



A Division of David Wood Ministries

Winning Souls at the Altar

I had just finished bringing a salvation message from the opening rally of a crusade. Many responded. Several came to receive Christ as Saviour. One man in particular was broken to the point of tears. After the invitation and all the people had been dealt with, the pastor read the names of those who had come forward. I noticed as he read the name of this one man in particular, the decision was "re-dedication," not "salvation." I see this happen often in many crusades.

After the service, I happened to see the same gentleman walking by me in the vestibule area. I turned to him, introduced myself and asked the question, "Did you receive the Lord Jesus as your Saviour this morning?" He dropped his head a little and responded, "I need to do that. I want to become a Christian one day." I took my Bible and led him to Christ.

The obvious question is, "Why was the man not led to the Lord at the altar?" In the answer to that question lies one of the greatest weaknesses in evangelism and many of our altar services in the local church -- winning souls at the altar. I am afraid that on many occasions our personal workers are a little intimidated and basically let the prospect do the leading instead of themselves. This normally leaves a confused person, who does not know his spiritual need, telling the "trained personal worker" how to do his job.

I trust that some of the information in this article will be beneficial in helping Christians do a thorough job in winning souls at the altar. Of course not all of us will be able to meet everyone's needs. However, we should pray and work at doing the very best we can to do a thorough job at this vital point in time in the prospect's life.

First of all, let me take a minute to introduce the four positions that are needed in a good service. First is the pastor who extends the invitation. Second is the greeter -- normally one man at the end of each aisle who is ready to greet any prospect who responds to the invitation. Third is the soul winner who is trained and prepared to receive the prospect from the greeter and take him to a private room or to the altar to lead him to Christ or help him in his spiritual need. Fourth is the altar secretary -- normally a couple of ladies seated on the front row who will fill out all the information on the decision slip after the soul winner brings the prospect back and explains the decision made.

As to procedure -- let me briefly walk with you through what normally should happen. The invitation is extended by the pastor. The prospect being convicted by the Holy Spirit would leave his seat and make his way down the aisle. The greeter will many times have to walk around somebody and be very alert to walk to this prospect, smile and greet him. The soul winner should be standing next to the greeter (which means all the soul winners will come forward on the first verse of the invitation). The greeter will then turn and introduce the soul winner to the prospect. The soul winner would then lead the prospect to the altar or go to a private back room to help meet the spiritual need.

At this point, many times the soul winner will make a mistake by turning to the prospect and asking a question like, "Why did you come?" The prospect does not know exactly how to respond and many times will give an answer that will make the soul winner think that he is already saved.

I believe a better question is, "Have you come to receive Jesus Christ as your Saviour?" Normally the prospect will say, "Yes," or give a clear definite answer that he has already been saved. Just making a simple adjustment on how we greet the prospect can make all the difference in dealing with him.

At this point, the soul winner does not need to deal with the lost person as if he were winning a soul in the home. It is normally sufficient for the soul winner to smile at him and say something like this: "I'm so glad that 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, he is going to Hell because of his sin, Jesus paid the price for his sin on the cross -- and then open his Bible to Romans 10:13 and show him his need to personally receive Christ as Saviour. At this point, both the soul winner and the prospect should bow their heads, and the soul winner should lead the person to Christ.

After he has won him to Christ, he then takes him to the altar secretary and introduces him to her and explains the decision made.

I'm sure this brief explanation of the invitation procedure does not answer all questions. However, I trust it will be helpful and beneficial. In this great business of leading men and women to Jesus Christ, we can never stop searching for a better means to be more effective. May God bless you as you "win souls at the altar."

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