

Secrets of Soulwinning

by R. Stanley

Soulwinning is the greatest job on earth because it involves preparing people for eternity and requires a deep sense of reverence, passion, power, pain, positiveness, pleasantness, procedure, patience, preparedness, and partnership.

Scripture: Proverbs 11:30, Isaiah 66:7, Matthew 4:19, Mark 8:36, Luke 10:1, Luke 15:5, John 3:3, John 4:1, Acts 1:8, 2 Corinthians 5:18

Topics: "Evangelism", "Discipleship"

Description

R. Stanley preaches on the significance of soulwinning, emphasizing its importance as the greatest job on earth, the wisest business, the happiest occupation, the loftiest mission to mankind, and the activity with the widest scope in Christianity. Despite its superlatives, only a few believers engage in soulwinning due to a lack of understanding of their calling and a lack of training in how to win souls. The sermon delves into ten essential ingredients for successful soulwinning, including purity, passion, power, pain, positiveness, pleasantness, procedure, patience, preparedness, and partnership, drawing insights from biblical teachings and examples.

Transcript

Soulwinning is the greatest job on earth. "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mk 8:36).

Soulwinning is the wisest business in the world. For who is wiser than he who prepares his neighbour for eternity? (Prov 11:30; Dan 12:3).

Soulwinning is the happiest occupation. For what is comparable to the joy of the shepherd who found his lost sheep, that of the woman who found her lost coin, and that of the father who found his lost son? (Lk 15:5-7,9,10,23,24).

Soulwinning is the loftiest mission to mankind. For what is more honourable than being God's ambassadors to bring men His message of joy and peace? (2 Cor 5:18-20).

Soulwinning has the widest scope of all Christian activities. For which Christian cannot do it, which place is not suitable, and what time is not convenient?

Despite these superlatives of soulwinning, only very few believers are soulwinners. Why? The reasons are many but two of them are outstanding.

First, most of the Christians have not understood their basic calling. They are yet to know that a follower of Messiah cannot but be a fisher of men (Mt 4:19). Soulwinning is a Christian obligation without evasion or exemption.

Second, many Christians have not been taught how to win souls. Through parables and practice Jesus demonstrated soulwinning to His disciples. Pastors and preachers must stir up and steer the unemployed majority in the Church to go after the perishing souls. When Simon Peter said to his friends, "I am going fishing," they said to him, "We are going with you also" (Jn 21:3).

Let's study here ten ingredients of successful soulwinning.

1. Purity

The first and most important step of evangelism is to walk the talk. The best argument for Christianity is Christians. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians. What we say and how we live must agree.

The soulwinner presents Jesus as the Saviour from sins. If he himself does not enjoy victory over sin, it is like a bald man advertising hair oil! The clean life of Paul and the clean message of the gospel coupled together made a corrupt governor tremble (Acts 24:16, 24,25). David Pawson, a renowned Bible teacher, said, "Our works are human proof and God's wonders are divine proof of the gospel" (Mt 5:16; Mk 16:20).

This of course does not mean that one should wait until he becomes perfect. A candle does not begin to shine after it's half-burned. No, it shines as soon as it's lit! The point is, the soulwinner must not live in sin. He must walk honestly before God and man. All known sins must be instantly confessed and forsaken. He should be a sanctified vessel useful for the Master (2 Tim 2:21).

Fishermen do not consider mending of nets a waste of time. Before launching out into the sea, they check up their nets. So also we should regularly examine ourselves with the searchlight of the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Spirit.

2. Passion

Paul the great soulwinner laid bare his heart when he said that he was willing to go to hell if that could send his fellowmen to Heaven (Rom 9:1-3). His ministry to the blinded souls flowed out of a passionate heart (Acts 17:16,17).

The soulwinner is a shepherd. He goes after the scattered sheep and the lost lambs. His primemover is compassion (Mt 9:36). The indispensability of this character is understood by the fact that the Risen Lord, before commissioning Peter, questioned him thrice concerning love (Jn 21:15-17). Love for the Lord and that for the lost are mutually inclusive.

Unless we love our neighbours as ourselves we will not muster all that's within us to stop them rushing into hell. General William Booth (1829-1912), the founder of Salvation Army, insisted that every soulwinner must have a vision of the horror of hell. Did not the rich man plead from hell to send Lazarus to earth to convert his five hell-bound brothers? (Lk 16:27,28).

Passion begets prayer. We are commanded to pray for all men to be saved (1 Tim 2:1-4). Weeping for souls precedes winning of souls. A bleeding heart is the secret of burning lips. A soulwinner prayed, "Lord, Give me souls or take away my soul!"

3. Power

Souls are eternal. It is futile to attempt to save them without the power of the Eternal Spirit. Soulwinning is snatching away souls from Satan. He is least affected by human wisdom and physical strength. Only by a power greater than his, he can be made to surrender his captives. And that is the power of the Holy Spirit (Isa 61:1).

Jesus would not let His disciples go out to evangelize the world until they were endued with power from on High (Lk 24:48,49; Acts 1:8). When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, rivers of living water shall flow out of us to bless the thirsty souls (Jn 7:37-39). We are like the "twelve wells" and "seventy palm trees" in this desert world to heal the wounded and feed the weary (Ex 15:26,27). Remember the 12 and the 70 disciples Christ sent?

"If the axe is dull, and one does not sharpen the edge, then he must use more strength!" (Eccl 10:10). A blunt knife ruins the meat. What a picture! Waiting daily in the presence of the Lord sharpens our spiritual faculties. We are God's battle-axe and weapons of war. The Holy Spirit uses us to ransack the enemy's barracks and release those who are bound (Jer 51:20-23).

The secret of successful soulwinning of the early Christians was their total dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit. They boldly proclaimed before their opposers, "We are His witnesses, and so also is the Holy Spirit" (Acts 5:32). In true evangelism, both the Spirit and the soulwinner call sinners to "come!" (Rev 22:17). Boldness to witness is the immediate outcome of the filling of the Spirit (Acts 4:31).

4. Pain

Soulwinning means reproduction. It is giving birth to children into the Kingdom of God (Jn 3:3). Is there such a thing as giving birth without travail or delivering a child without pain? (Isa 66:7). Apostle Paul experienced labour pains when bringing back the scattered sinners as well as the straying saints to Christ (Gal 4:19).

It was said of the Master Soulwinner, "He shall see the travail of His soul and be satisfied" (Isa 53:11). The depth of grief of the shepherd, the woman and the father is indicated by the height of gladness when they found the lost (Lk 15).

Sharing the gospel with someone is not simply telling the story of Jesus of Nazareth. It is called "sowing in tears" (Psa 126:5,6). Which means, the soulwinner pours himself into the message. There's a deep sense of reverence within him as he deals with a soul. It is a matter of life and death. The feeling of a surgeon while performing an open heart surgery is the nearest equivalent.

The soulwinner cannot escape the fury of the Enemy and the enemies of the gospel. Joseph was a fruitful bough. The archers bitterly grieved him, shot at him and hated him (Gen 49:22,23). No pains, no gains!

Here's God's call to those in the rescue mission: "Let tears run down like a river day and night; Give yourself no relief; Give your eyes no rest. Arise, cry out in the night... Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord" (Lam 2:18,19).

Soulwinning is worth all the pain. When a woman brings forth a child, she forgets all the anguish of the labour because of the "joy" that a human being is born into the world (Jn 16:21). Rebirth of sinners excites Heaven and earth.

5. Positiveness

A pessimist never makes a good soulwinner. Evangelism is no doubt dangerous, though it is not so dangerous as the lack of evangelism. "There is a lion in the road...A fierce lion is in the streets" (Prov 26:13). Thousands of Christians have stayed back home believing these lies of the old serpent.

No fisherman launches out into the sea expecting nothing! No farmer cultivates a field expecting nothing! No fighter marches to the battleground expecting nothing! Yet, many Christians engaged in evangelistic activities expect little. No wonder the fruits are minimal. Did not Jesus say, "Be it unto you according to your faith?"

Positiveness means expecting great things from God and attempting great things for Him. May this spirit of William Carey (1761-1834) consume us! Great soulwinners have always been men of vision. They refused to be intimidated by circumstances. They rejected all negative thoughts. They rose above the opinions of the majority. They reverberated the words of Caleb, "Let us go up at once and take possession" (Num 13:30). Let us remember the words of Christ everytime we set out for soulwinning: "All authority is given to Me. Go therefore!" He has in advance prayed for our contacts and converts (Jn 17:20). Ooh!

Many of us suffer from an inferiority complex. We are scared of the ridicule of a world so advanced in science and technology. But the truth is, "The people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God stands forever!" (Isa 40:7). The gospel has stood all tests. Uncage the lion!

6. Pleasantness

If we would win some, we must be winsome! The soulwinner should not go out without wearing a smile. Is he not carrying glad tidings? His burden for souls need not be shown by a long face! There's an excellent portrait of a soulwinner in Psalm 45:1, "My heart is overflowing with a good theme; I recite my composition concerning the King. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer!"

Jesus earned the nickname, a "friend" of sinners. Friendship is the bait to bring our fellowmen into fellowship. A warm handshake, a loving enquiry, a gentle embrace, a word of appreciation, all these bring the candidate closer (Lk 15:20). Each culture has its own manners and customs, They must be respected. A sense of humour is an asset to the soulwinner. The enemy sells untruth sugarcoated. Should we serve truth with a sour sauce?

William Gurnall said, "Sinners are not pelted into Christ with stones of hard provoking language, but wooed into Christ by heart-melting exhortations." Paul wrote to the Philippian believers, "Let your gentleness be known to all men" (Phil 4:5). Gentleness means graciousness. Concerning Jesus we read in Psalms, "Grace is poured upon Your lips... All Your garments are scented with myrrh and aloes and cassia" (Psa 45:2,8). We are called to diffuse this "fragrance" in every place to save the perishing! (2 Cor 2:14,15).

7. Procedure

The message is the same but the methods should be suitably changed according to the nature and need of the candidate. Blind shots accomplish little. The approach of Jesus to each individual was different. Also the apostles were so variant in their methods.

The black cummin is beaten out with a stick, but the cummin with a rod! This discretion comes from the Lord who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance" (Isa 28:26-29). As we wait on Him each morning, He teaches us "how to speak a word in season to him who is weary" (Isa 50:4).

In order to be relevant in what we say, we also must have true understanding of the world we are committed to reach for Christ. We need to know its complexities, contradictions, upheavals, yearnings, aspirations and hope. The soulwinner should not be stranger to newspapers.

We must take advantage of our pre-conversion background. Paul as a converted Jew could present the gospel so convincingly to the Jewish community. If you are a Hindu convert, be primarily concerned about Hindus to help them find the truth (Rom 9:1-5; 10:1-4). It is sad that most of the Indian evangelists from Hindu background spend most of their time with Christian audience.

Though there's no hard and fast rule, it is advisable in personal soulwinning to deal with those of the same age group and sex.

8. Patience

One of the great faults in soulwinning today is hurry. Jesus did not hurry with Nicodemus. He dealt patiently with him. Nicodemus was not saved in the first five minutes! In our enthusiasm to get quick results, we perform caesareans. We dilute the message to make conversion easy. This is fatal. We can persuade people but not push them into a decision. Rebirth is a supernatural miracle (Jn 3:7,8). Don't meddle with it. Midwifery is just an assistance. Premature babies are difficult to bring up!

Having sown the seed, the soulwinner like a farmer must patiently wait for the harvest (Js 5:7). Having thrown the net, he must wait patiently like a fisherman for the catch. Patience and persistence are vital virtues in soulwinning. The game is worth many failing efforts. The shepherd diligently searched until he found the lost sheep. The woman did so until she found the lost coin. We must not give up too soon. No person is too difficult. No place is too hard.

9. Preparedness

Soulwinning is not a spare-time activity. We must have a spirit of evangelism, not just a spurt of evangelism! We should be everyday witnesses. "In season and out of season!" (2 Tim 4:2). The early disciples witnessed everywhere, everyday. James A. Stewart challenges us, "We must witness in unconventional places, at unconventional times, with an unconventional approach!" Let the gospel be our gossip.

We may not meet the same person again. Also what is the guarantee that tomorrow would be more convenient than today? (Prov 27:1). "Now" is the best time (2 Cor 6:2). Unless we are ever ready, the donkey or the ox that has fallen into the pit will die because of delay! (Lk 14:5).

10. Partnership

"Personal" soulwinning does not mean that we minister all alone. Jesus sent soulwinners "two by two." And He worked in close partnership with them. He sent them into every city and place "where He Himself was about to go" (Lk 10:1).

When Simon Peter threw the net into the deep at the word of Jesus, they got a net-breaking catch. "So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them!" (Lk 5:5-7). A beautiful picture for partnership in evangelism!

Paul plants. Apollos waters. And God gives the increase. Our productivity in evangelism will be multiplied if we act together as God's "fellow workers in His field and building" (1 Cor 3:6-9).

Introduce your contacts to the fellow believers. Share your successes and failures in soulwinning with other Christians for prayer. Be not a solo player. C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) was right when he said, "Christian labourers disconnected from the Church are like sowing and reaping without having any barn in which to store the fruits of the harvest; they are useful but incomplete."

"Follow Me!"

Interestingly enough, all these ten ingredients are seen in Christ's personal encounter with the Samaritan woman (Read John 4:1-42).

Purity: The adulterous woman could perceive that Jesus was truly a man of God (v 19). Passion: He realised that her quest was greater than His thirst (v 10).

Power: He touched her problem precisely (v 16).

Pain: He did not mind His weariness and hunger (v 6).

Positiveness: Without condemning her, He offered her something more attractive (vv 17,18,13,14).

Pleasantness: His request was polite. He let her speak freely her ancestry (vv 7,12,20). Procedure: He let the conversation develop quite naturally.

Patience: He answered her questions patiently (vv 9,11,12). He did not thrust the blessing on her before leading her to repentance (v 19).

Preparedness: Anytime was right time for Him to help someone in need (v 6).

Partnership: When His disciples returned, He taught them in that context, "One sows and another reaps" (v 37).

Oh, who can teach us soulwinning like Jesus who said, "Follow Me, I will make you fishers of men?"

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