for me to go?

But I did. The man's leg had been amputated below the knee and he was going through physical rehab. I spent a few moments sharing my concern and then asked to read the Bible. No problem. As I went through the plan, I noticed big heavy tears in his eyes and Joe was wonderfully saved.

That night's meeting was influenced in a wonderful way as the people of the church had been praying for him for some time. Later I went back to see Joe and gave him a follow-up booklet. He was instantly receptive, talking to me and others about his salvation. I left the hospital wanting to share with as many as possible the tremendous door of opportunity open to us in hospitals across America.

I was with a lady in a ward with privacy curtains all around us. I led her through the plan and to the Lord. After she received Christ a weak voice cried from the next bed, "Would you pray with me next?" The man was dying of cancer and I had the privilege

of leading him to the Savior. I returned a week later and found he had died.

Friend, soul winning in hospitals is so vital and rewarding. Spend a couple of hours this week and see if you don't agree.

He was walking away from the alter

I had just finished bringing a salvation message for the opening rally of a crusade. Many people responded and several came with the desire to receive Christ. One man was broken to the point of tears. After the invitation was over and the people were dealt with, the pastor began to read the names of the people who had come forward. There was a season of rejoicing.

I noticed one name was read for re-dedication, not salvation. I see this a lot in crusades and made note of the man in question. After the service I bumped into the man and asked, "Did you receive Jesus as your Savior today?"

He dropped his head a bit and said, "I need to do that. I want to become a Christian one day."

I took my Bible and minutes later led him to Christ. The obvious question was, why wasn't that man led to the Lord at the alter? In that answer lies one of the greatest weaknesses not only in evangelism but also in many of our alter services: Workers may be a bit intimidated and basically let the prospect do the leading instead of them. This results in a confused person (who does not know their spiritual need) actually telling a trained worker how to do their job.

Four points make for a good invitation service:

1. The pastor extends the invitation.
2. The greeter (normally one man at the end of the aisle) is alert to the prospect who has responded to the invitation and offers to walk the aisle with him.
3. The soul winner is trained to receive the prospect from the greeter and lead him to a private room. This means all soul winners come forward on the first verse of the invitation.
4. An alter secretary (one or two ladies seated on the front row) fills out information on a decision slip after the soul winner brings the person back and explains the decision made.

It's important that a soul winner never asks the prospect why he came. The prospect doesn't know exactly how to respond to that and many times will give an answer that will make the soul winner think he is already saved. A better question is, "You have come to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior—isn't that correct?"

Just making a simple adjustment on how we greet the prospect can make all the difference in dealing with them. The soul winner does not need to win the person as if he was on visitation. Simply smile and say, "I'm so glad you've come to receive Christ.

There are four things that you need to know in order to become a Christian.” At this point he can review the first three: he is a sinner, is going to hell, and Jesus paid the price for sin. Then open your Bible to Romans 10:13 and show him his need to personally receive Christ as Savior. Bow your heads together and lead him to Christ.

He was on the 10th visit

There it was—again. The prospect card that had already recorded nine official visits—two by me—and still no salvation. I fought the usual thoughts: “I gave up my night to come out on church-wide visitation,” “At least I should get fresh prospects,” “What good will it do me to visit this man again? I’ll probably be wasting my time.” Sound normal?

After fellowship and prayer at the church, my partner and I were off to see this man again. As soon as we left my partner said, “Preacher, I’d be a little negative on visiting someone for the 10th time. I know you’re not. Tell me, what approach will you use?”

“You always use the same plan,” I answered, “The only difference is that you have to begin after the opening step or two. You can’t treat him as a perfect stranger.”

A few minutes later we knocked at the door. “Preacher, you folks are visiting me more than I visit the church!”

I smiled and replied, “It shows you’re one of our favorite people. Can we come in a visit a minute?”

“Yes, but I don’t have time for any Bible study.”

“Joe, let me share with you how I became a Christian.” He had heard my testimony twice before, but I thought it was a pretty good starting place to talk to him about his need for Christ. After giving my testimony I said, “Joe, you shared with me before the fact that you are not 100 percent sure that if you died you were going to heaven. Let me take a minute to show you how you can know for certain.”

“Okay, as long as it won’t be a long Bible study.”

I carefully went through the Romans Road, making sure he understood each step. A few minutes later we bowed our heads and he was saved! I left and shared with my soul winning partner how unbelievable it was that a man would listen to the same wonderful story over and over and respond to it as if it was the very first time. Then I remembered how patient God had been with me until I received His wonderful Son as my personal Savior.

So my advice is to be persistent. Go back until he responds. Never give up on anyone. It’s not a waste of time even on the 10th visit.

They were relatives

Relatives and close friends are sometimes the hardest prospects to win for Christ, but no Christian will have a burden for the lost if he is not broken over his own loved ones. God wants them saved and they can be won. Generally I follow four rules:

1. Do not put them down over their sin. Telling them they shouldn’t drink, smoke, etc., will only build a barrier between you.

2. Let them see Jesus in you. Don't put on an air, but live what you profess.
3. Do nice things for them. Help them, serve them.
4. Win them like anyone else.

I've had the joy of leading several of my loved ones to the Savior. I remember particularly when my precious grandparents were saved.

I was so burdened for them that I left Bible College one weekend with my wife and drove nine hours just to talk with them about the Savior. After an hour my grandmother said, "David, I'm certainly glad you came."

"Grandma, could I take a few minutes and tell you the real reason I'm here?"

"Certainly."

I told them both how I was saved and asked if I could share some verses from the Bible that helped me. They agreed. A few minutes later they bowed their heads in tears and both were saved.

Several years later I preached at both their funerals. What a joy for me to know right now that they are in heaven with their Savior.

Like most other people, relative are usually waiting for someone who is burdened and will share the glorious Gospel plan.

They were on the job

Many soul winners believe winning co-workers is harder than witnessing to strangers. Some Christians want to win people but feel the job isn't the right place. It's so "public" that they feel awkward and end up embarrassing themselves or their friends and never attempt it again. Others are concerned about living under a microscope. Our work mates see us everyday, and if we're not careful we can undo hours of preaching with five minutes of improper action.

The positive side is that every time we win a precious soul on the job we make it easier to win others in the same environment. Think of the joy of seeing your entire office or crew saved and living for the Lord. Winning friends on the job can be done, but it must be approached in the right way.

Try these suggestions:

1. Always be excited and happy. Don't magnify your problems. Let others see the joy of the Lord and the victory that comes by serving our Lord.
2. Do your part of the work. Don't be lazy. Be helpful and honest. A slothful Christian is a reproach on the name of Christ. Respect your boss and his authority.
3. Beware of self-righteousness. An attitude of "I'm better than others" or "I'm glad I'm not like you" will repel, not draw men to Christ.
4. Determine that you will win others on your time, not company time. Use your breaks, lunches,

periods before or after work, or make an appointment to go by his home. On-the-job witnessing can be interpreted by the boss as a stealing time, and it's one reason employers don't want people "talking religion" on the job.

A good friend came to me, burdened about a man in his office. I suggested he follow those four rules but he was still fairly timid. So I set up a breakfast for the three of us before their work day. After we met and ordered I made a simple opening statement. "Joe, your friend has been wanting to share something with you that has changed his life. Would that be okay?"

"Sure."

For a minute my dear Christian friend was hesitant and stuttered. But he gave his testimony, shared the Gospel, and won Joe to Christ. In the next several weeks nine of their friends at the office were saved—all at breakfast.

A final thought: Try to witness alone so your friends won't feel embarrassed or even angry toward you. Every job and circumstance is different, but if we pray, think, and work at it, we can be sensitive to the appropriate times for soul winning.

I was visiting a businessman's office and while we were talking two men came to see him about a product. After they were alone a while they returned and my friend said, "Dr. Wood, this man became a Christian two weeks ago." I congratulated him but noticed his friend dropped his head and looked at the

floor. My desire was to instantly begin to deal with him about his need for Christ. However, I began to ask the Lord to give me wisdom to set a time in which I might talk to him.

My friend had to go to another office to look up information on the product they came to see. He took the other visitor with him. I turned to the unsaved man and asked if we could talk privately for just a moment while the others went to look for information. We slipped into an empty office and began to talk. Minutes later he, too, was saved.

Sometimes Christians share with me that they are alone in the workplace. My response? Great! One is all it takes. Ultimately all evangelism is one by one, or "won by one."

I have a friend in Indianapolis who won more than 50 co-workers to the Lord during the time he was enrolled in our 13 week *Operation Go* session! On one occasion Paul heard a man just left the building suicidal. Immediately Paul asked his fellow employees to join with him in prayer for a man. As he prayed, some bowed their heads in reverence while others just looked on wondering. Paul had been a witness to many of these people and they deeply respected him. To everyone's surprise a few minutes later the suicidal man returned and said he just didn't know where to turn. Paul jumped in. "I know what you need." He took him aside and let him to Christ.

Like my friend Paul, you have a sphere of influence whether at home, school, or work. In fact, there is a groundswell in our country of witnessing at

work—men and women being used of God in unbelievable ways, almost like a Book of Acts style of Christianity. Imagine if every Christian worker set out with determination to evangelize his sphere of influence. There would be revival overnight and you would certainly never be able to invest your life in anything more important.

They had said “no”

Anyone who works at soul winning knows it's not too long before you receive a negative response. In fact, fear of hearing “no” keeps many well-intentioned Christians away from their loved ones and friends. They fear they'll make a mistake: “He turned me down because I did something wrong.” Or, “Someone else could have won him to Christ.” Even, “Because of me he will forever be lost.”

Let me remove those feelings completely by telling you that any presentation gives the truth of the Word of God under the power of the Holy Spirit. You are an ambassador. You represent someone else—the coming King. If they reject Him, the person's confrontation is not with you but with God. You won't botch anything.

Actually, the mistake many soul winners make is to enter into an argument with the prospect. “I'll set him straight so at least he'll hear the truth!” All this does is turn him off from the Gospel, the church, the Christian, and, most importantly, the Savior.

When negative responses come (and they can occur at any point in your presentation), just keep these truths in mind:

1. The prospect is not rejecting you, but God. He would be nice and probably receptive if the two of you were discussing sports or families.
2. There is a difference between evangelizing an area and winning everyone in that area to Christ. We are to get the Word out to everyone. Even though they may not accept our message, we still present the Gospel in clarity and with the Holy Spirit's power. It is God who gives the increase.
3. A “no” is not always a “no.” Many times the prospect will respond positively if given time to carefully reflect on what you are asking him to do. A loving reaction to a “no” will many times help the next soul winner, or you. When someone rejects the Word, simply close your Bible, thank him for listening, be nice, and leave. Make note of this and come back later and try to win him.

The question that arises here is one of persistence. It's a fine line, I admit, and I have followed a very simple rule for most of my life: Bounce the basketball three times. When a prospect is negative at any point consider that one bounce. Step back, pause, and say, “Here's what I mean.” Same response? Two bounces. Ask a third time. Still no? Then close your presentation, be courteous, and leave him for the next soul winner.

I was witnessing to a man on a plane and asked if I could show him from the Bible how he could know he was going to heaven.

“I’m not interested in that right now.” (One bounce)

We talked a moment and I said, “I’m not trying to make a Baptist, Methodist, or church member out of you. I’d just like to show you how to become a Christian.”

Again no. (Two bounces)

I told him nicely that I’d like to show him four simple verses that helped me know for sure about heaven and where I’d spend eternity.

He paused at this point and then said to go ahead. After a few minutes he accepted Christ.

Once I visited a man in Michigan and got to step 3 of our 13-step plan when he said no.

“I’m not trying to make a Baptist out of you. I simply would like to share with you some verses from the Bible that helped me know for sure that I was going to heaven.”

“No.”

“Roy, everyone ought to have the opportunity to understand clearly from the Bible what it means to know for sure. Why not let me take a moment and show you from the Word of God?”

“No, not at this time.”

I had given him three opportunities to say yes. At this point I closed my Bible, leaned back, talked casually, invited him to church, and left. A week later I returned for another visit. Nothing doing. The third week? Same results. On the fourth visit he

said, “Preacher, I guess you’re going to visit me until I let you show me something from that Bible.”

“Yes.”

“Well, go ahead, I’ll listen.”

By this time I had made a friend and showed him from the Scriptures how he could be saved. Minutes later we prayed together and he accepted Christ. “No” is not always “no.”

In a plane I spoke across the aisle to a gentleman who refused me three times. I thanked him for his time and was straightening up in my seat when the gentleman behind me asked if I could take a minute and show him. Of course! I moved back beside him and led him to the Lord. That doesn’t happen every time, but if you get a “no” and handle it in a positive manner you never know where it will lead.

Every soul winner should have a pre-thought response to the rejection of the prospect as part of his plan. During a hospital visit I encountered a man who faced a major operation. I asked him to receive Christ, but he refused. I backed up and asked again. “I’m not asking you to be a Baptist or to join a church.” No.

“Keith, you are facing a major operation. People are praying you will come through and regain your strength, but no one knows if we have another minute or day. Just as the doctor is going to take care of your physical needs as best as he can, I’m just asking you to let Jesus take care of your spiritual needs. He will save you, forgive your sin, and prepare you for heaven. Keith, why not let the Lord Jesus save you right now?”

He did. Keith never came out of that operation and today he is in glory.

They were interrupted

Have you ever been right in the middle of a plan, your prospect was deciding to accept Christ, and in walks husband, the wife, or kids?

What happens next largely depends on our attitude. If we're angered or develop a complaining spirit, we'll probably lose the prospect and our testimony. If we're embarrassed, we tend to go weak-kneed, re-pocket our Bible, and slip out the door.

Why not look at it differently? Satan will always send interruptions. Instead of getting nervous or angry, welcome the break as an opportunity to win someone else to Christ.

Stop and meet the person. Speak kindly and don't be embarrassed. Explain what you're doing. "I just asked Sam life's most important question: If he were to die, would he be assured of heaven? As you entered I was showing him from the Word of God how he could know for sure."

At this point ask him to join you. He may or may not. If he does, always back up to the beginning of the Gospel plan and start fresh. The review will not hurt the person with whom you have been dealing. In this way you can win both prospect and intruder.

In Grand Rapids I was visiting a first-time couple and was into my plan when a teenage friend of the family came to visit. I asked my partner if he would go outside and spend some time meeting this young

man. Of course, I wanted him to do his best to win him to Christ.

A few minutes later in came two of the teens of the family through a different door. I stopped the plan and took a minute to meet these young people. I invited them to join us and they did. Both parents and kids accepted Christ. After a few moments we went outside and my partner had gathered three different teens from the neighborhood. All three had accepted Christ!

Another time in Michigan I was leading a teenage boy through the plan of salvation when the father walked in with a "What's-he-doing-talking-to-my-boy" attitude. I introduced myself, followed the steps above, and had the dad join us. I had no sooner started when the mom came in and I followed the same procedure and included her. As soon as she was seated two friends of the teen knocked and walked in. Again I stopped and included them. When I reviewed the soul winning plan now for the third time the original teen said, "At least I've heard it enough to understand!" In a few moments all five received Christ. What could have been a disaster became a blessing.

They were objecting

One of the reasons many Christians do not regularly present Christ is a basic fear that someone will ask a question they can't answer. Please understand that everyone has questions and issues on their mind. So rather than fret, work on ways to handle them.

The best advice is to learn to stay on track. Lay aside the question until the end of the presentation and ask permission to continue what already has been started. I've found that a great way to answer objections before they're even raised is to do so subtly through your testimony.

When I share my testimony with a prospect and I come to the part where a man asked me if I knew for sure I was going to heaven, I tell my listener: "One, I didn't think it was any of his business to ask me that question. Two, I really didn't know if anyone could know for sure. And, three, to be honest I was a smart aleck when I was 19."

Those three statements will usually disarm the prospect and remove his objections. What you've done is eliminate his hesitation to respond plus his objections. He must let you proceed or he's admitting he's a smart aleck or is being rude. In reality you've lined up on his side. He sees you were once where he is and now it's only reasonable for him to listen to you.

I was running a few miles when I came across some young men playing basketball on an open court. I asked if I could join in. After some hard play we were all winded and wanted to cool off. I used this time to ask them what church they attended.

A couple of them snickered and wondered what this religious guy was going to say next. I instantly jumped to my testimony and said, "Let me tell you what I thought about that at 19." I included the three statements above.

Minutes later all of us were on the same side, understanding that we needed someone to show us the truth of the Bible. I followed through with the plan and three of them accepted Christ.

It's very natural for people to suspect that somebody is intruding and for them to have a storehouse of objections. Those three statements will usually close the door on objections.

She was religious

It was late at night in a large department store and the clerk was virtually alone. I asked her a couple of light questions and she mentioned she always worked the night shift.

I told her my reason for being in town and then asked her church background. She was raised Baptist, but hadn't been to church in a long time. Listening to her, I felt she was unsaved and possibly had a desire to be religious but knew nothing of the Savior. I gave my testimony and asked her if she knew for sure. "I guess I would (go to heaven)," she replied. "I've done what Jesus wants me to do to be a Christian."

Instead of probing deeper and straightening out her problems, I asked if it would be all right to show her some verses that helped me. In minutes she accepted the Lord.

When you feel someone is lost, even if they give positive responses, don't engage in verbal conflict. Notice I didn't ask the clerk if I could show her how she could know for sure but if it would be all right to show her verses that helped me to know for sure. I

also try to phrase my sentences so the person sees that I saw from the Bible that there was nothing I could do to help myself. This takes the pressure off them and gives you the opportunity to share the Gospel just as if they had asked you how to become a Christian.

He was an unbeliever

When people claim to be unbelievers you never know whether they're atheists, evolutionists, or simply people having problems believing the Bible. Generally, I classify unbelievers into two categories: those who are hard, indifferent, and obnoxious and those who are genuinely interested in the Gospel but have either real areas of unbelief or questions in their lives.

All we can do with the first group is try to be extremely charitable and get the Gospel to them. If they refuse, just pray for them and present the Gospel to someone else. But with the second group you can present the Gospel and see souls come to Christ.

There are two basic spiritual powers that draw unbelievers to the Lord, break their hearts, and cause them to respond if they are going to do so. The first is the power of the Word of God. The second is the power of the Holy Spirit. Each of us as soul winners must remember that it is imperative to establish and maintain a clear presentation of the Gospel to these people.

I normally set aside the person's area of unbelief and ask if they will let me present the Gospel. By doing this I avoid a conflict or a long philosophical

exchange which helps no one. I want to present the one thing that can make a difference—the Word of God. After a clear presentation of the Gospel, I draw the net on the unbeliever the same way I would do with anyone else.

I met a well-educated young man who had been attending church for quite a while. He listened to the preaching and even showed genuine concern through his facial expressions. However, the pastor and others told me of his deep commitment to evolution. For that reason, they said, he probably could not be reached. Several had talked with him on many occasions, but evolution had always been the barrier that ceased all spiritual conversation.

After a service I sat down with him and went through my plan. He had come from a different religious background and listened to my testimony with real interest. "I'm sure others have told you about my background in evolution and how this had been a real problem," he offered.

"Would you allow me to take the whole subject of evolution and set it aside?" I asked. "Then let me take the Bible and show you what you need to know for sure." I went step-by-step and he was saved. Later he brought up evolution but with his new knowledge of Christ he was able to see the truth.

I left that presentation with a real conviction that there are many hungry, confused people who need someone to show them the way. Don't let someone's unbelief hinder you from presenting Jesus. Remember: We were all unbelievers at one time.

He was an agnostic

“I don’t believe the Bible and, besides, how do you know there really is a God?”

How do you deal with such a person? The answer is simple and profound. First, don’t act like you are shocked or upset. Take it in stride because you’ll hear it plenty of times. Smile and relax. The last thing you want to do is show anger or make a person feel you are condemning him. Then ask if you can present the Gospel anyway. This will surprise the prospect because he expected you to retreat or logically debate him.

Two things to remember are the CONVINCING power of the Holy Spirit and the CONVICTING power of the Holy Spirit. It makes no difference who you deal with. If they will not listen to the Word of God and respond to the Holy Spirit, they will not accept Christ.

Do you recall what Abraham told the rich man in hell? If they didn’t hear Moses and the prophets, they won’t be persuaded if one rose from the dead (Luke 16:31). If a man will not be won by the ministry of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, he will not be persuaded by the logic of a doctor of theology degree from a seminary.

I went visiting with a laymen from a church and we encountered a man who responded with, “I don’t believe in heaven or hell.”

My partner then began to try to convince him there was a hell, that he was qualified to go there, and that would probably be soon! The situation became very tense. After a few moments I looked at the man

and said, “Would it be OK if I showed you from the Bible how you could go to heaven, if there really is a heaven? If not, what could you lose?”

He yielded; I led him down the Romans Road, and he was saved. He never again mentioned his unbelief and neither did I. He came to church that night and the next and walked the aisle.

Not all unbelievers will let you proceed, but if we are faithful to sow the seed for the Word of God, it will be able to do its perfect work.

Chapter 6

**Make Soul Winning
Your Life**

If you want to engage in a fascinating Bible study, examine the questions asked by Jesus. Sometimes He's the master teacher. Every word He speaks is a picture of personal discovery as He prods and nudges searching hearts into the reality of God's truth.

And then there are times when He's the master confronter. Every word He speaks is an indictment of professed lifestyles and insincere faith.

One of His most ringing questions occurs near the end of the Sermon on the Mount when He asks the heart-searching question, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

The crowds were following Jesus and paying extravagant lip service, but He knew what was in the

hearts of men. Just as you recognize the tree by its fruit, you examine the faith by the action. In street talk it's called "Walk the talk." What you do pretty much reflects who you are.

There was a hollowness to the "believers" who followed Jesus, and as was His character, He wanted truth. In effect, He was saying, "There's one proof of your love for God: obedience. There's one proof of your sincerity toward God: action. If you love Him and are sincere about your faith, why would you not do something that pleases Him?" Or put another way, Why would you do something that hurts Him?

The Bible is perfectly clear about personal witnessing. Soul winning obeys our Lord and makes His heart happy. Not only is the lost soul saved but the soul winner is encouraged and strengthened, and our Lord is honored that His child is walking in obedience.

Unfortunately I suspect our Lord's heart is saddened by today's children who are still not obeying the clear Scriptural teaching of winning a lost world to Christ. This is a personal issue and each child of God must practice a daily surrender to obedience.

The Bible clearly commands:

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations..."
(Matthew 28:19).

"...Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

"...Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great the things the Lord hath done for thee..."
(Mark 5:19).

"...he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).

"...Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19).

A Christian will either be a fisher of men or be guilty of the sin of not following Jesus. If he follows our Lord, he will fish for souls and, like the apostles, draw in the unsaved with the net of the Gospel. All greatly used men of God have been burdened about this area of Christian obedience:

John Wesley said, "You have only one business on earth—to save souls."

L.R. Scarborough stated, "The most gigantic undertaking God has laid out for the Christian is to lead lost souls to Jesus."

Dr. Curtis Hutson wrote, "The only alternative to soul winning is disobedience."

As a Christian and a preacher of the Gospel I can bear testimony that this business of personal soul winning needs regular attention. We must be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and our need of heart obedience to the Scriptures.

During one of my crusades I was spending some time with the Lord early one morning and felt the urge to spend a special time that day in soul winning. I called the pastor and set a time to go.

The second home we visited was inhabited by a couple who visited church Sunday. I followed my plan and both accepted the Lord. Afterward they commented that only that morning they had talked about the Sunday service and wondered how a person could know for sure he was going to heaven!

As we left I couldn't help but reflect on the great truth of soul winning that God has taught me over and over: Soul winning is not winning, tricking, or pushing the hard one but simply going. If I'll go and present the plan, not everyone will be saved but many will be. My responsibility is to go with genuine concern for the lost. God will give the increase (Psalm 126:5-6).

Every Christian should be working diligently to get the Gospel out to every person he possibly can. We've already explained how you should have a regular weekly time of visitation. Yet it should be more to the child of God than going out three or four hours a week. It should literally be the life of every disciple of the Lord. The Great Commission calls for a total commitment, not a few hours here and there.

For instance:

1. Always be ready to give out tracts, books, and tapes. Many have been won because a Christian was ready with a piece of literature that would continue the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
2. Actively support missionaries and mission projects through your local church. Give, pray, and nurture a worldwide vision.
3. Support Christian radio and television. The tithe goes to the local church, but extra amounts can be carefully delegated to programs that clearly proclaim the Gospel.

4. Bring lost people to church and revivals. In many of our rallies, scores of people are saved at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of each week. And without fail, each convert was brought by a dear Christian.
5. During an invitation, pray for those who are lost. Be ready to speak to prospect and help them come forward at the invitation. Seek out those who respond positively to the invitation. I have seen tremendous conversions when Christians were sensitive to the Holy Spirit.

Many times we sense someone is interested in being saved but our excuses stop us. Never neglect giving the Gospel to those who have a sensitive heart.

I was in a mall and commented to the clerk at the cash register, "This is a beautiful day. Thank the Lord for the sun." (It had been raining for several days.) As I left, a man's voice behind me said, "It's sunshine today. I'm glad a few good things come amidst all the bad."

"You know," I quickly turned to him and replied, "There's a lot in the Bible about that very subject."

"There is?"

"Let me take a moment and show you how to be prepared for such events." I led him down the Romans Road and into the hands of our Savior.

Lesson 18

Remember the Field

Someone told me, “My problem in soul winning is that I have no prospects.”

I think her viewpoint is wrong. She wanted others to approach her with a desire to have what she has. While she waits, hundreds or even thousands could die because they didn’t hear a clear explanation of the Gospel. In Matthew 13, Jesus made it clear that the field ready for harvest is the world. Even in a society where evil abounds, grace will abound that much more because the greater the need, the greater the need for an answer, and it’s basically selfish of us to fail to share Christ with those we meet every day. There is always a ready harvest if we just take an extra moment to look below the surface and see people where they really live.

I was changing planes in Pittsburgh when I noticed a young lady sitting in a waiting area by herself, tears streaming down her face. I had to get involved. “Excuse me, I’m a Christian. Could I help by sharing a couple of verses and having some prayer?” (This is always a good approach to those who are distraught.)

She poured out her heart about the crises in her life, and it was interesting when she concluded, “I’m very glad to meet a Christian.” We talked and I had the pleasure of leading her to the Lord.

As you remember the field, be alert to two groups of people who tend to be overlooked: children and professionals.

Read the gospels and see how much the Word of God mentions children around our Lord, even in

examples to adults. I’m always amazed how children instinctively seem to hang around those who love them. And yet we place so little interest on leading these precious souls to the Lord.

Every study seems to indicate that eight is the ideal age to accept the Lord, and even though many can be won earlier than that, parents and soul winners have a fear of dealing with such young souls. “Did he really understand?” “Can a child of four or five really be saved?”

I remember when our first child, Faith Ann, was three and began to express an interest in trusting the Lord. Her mother and I talked about this and wondered how to proceed. The next week I was in Michigan holding a revival and fellowshipping with some of the people when I brought up the subject. A godly deacon looked at me and gave me the best advice. “You need to look at it this way,” he began. “If the child is old enough to be saved and understands what salvation is all about and you refuse to lead him to Christ and he should die, think of the consequences. On the other hand if you lead him to Christ and he does not completely understand, God will be faithful to help the child to be brought under conviction at a later date.”

I could hardly wait to get home and lead our first child to the saving knowledge of the Lord, and we experienced a similar time with each of our children when they were young.

I was holding a meeting in Pennsylvania when after a service I was asked to visit a four-year-old in the hospital who had sustained severe injuries from a

tragic accident a few weeks earlier. We entered the hospital about 9:30 Sunday evening and visited with Kevin, his Christian parents, and his grandmother. I began to talk to Kevin about the Lord. It was so easy to help him understand that I still don't know that I've ever had an adult respond so willingly. In a few minutes Kevin accepted Christ and there was not a dry eye in the room.

When I encounter lads like Kevin I often wonder if he'll grow up to be another D.L. Moody. It was a novice Sunday school teacher who had a lasting influence on Dr. Jack Hyles as she held him on his lap at a very young age and told him Jesus loved him. A similar story can be said about Dr. Lee Roberson.

No one can adequately measure the influence these three have had on our nation and the world for Christ. Some people didn't see the opportunity before them; someone else saw a small boy in Sunday school needing Christ; God saw a giant in potential for the cause of Christ.

During a six-day crusade I had the opportunity to tour several Sunday school classes and spend 30 minutes or so in each room watching the exciting interaction between teacher and student. Walking down the hall to the next room, I ran into 10-year-old Jake who had decided to skip class and wait for junior church. He said he liked Sunday school, but just wasn't interested in the things of God that day. I took him aside, had a great talk with him, and led him to Jesus. When he returned to his assigned room, he marched up to his teacher and announced, "I just accepted Jesus!"

I walked away wondering if that boldness was indicative of another D.L. Moody. Farfetched? No, I don't think so. A trained soul winner, Sunday school teacher, or bus worker should always be alert to the eager young soul both in church and throughout the community. You just never know what will happen in 20 or 30 years.

Have you ever noticed how much easier it is to approach a child or a poverty stricken person than it is to talk to someone a bit more distinguished than yourself? We tend to want to deal with those who offer the least resistance, who are not as likely to reject us, and who will look up to who we are. Although we should win the young and the downtrodden, we shouldn't exclude the banker, doctor, or lawyer.

That's why the second group of people I champion is the professional man or woman—folks who can be just as lost or just as saved as anyone else. One of the great truths of the Bible is that Jesus never put a premium on any class distinction. When He said that God so loved the world, He meant that God wanted everyone evangelized—from the widow and her mite to the powerful Nicodemus. Unfortunately, many of us spend our efforts on one class of people, and it's usually not the professional or what I call the "up and comer."

I met a Jewish man who owned a car dealership and had just been converted. He looked at me with tears and said, "Thank God somebody cared enough to treat me like everyone else."

It's Satan who convinces us that we should only present the Gospel to certain classes of people. But just as God is no respecter of persons, neither should we be.

What's the best approach for winning professional people? Three simple rules:

1. Pray for the person by name.
2. Remember the commandment to go. Make an appointment in your house, at lunch, or at work. They're normally on tighter schedules than us and you should consider their activities.
3. Go door-to-door in a professional neighborhood, too. I'm always surprised at the many prospects when this is done correctly.

And be sure to follow up on these prospects. You might be surprised at how much they appreciate your friendliness. Most people are only after professionals for what they can get from them. When the professional encounters someone who genuinely cares for them, loves them, and wants to do them good, they're overwhelmed and will sit and listen to a clear presentation of the Gospel.

I believe there are scores of professional men and women looking for someone who cares enough to take the time to present Christ to them.

I was traveling through Dallas and ended up with an hour and twenty-minute layover. I walked the corridor to my next gate, looking for an empty row of

seats so I could work. As I begin writing an article, a middle-aged man sat two seats away with no one else in the entire section!

At first I wondered why he didn't allow me my privacy. Then I began to think of the excellent opportunity to present the Gospel in an uninterrupted environment. I looked at him and made a casual comment on the weather. He responded in a positive manner and talked about many areas. Then I asked his church background. Catholic. I commenced my plan and minutes later won him to the Lord. After he shared how he thought about becoming a Christian on several occasions, but didn't know how to approach it. He was a medical doctor teaching in a major university.

For a while I reflected on whether or not I would have taken the same approach had I known his profession ahead of time. But I came away from that experience with a renewed confidence that the Gospel is just as powerful for the up and comer as it is for the down and outer. With a good attitude and an honest approach we can win professionals to the Lord.

Toolbox

Urgency

There are several words or phrases which are important to a Christian who wants to be an effective soul winner: "prayer," "tracts," "ready," "plan," "fullness of the Holy Spirit," "setting a regular time,"

and “get the Gospel to everyone somehow.” But no single word carries as much importance as “now.”

None of the other words matter if we don't act now. Soul winning carries a deep sense of urgency. “...Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2). “...how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14).

Living under this sense of urgency is exciting and rewarding. I was in North Carolina and, loving the water as I do, I went by the rows of fishing boats. I spotted a fresh seafood shop and watched them prepare fish for public sale. The man on the floor began to explain the how-to of preparing fresh fish for freezing and future use. He said he had been doing it since childhood, and I replied that I had been doing the same in a spiritual sense since I was 19.

“I'll be you're a preacher. You're talking about catching fish for Jesus aren't you?”

“Yes.”

“But what made you start at 19?”

“That's when I accepted Christ as my Savior.” I began with my plan and in a while he was saved. He looked up at me and grinned, “Well, you landed another one!”

Lesson 19

Stay Involved in Soul Winning

If we're honest with ourselves, we'll admit there are times when we're tempted to win others only when it's convenient for us or profitable for the

church. Will this person come to my church? Can I recruit him for my Sunday school class? Will I even see him again after tonight? If we're not careful, we'll end up practicing soul winning only when we think we'll see results or numerical gains.

What about the people in airports or malls? Teenagers, the poor, prisoners, the sick, the uneducated, and the forgotten of our cities? The point that we need to reinforce is to be on guard against the tendency to witness only to those who we think we can disciple and church within our immediate sphere of influence. In doing so, we forget about sin and hell. Lazarus of Luke 16 was not of much value to a religious establishment of his day, but Abraham and God thought differently.

Years ago in South Carolina a bus worker asked if I would visit with him. “Pastor, I want you to visit a family in a trailer park. It's a poor area and they're a little dirty. The husband may curse. If they come to church they couldn't put any money in the plate. They have six children and no one has ever talked to them about Jesus.”

I had no problem because the value of one soul—or six or more—is worth the “risk” of the family worshipping in another Bible-preaching church. Sure enough the husband came running out of the dirty trailer cursing us for bother his family. When he calmed down my partner took him aside and started talking about the truck.

I went in and met the family. “Your husband may not want you to come to church, but could I take a moment and teach a Bible lesson about Jesus right

now?” They were a willing audience and by the end of the “lesson” all seven had come to the Lord. The husband reappeared about then and scorned their decision. A couple of nights later, the trailer caught fire and everyone in it lost their lives. Thank God for His wonderful salvation and for a dear bus worker who was concerned about the forgotten of his city.

Staying involved in soul winning sometimes requires you to go against the grain—even the religious grain. There’s a dangerous concept alive in our land and even in some of our churches. The rise of lifestyle evangelism and the confusion over repentance and faith has caused some Christians to be “soil inspectors” instead of “seed scatterers.”

Some Christians are making a judgment call that’s not theirs to make. If, in their opinion, a person isn’t ready for the Gospel or doesn’t show any of the “signs,” they don’t share the Good News. However well-meaning these Christians are, they’ve forgotten two pivotal spiritual truths.

First, they’ve forgotten about hell. Should the existence of a literal hell enter into the Christian’s motive for soul winning? Absolutely! Never forget that when you win souls you rescue them from hell. Psalm 9:17 says, “The wicked shall be turned into hell and all people who forget God.”

Our hearts should be stirred as we realize the terrible fate of a lost soul without Jesus. We should have at least as much compassion on lost sinners as we do on a drowning man when we throw him a rope. It’s only decent and moral to want to rescue someone from suffering forever in the lake of fire.

Before the account of Lazarus there was the story of the rich man (Luke 12) who took care of his physical needs but forgot his soul. God declared, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” How foolish to live a few short years on earth and forget eternity.

I was on a morning talk show in Pennsylvania where I met a man who fought in Vietnam and lost a leg to Agent Orange. He talked of his loyalty to America and the great principles on which it was built. I ached when I thought of his suffering because of his devotion.

Over coffee we talked of the war and I waited until I gained his confidence before asking his religious background. He was Catholic. I gave my testimony and proceeded with the plan. I’ll never forget the look in his eyes as he said, “This is an issue that has been on my heart continually for the last several years.”

What a joy it was to lead him to the Lord! That night he came to our crusade meeting and gave his testimony. He made a statement that has stuck with me: “I would go through all that I’ve experienced several times just to have the joy of finding an answer to the question concerning my living forever in heaven.” He concluded, “Thank God I’m not going to hell when I die!”

If there’s going to be a similar revival in other lives, churches, and communities—a revival that will be lasting—then we need to return to clear preaching and Bible teaching on hell and the truth that God will punish sin.

Every soul winner needs to help the prospect understand there is a hell which is the penalty of living in sin and rejecting God. Sometimes in our presentation we tend to be rote, which may leave the average prospect feeling that salvation is a take-it-or-leave-it proposition.

A man in a hospital said to me, “I don’t believe in heaven or a hell.”

“Sir, if you’re right, what will happen to you when you die?”

“You simply go back to the dust of the earth or something like that.”

“If the Bible is right and there is a heaven and a hell, what will happen to you?”

“I guess I’ll go to hell.”

I suggested that he let me share some verses with him on the subject. After a few steps into my plan I could see his countenance changing and signs of brokenness appearing. Eventually he accepted the Lord and remarked, “I think somewhere in my past I heard about the awfulness of hell.” In fact, I didn’t have to dwell on the subject too long before he understood thoroughly what the Bible taught.

My advice is don’t throw around the term “hell” carelessly, but do teach that the penalty of sin is death. As soul winners, we need to thoroughly explain that the spiritual ailment of that death is eternity in hell separated from God.

The second great truth that many would-be soul winners forget is what I call “won by one.” In the final analysis soul winning is winning soul one-by-one. Jesus won the woman at the well and probably

Nicodemus. John the Baptist won Andrew who netted Peter and so on.

Which is why I took such issue with the lady’s comment to meet me at the beginning of this chapter. Too many Christians sit idly by and wait for greater opportunities to more efficiently use their time when the person next to them dies and goes to hell. What greater opportunities are they waiting for?

Lifestyle evangelism tries to pour water on the New Testament soul winning by calling it confrontational. “The challenge is to live life in such a way that men and women will be drawn to us for salvation.” No, friend. Both preaching and soul winning are confrontational. If modern sales forces practiced lifestyle selling, every corporation in America would be bankrupt in three months!

I fear we wait because we’ve become lazy. We may say we’re waiting because we can’t follow up. Or we can’t disciple. Or the person wants to debate theology. We wait and strangers, friends and families go to hell. It’s been said that, “I’d rather have two of 100 than one of one.” I heartily agree.

Leaving a motel for the airport, I noticed a lady employee. My heart was moved to witness, but I had the normal negative thoughts. I was honestly too busy, already late, never met the person, she won’t respond, and there’s not enough time for real conviction.

But I followed through and led her to Christ. Then she followed me—all the way to the van, thanking me for taking the time to tell her of Jesus. There was no crowd, just one lady. No time for

discipleship other than to ground her in the Word. But I did get her name to the pastor of a local church. I won't see her grow, but I know she will. She was won by one.

Sometimes it's inappropriate to witness, but you can still be a seed-scatterer. While visiting door-to-door with a trainee we encountered a husband who refused to let us enter. I did my best to be friendly, but he was adamant. We weren't coming in, we weren't going to witness.

I asked if I could leave some literature. "It has a wonderful message that just might be a blessing to you at some point."

"I guess that would be okay," he grumbled.

I gave him a tract with our phone numbers on it and asked if we could pray before we left. Again he agreed. My prayer contained a simple Gospel plan and I asked him if he'd like to respond.

"No."

We left. Two nights later he called me late at night. He apologized for his behavior and asked if it would be possible for me to see him a little later in the week. We made the appointment and went inside to a much friendlier atmosphere. That evening he, his wife, and their two children accepted Christ. Later he said, "Your prayer stuck in my mind the other night and I couldn't help but read the literature you gave us."

Again I recognized how my job is to be obedient as a servant and as a seed-scatterer, not as a soil-inspector.

Toolbox

Alternatives

Are there ways to stay involved in soul winning other than just going out on a regular basis? Sure, just be soul-conscious at all times and realize alternatives are not substitutes for regular visitations. But, again, it's wise to have alternatives or options handy when soul winning. Here are my favorites:

1. Always take tracts with you and leave them everywhere.
2. Write what I call I love you letters. Write to a loved one or friend and tell them how concerned you are for them and through a series of letters present the Gospel.
3. Phone a prospect
4. Be a soul winner at the altar. One of the weakest areas in churches is not having enough trained workers at the altar.
5. Invite a friend to attend a service. I think most people are won by a concerned friend who prays for them and brings them to a service.

I always like to speak to people after a service. Once a man walked by whose countenance revealed that God had spoken to his heart. We introduced

ourselves and I said, “God was good to us tonight. I’m thankful He spoke to all of our hearts.”

“He certainly did that,” he replied.

I went right to his heart. “Have you personally received Jesus? Are you 100% sure of heaven?”

“That’s what’s bothering me.” What a joy it was to lead him to salvation!

Believe it or not, that’s a common encounter for me, and it breaks the heart of any Bible preacher to think that someone listened to the Gospel and then was leaving the service either through confusion or refusal to accept Christ as Savior.

Night after night I have the privilege of preaching to hundreds of hundreds of people across America in revival crusades. I thank the Lord many people receive Christ, but hardly a service goes by when I don’t see someone whose heart has been dealt with by the Holy Spirit. They may lift their hand for prayer and weep, yet will resist the drawing of the Holy Spirit.

That’s where a soul winner can use one of his “alternatives.” That prospect can still come to Christ after the service if a Christian is conscious of what’s going on inside that person’s heart. Often a person lifts a hand for prayer but won’t respond publicly. Slip up to him and say, “I couldn’t help but notice that God was dealing with your heart this morning. Could I just take a moment and explain?” Sometimes leaving a note during the invitation opens the door. If he says yes, you can remain in the pew. If he’s already saved, you’ve made a friend by praying for

his burden. Most of the time you’ll find they need Christ.

During a crusade in Missouri I detected a man about two-thirds of the way back was under conviction but wouldn’t respond. After the service I asked if we could talk. “I couldn’t help but notice that God has dealt with your heart about your need for Christ. Would it be okay if one of the men of the church sat down privately and explained how you can know for sure about salvation?”

He nodded through his tears and I directed one of our soul winners to take over. Later the man found me and said, “I wouldn’t have come to Christ if you hadn’t approached me as you did.”

Soul winning is an attitude. It’s a life that’s dedicated to looking, watching, and noticing people all around us who have a definite need for the Savior. However, a note of caution is in order. At no time do I feel it’s a good idea for a Christian to simply wander around the building after a service and approach people telling them they need to be saved. Even though that soul winner’s heart is tender, we should never make a prospect think we’re looking all over the building to find someone to jump on.

Lesson 20

Continue to Learn

My partner and I were visiting door-to-door and a young lady answered the door saying she didn’t have time to talk. I complimented her children and told

her we'd only take a few minutes to visit and had some interesting things about the church to leave with her.

She agreed, but as soon as I got to the plan her husband came in. I shut the Bible and spent several minutes with him. I asked him to join us, but he had an errand. I had just resumed the plan when their small daughter wandered in and tugged on her mother's sleeve, totally stopping us. I suggested that my partner read her a story in the other room, and everyone seemed delighted. I picked up where I left off and within minutes this young lady accepted Christ. She was more than excited. I can't recall anyone asking more questions after they were saved!

When we left, my partner said, "I couldn't have won her."

"Why?"

He shared the three things that normally stop him: She didn't have time, the husband intruded, and the child stopped us.

I had to give pause to his candidness. He felt the tug of the Holy Spirit, but was prepared to walk away. The conclusion I arrived at was my friend, like all of us, needed to continue to learn the fine art and science of soul winning so he could be prepared for any challenge.

He and I were not in a hostile environment and therefore, unsure of how to get on the subject. I've dealt with people living in open sin. "Do you ever plan on becoming a Christian?" I ask. Usually they say yes and that's when I take out my Bible.

Or I've encountered people who brag about what they've done for God, or simply on their own goodness. "Fine," I say. "If you should die and would stand at heaven's gate and Jesus asked you why He should let you enter, how would you respond?" After they fumble around a bit I take out my Bible and get on the plan.

On one occasion I met a man bragging about his biblical knowledge but saying he wanted nothing to do with God. I offered him my Bible and said, "Show us how we can get to heaven." He said he didn't know so I used my Bible and led him there.

The whole idea of soul winning is to bring together the sinner and Christ. I think we'd be shocked if we realized how many people in our daily contacts are spiritually hungry. I remember a verse by Dr. John R. Rice:

How can I meet Him without my loved ones?
How can I smile and know they are lost?
When I see Jesus up in Glory,
Without the souls He bought at such a cost.

I met three men in a public place and after some light conversation one of them asked me, "What do you do for a living?"

"I'm an evangelist."

"Then you know something about religion."

"Well," I answered, "I've learned one very important thing about religion."

"What's that?"

"Religion never takes a person to heaven."

“Then what can?” That led me into my plan within a few minutes the questioner had accepted Christ. The others would not, but they were polite.

Another time I had to make a connecting flight and ended up sitting in the middle seat between two men who talked back and forth spicing their conversation with profanity. After a minute I let the center tray down, put my Bible on it, and began to read. One of the men responded, “I hope we didn’t offend you.”

“That’s strange. I was worried I was offending you,” I said.

“How?”

“I wanted to share a couple of verses with you and your friend but didn’t know how to get on the subject without offending you.”

He laughed. “That’s okay. I don’t think anything offends George and me.”

I proceeded through my Romans Road plan and the man received Christ. George did not, but was polite. And there was no more cursing on the flight. Again, the difference between those incidents and the near-miss at the young lady’s house is probably attributed to experience. I try never to stop learning about soul winning. If there are two thoughts I could impart as we close this workbook, they would be in these areas:

First, increase your actual working knowledge of soul winning. Read, observe, be open to new ideas that will strengthen your weak areas. Know the methods of competition—the enemy of the soul.

Remember our earlier lessons: have a plan, memorize Scriptures, review the opening and closing, make transitions, stay on track, and practice, practice, practice!

A lady came to me after a crusade meeting and said, “I’m so excited! I must tell you something!” She had witnessed to friends, brought several to church, and prayed for their salvation. But she had never won anyone to Christ. “I used your plan and won my first soul to Christ!”

I remember how Dr. Jack Hyles taught me a plan for winning souls in August of 1965. I went out and won my first soul that summer day and now I can understand that lady’s excitement by helping others lead people to Christ. It remains even for me a never-ending process of learning your craft.

Secondly, Be influenced by the great soul winners of all ages. Every Christian is in the process of becoming, growing, or declining in every area of spiritual stature. Someone has correctly stated that a year from now everyone will be the sum total of who they hang around, what they read, and what they listen to.

This is true in the area of personal soul winning as it is for any other area of the Christian life. We need to read, hang around, and listen to great soul winners. In my life Dr. John R. Rice, Dr. Jack Hyles, Dr. Curtis Hutson, Dr. Bob Gray, and many others have had a direct and personal impact on my ministry. Others have had an indirect influence, through reading, including the likes of Dr. Bob Jones,

Hyman Appleman, Charles Finney, D.L. Moody, and Billy Sunday.

One question I'm often asked is how do I keep at it, or how do I keep from getting discouraged? The answer lies in being influenced by the right people, reading God's Word, listening to the messages of great soul winners, and fellowshiping with those doing something for God.

Hebrews 10:24 works both ways: "Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works." Be a positive on the lives of others. Provoke, motivate, and stimulate them to good works. It's also your responsibility to make sure that you carefully control who you allow to provoke you in the Christian life. Make sure it's a person of real spiritual character with a broken heart for the lost.

At a Sunday morning crusade attendance had doubled. One hundred eight responded publicly and 45 were saved. That night a man came to me and confessed, "It's been years since I shed a tear over someone being saved. This morning God broke my heart. I need to get back to soul winning. What should I do?"

I recommended the answer above and added, "Win them individually and get them under the Gospel."

The next night he arrived with four friends. After the service two came forward whom he had won during the day. He then began to pray at the altar a few moments, went back to his seat, and brought the third down. The fourth wouldn't come. After the service he brought the remaining one to me and asked

if I would talk to his friend about Christ. I was happy to and my efforts were successful.

I asked him what had made him go after these four. He pointed to the book and tape on the table. "After talking to you last evening I purchased your tape on compassion. I listened to it and fell on my knees. Then I made a list of my lost friends and these four were on top of the list."

That night I went back to the motel happy and humbled. I looked at an old printing of a 1945 Sword Book entitled, "How to Have a Revival." I had been reading that book like a hungry man for days. God had stirred my heart through great soul winners of the past and now I had challenged this dear man to do the same.

Toolbox

Qualify Your Prospects

The last tool we'll talk about is actually one of the most important to really digest. As we learned in chapter one, we are to never assume a person's salvation. Even for a good soul winner it's one of the easiest mistakes to make. Too many people know the language but not the Savior. Nor is it inconceivable that on Judgment Day, many people who died thinking they were right with God will find out otherwise.

Sometimes I hear soul winners say they fear a person may be offended if they're already a Christian and we try to witness to them. That's simply not

true. On the contrary, it would be a personal source of encouragement for that person to share their testimony and see that another Christian from a good church was really interested in doing the right thing.

While visiting with a local pastor, I met a lady who was working around her house. She talked of her husband's acceptance of Christ, his death, and how he's in heaven. Then she mentioned her love for the local church, the Bible, and even the joys of tithing. I can honestly say that if I was ever convinced that a person was saved because of their speech she would be the one.

But because of my deep conviction that we should never assume, I gave my testimony, explaining about being religious and not 100% sure of heaven. When I built up to the question if she was saved her answer was "salvation is one issue that I never resolved." We got further into the plan and led her to the Lord.

In another city a pastor and I encountered a friendly man who said his background was Baptist but that he had gotten away from the church." We heard an awful story of how sin had cost him his job, health, and family. I gave my testimony and questioned him.

"Oh, I'm saved."

"When did you accept Christ?"

He told me how AA gave him a new respect for God and what is good. I made a decision at that point that he was unsaved and continued with the plan. I was right because minutes later he accepted the Lord.

The soul winner has to decide if the prospect is saved or lost. This is not judging a person but understanding that we can't lead someone to Christ if we don't know if there is a need. Many people will say they've decided to reform, join the church, or turn over a new leaf and we mistakenly believe they've accepted Christ.

With the man from AA I instantly began to share the wonderful Gospel story. I knew that if he was already saved, he'd tell me later I could help him understand the biblical basis for his salvation. But if he was lost I would lead him to Christ.

Either way, my friend, if there is any doubt, we are always safe as soul winners to proceed as if the person is lost.

Summary

The early Christians could put on a clinic.

Their church grew from 120 members (Acts 1:15) to 3,000 (2:41) to 5,000 (4:4) to a multitude (4:32). Most biblical scholars believe 120,000 people (about half of the population of Jerusalem) were reached for Christ within two years of our Lord's death.

Those kinds of numbers focus the mind real quickly! And they make it abundantly clear that the early Christians didn't sit still, hope for the best, and

The Jerusalem Factor

settle for the results. They understood the Jerusalem Factor—that God gave the plan and all they had to do was obey! That was the secret of the incredible numbers saved! They knew that soul winning drives church growth. In fact, they realized that the spiritual health of a church was directly proportional to its commitment to soul winning.

Soul winning is a bone-and-sinew issue for us at the David Wood Ministries, and it's why we pray that churches and Christians in general will rethink their approach to soul winning.

One of the unlooked-for consequences of our spiritual sophistication is that we've let too many experts redefine soul winning from its traditional mold (the Great Commission). As a result, too many of today's churches are living beneath their spiritual potential. Their message is muddled and their outreach is waning.

That's why we want this textbook to galvanize concerned Christians into making soul winning relevant once again. It's not reinventing soul winning, but rediscovering it and then letting it reshape 21st century Christianity.

It's time for Christians everywhere to fulfill the potential of the Great Commission.

Author's Postscript

Writing this book has been a pleasurable experience for me. Your attention and involvement across the 200-plus pages encourages me, and I hope you took my earlier words literally: This book is designed for practical use. Tools must be employed in order to be effective.

With time and practice I trust your soul winning technique will become second nature. I know you will do your best, just as I know that each success you experience will change your spiritual life forever.

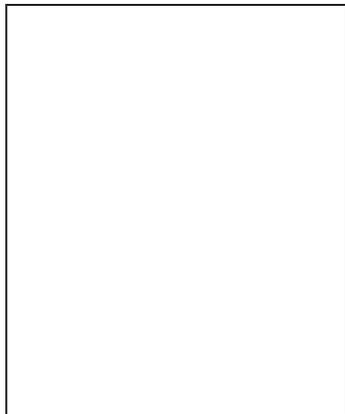
Eternity, of course, is what's at stake. Despite advances in technology and changes to society, the Great Commission remains unwavering. It is perhaps the most timeless and comprehensive of all scriptural commands.

So I encourage you to go, win, baptize, and teach all people, and I sincerely hope I bump into you somewhere within the uttermost parts of our savable world!

Yours for Souls,

David

About the Author



David Wood is an inter-national evangelist and founder of David Wood Ministries in Panama City, Florida. After founding two aggressive, soul winning churches which grew to national prominence, Wood entered evangelism.

Today, Wood preaches an average of forty crusades annually in the United States, as well as conducting at least one foreign crusade each year. In excess of 130,000 have publicly accepted Christ in response to the Gospel message in these meetings. His books, videos, and training materials have been translated into several languages and are used to train soul winners around the world.

David Wood Ministries established the *National Soul Winning Directors Institute* (SWDI) in January 1998, which has trained hundreds of local church soul winning directors, who, in turn, have developed effective outreach ministries in their communities. Additionally, through the Institute program, Wood launched *Operation Asia 2000*, a three-step campaign which has trained thousands of national pastors throughout Southeast Asia. The result of this massive effort has been hundreds of churches planted

and thousands won to Christ using SWDI methods and materials.

As a noted motivational speaker, Wood is committed to a life style of soul winning and sharing these principles with others. It is his belief that soul winning as a concept was shunned during the eighties but has resurfaced in the nineties and will be highly expanded in the new millennium. His prayer is that God will use this book as a catalyst in the birthing of soul winning movement in the 21st century.

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