

Keeping the Flock

by Samuel Logan Brengle

The soul-winner must give much time and thought and prayer and effort to keep and strengthen his converts, and love must abound among converts and soul-winners.

Scripture: Exodus 18:21-26, John 6:66, Acts 20:26-27, 1 Corinthians 13:1-8, 2 Corinthians 12:14-15, Colossians 1:28, 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, 1 Thessalonians 3:8, 2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 1:5

Topics: "Nurturing Faith", "The Role of Love in Ministry"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes the vital role of soul-winners in nurturing and maintaining the faith of their converts, drawing parallels to Paul's dedication in strengthening believers. He warns against the tendency to focus solely on conversion without ongoing support, likening the care of new believers to the nurturing of a newborn. Brengle stresses the importance of love, prayer, and personal connection in keeping the spiritual fire alive in the hearts of converts, urging soul-winners to actively engage in their growth and development. He highlights the necessity of teaching converts to pray, read the Bible, and work for others, while also fostering a community of love and support among believers. Ultimately, Brengle calls for a ministry characterized by deep love and commitment, ensuring that the converts remain steadfast in their faith.

Transcript

The soul-winner must give much time and thought and prayer and effort to keep and strengthen his converts. He ought to say with Paul, "Now we live if ye stand fast," and again like Paul he should pray "night and day exceedingly that we might perfect that which is lacking in your faith." (1 Thess. 3:8, 10.) Paul's ambition was not simply to get people converted and united with some local corps or church, but to "present every man perfect in Christ Jesus." (See Col. 1:28.)

There is danger of spending far more effort and care in getting people to the penitent-form or the inquiry room, than in keeping them after they are there. After a baby is born it must be intelligently and constantly cared for, or it will very likely die. Soul-winners are not spiritual incubators, but fathers and mothers in Israel, with all the measureless responsibility not only of saving souls, but of keeping them after they are saved.

The General once said to a few of us on a New England train, "Look well to the fire in your own souls, for the tendency of fire is to go out."

And yet a fire will never go out if it is frequently well shaken down and fresh fuel is added. We must look well to the spark of fire kindled in the hearts of our converts, and fan it gently but surely to a flame and help them to care for it, that it may never go out. The saddest thing in all this mighty work of soul-saving is the fact that in so many instances the fire goes out, the light ceases to shine, the salt loses its savor, and the soul that was redeemed and washed with "precious Blood," made a partaker of the Holy Ghost," and had "tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come," falls away and returns to its old sins, "like the dog to his vomit" and the "sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Judas backslid from the very face and ministry of Jesus Himself; and on another occasion, after one of His searching sermons, we read that, "from that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." (John 6:66.)

Paul had to mourn the backsliding of "Demas, who loved this present world." He foresaw and foretold the backsliding of some of the Ephesian local officers (see Acts 20:29-30), and after his mighty victories there, which radiated to all the surrounding nations, he had sorrowfully to write to Timothy, "This thou knowest, that all they that are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes." "Offenses must needs come," and backslidings will follow, but the soul-winner must strive mightily against this, until, like Paul, he can appeal to his people and say, "I take you to record this day that I am pure from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:26, 27.) He must not only save sinners, but must keep his converts.

I. (a.) They should be visited. Some time ago I called at a corps in California. The Ensign met me at the train, and on the way to the quarters remarked, "We got one of the worst drunkards in town saved last night, and I have seen him twice this morning and he is doing well." Of course he would do well with such love and care as that! If they cannot be visited at once, drop them a note and enclose a suitable tract. A business man of about fifty years of age, together with his wife, got saved in my meetings. I missed him one night, then I wrote him a note telling him I was praying for him, etc. The next night he was present and told how he had been sorely tempted, but that note blessed him and helped him to get the victory. He became a good soldier. In all probability it was that timely little note, written in five minutes and costing only two cents to mail that kept him saved.

(b.) They should be encouraged to read their Bible daily, together with other good books. The Red-Hot Library is well adapted to young converts. When I was in Boston as Captain I went to the Bible Society and got them to donate me forty little five-cent Testaments, one of which I used to give each convert, after having marked a number of helpful texts and written his name on the fly-leaf. Years afterward I was visiting a corps. A young man asked me if I didn't remember him. I did not. He pulled out a little, well-worn Testament, pointed to his name and asked if I knew that writing. I did. Said he, "You gave me this Testament years ago when you were Captain in Boston I have kept it and read it ever since, and am to be sworn in as a soldier tonight"

(c.) They must be taught to pray and urged to much regular and frequent secret prayer, until they know its sweetness and unspeakable necessity and profit.

(d.) They must be instructed to keep believing and made to see the difference between sin and temptation.

(e.) They should be patiently encouraged to work for others, especially for their own people "Andrew findeth his own brother Simon, and he brought him to Jesus," the Bible says, and our converts must do likewise.

(f.) They should be patiently, tenderly, firmly led into the experience of sanctification or perfect love. They must not be allowed to stop at consecration, but must be pressed on into a definite experience of full salvation. It was at this point that President Mahan says Finney failed during his early ministry. He was unexcelled in getting sinners to a complete renunciation of all sin, to making right of all past disobedience, followed by a complete consecration of all to Jesus. He would start them off for the future with vows to obey God at all points, while nothing was said to them about trusting Jesus to cleanse their hearts at once and fill them with the Holy Spirit. Our vows are only ropes of sand, until the Holy Ghost has come with consuming fire into our hearts, filling them with perfect love. Mahan says: "No individual, I believe, ever disciplined believers so severely and with such intense and tireless perseverance, on that principle as my brother Finney, before he learned the way of the Lord more perfectly. Appalled at the back slidings which followed his revivals, his most earnest efforts were put forth to induce among believers permanence in the divine life. In accomplishing this, he knew of but one method -- absolute and fixed renunciation of sin, consecration to God and purpose of obedience." Not a word about the faith that receives.

"During his pastorate in New York, for example, he held for weeks in succession special meetings of his church for perfecting this work, and never were a class of poor creatures carried through a severer discipline than were these. Years after, as their pastor informed me, these believers said they had never recovered from the internal weakness and exhaustion which had resulted from the terrible discipline through which Mr. Finney had carried them.

"When he came to Oberlin and entered upon the duties of his professorship, he felt that God had given him a blessed opportunity to realize in perfection his ideal of a ministry for the churches He had before him a mass of talented and promising theological students, who had implicit confidence in the wisdom of their teachers, and with equal sincerity would follow their instructions. He, accordingly, for months in succession, gathered together these students at stated seasons, instructed them most carefully in regard to the nature of the renunciation of sin, consecration to Christ, and purpose of obedience required of them. Then, under his teachings and exhortations, they would renew their renunciations, consecrations and purposes of obedience, with all the intensity and fixedness of resolve of which they were capable. The result in every case was one and the same -- not the new life of joy and peace and power that was expected, but groaning bondage under the law of sin and death. At the commencement and during the progress of each meeting, their confessions and renunciations, their solemn consecrations and vows of obedience, were renewed, if possible, with fuller determination than ever before. Each meeting, however, was closed with the same dirge songs:

"Look how we grovel here below,

"Return, O Holy Dove, return."

and as they went out, not their songs of joy and gladness were heard, but their groans; 'They followed, and followed hard after the law of righteousness, but did not attain to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law;' that is, by self-originated efforts and determinations." (Mahan's Autobiography, pages 246-7.)

Thank God, Finney learned better, and soul-winners should profit by his example. Converts must utterly renounce sin, make wrong things right and consecrate themselves fully to the Lord to obey Him in all things great and small; but they must understand fully that that is only man's part, and that they must now wait on their Heavenly Father and believe for him to do His part, which is to cleanse their hearts and fill

them with the Holy Ghost. They must continue in glad, believing, wrestling, never-give-in prayer, till the Comforter comes into their hearts in all His cleansing, sanctifying, comforting power. They must "tarry in Jerusalem till they are endued with power from on high." They must believe God and receive the Holy Ghost, remembering that God is "more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than parents are to give good gifts unto their children." That is so. Hallelujah! I have proved it.

II. The soul-winner should so organize his work and train his people that he shall have wide-awake, willing workers and local officers to assist him in looking after the converts.

It will take patience and tact and prayer to train these workers, but it will abundantly repay all effort. "To every man his work," is the inspired plan. Moses had such helpers. (See Ex.18:21-26.) Paul depended much on such help. (2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:5.) But there must not be too many irons in the fire. Everything must be subordinated to this one end of saving men and making them into valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ. Paul said: "This one thing I do." Organization must not be overdone, lest the workers become like David in Saul's armor, lest they become like a mighty engine that has not sufficient power to run itself. Let the machinery be simple and the divine, Holy Ghost power be abundant. For this there must be much prayer and patient waiting upon God. The power is His and can be had when persistently, believingly, humbly and boldly applied for. Glory to God!

III. Love must abound. In England, France, Germany and other European countries, the populations are practically homogeneous -- that is, in England they are all English; in France, French, etc.; but in this country we are a mixed people, with different ideals, tastes, maxims, prejudices, hereditary instincts, influences and religious training, which make it more difficult for us to combine for religious purposes and work harmoniously together.

In order to do this we must be melted or heated by a great common passion, and welded together like two pieces of iron, until there is no longer "Greek or Jew," Englishman or Irishman, French or German, American or European, "but Christ is all and in all." Love is the only thing that will do this, and love will do it. I heard one of our officers say: "I got saved in an Army meeting where I could not understand a word spoken. But the love of Jesus was there and I understood that."

In cold weather men of all nations will gather around a stove in which there is a fire, and so they will gather around officers and soldiers who are full of love. Love is "the bond of perfectness," according to Paul. It is that which quenches jealousies, destroys envyings, burns up suspicions, begets confidence and holds men together with bonds stronger than death. Let us have it and have it more abundantly. More love, more love, more love! Without it we are nothing.

We may be gifted in speech and song as an angel; we may be shrewd and farseeing and able to accurately forecast the future; we may be encyclopedic in our knowledge; we may have mountain-moving faith; we may be charitably inclined and feed and shelter many poor to the extent of using up all our resources and wearing out our bodies, but if we have not the gentle, holy, humble, longsuffering, self-forgetful, unfailing unsuspecting, self-sacrificing, generous, lowly love of Jesus, we are nothing -- we are as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. (1 Cor. 13:1-8.)

It was this love that enabled Paul to write: "I will not be burdensome to you, for I seek not yours, but you And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." (2 Cor. 12:14-15.) And here is another bit of Paul's autobiography that ought to be put on the wall of every minister's study and every officers quarters throughout the land, every word of which is freighted

with the love that filled his great heart: "For yourselves, brethren, know our entrance in unto you, that it was not in vain; but even after we had been shamefully entreated at Philippi we were bold in our God to speak unto you the Gospel of God with much contention.

"For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile; but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness; nor of men sought we glory, neither of you nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children; so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us. For ye remember, brethren, our labor and travail; for laboring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the Gospel of God. Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we behaved ourselves among you that believe; as ye know how we exhorted and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children, that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His Kingdom and glory." (1 Thess. 2:1-12.)

And again he says: "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you and have taught you publicly, and from house to house,..... I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears." (Acts 20:20, 26, 27, 31.)

This is the love that will build up our converts, and nothing else will. We must have love, love, love! We must look for love, pray for love, believe for love. We must exercise love ourselves, and inspire all our people to love, and then they will watch over one another, and pray and weep for each other, and bless one another, and be united as one man, and the gates of hell cannot prevail against us.

Oh, that we all as soul-winners may have melting baptisms of holy love that shall make us, like Jesus, patient, gentle, faithful, courageous, tireless, undismayed and utterly unselfish. Then shall our spiritual children abound and be strong, and The Army of the Lord shall become more terrible to evildoers than "an army with banners."

If we haven't this love, God will give it to us in answer to persistent, believing prayer. He surely will. Glory to God!

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/samuel-logan-brengle/keeping-the-flock/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net