



The Soul-Winner's Secret

Chapter 7 – The Studies Of The Soul-Winner

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. – Paul to Timothy." (2 Tim. 2:15.)

"Give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all." (1 Tim. 4:13,15).

No man or woman need hope to be a permanently successful soul-winner who is not a diligent student of the truth, of the will and ways of God, of men and of methods. A man cannot successfully build a house, or write a poem, or govern a city, or manage a store, or even shoe a horse or make a mousetrap without thoughtful study.

A doctor must think and study, and that diligently and continuously, if he would understand the delicate human organism and the subtle diseases to which it is subject and the various remedies by which these diseases are to be antagonized.

A lawyer must be a diligent student if he would win cases before judges and juries in the face of self-interest and skillful opponents.

How much more then should the soul-winner study in order that he may understand the diseases of the soul, the ramifications of evil, the deceitfulness of the human heart and the application of the great remedy God has provided to meet all the needs of the soul; or, to change the figure, how must he study to win his case at the bar of man's conscience, when the man's own deceitful heart is the opposing counsel, assisted by that old adversary, the devil, who for six thousand years has been deceiving the children of men and leading them down to hell!

Oh, that every man who sets himself to be a soul-winner might fully recognize the tremendous



odds against which he fights and set himself by much believing prayer and joyous diligent study to show himself a man "approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed!" Thank God no one called of Him need be discouraged or dismayed. Only let him not bury his talent in a napkin, nor spend his time in idle dreaming, but let him stir up the gift that is in him and faithfully give a little time each day to those studies that will enlighten the mind and fit him for the work God has called him to, and he shall surely be blessed of God and find himself "furnished unto every good work."

1. The first thing and the last to be studied is the Bible. The doctor may know all about law and art, history and theology, but if he is unacquainted with his medical books he is a failure as a doctor. The lawyer may have devoured libraries, traveled the wide world over and become a walking encyclopedia and dictionary, but if he is unacquainted with his law books, as a lawyer he is a failure.

So the worker for souls may read ten thousand books, may be able to quote poetry by the mile, may be acquainted with all the facts of science and history, and may even be a profound theologian, but unless he is a diligent student of the Bible, he will not permanently succeed as a soul-winner. He must become full of the thoughts of God. He must eat the Word and digest it and turn it into spiritual blood and bone and muscle and nerve and sinew, until he becomes, as someone has said, "A living Bible, eighteen inches wide by six feet long, bound in human skin"

Finney used to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning and read his Bible until 8. During one of his revival services in Boston he said: "I gave myself to a great deal of prayer. After my evening services I would retire as early as I could, but rose at 4 o'clock in the morning because I could sleep no longer, and immediately went to the study and engaged in prayer. And so deeply was my mind exercised, and so absorbed in prayer, that I frequently continued from the time I arose at 4 o'clock, till called to breakfast at 8 o'clock My days were spent as far as I could get time, in searching the Scriptures I read nothing else all that winter but my Bible, and a great deal of it seemed new to me. Again the Lord took me, as it were, from Genesis to Revelation. He let me



see the connection of things, the promises, the threatenings, the prophecies and the fulfillment; and indeed the whole Scripture seemed to me all ablaze with light. and not only light, but it seemed as if God's Word was instinct with the very life of God."

This diligent attention to the Word of God is a command He said to Joshua, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night" The object of this earnest study was, "That thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein," and the result, "for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous and then thou shalt have good success." David's "blessed man" is not one who simply refuses to keep company with the ungodly and abstains from their ways, "but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in His law doth he meditates day and night." (Ps. 1:2.) And the difference between him and the ungodly is the difference between a fruitful tree planted by the river and "the chaff which the wind driveth away."

Jesus declared the importance of the Word when He told the devil that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Mrs. General Booth read her Bible through a number of times before she was twelve years old. No wonder God made her a "mother of nations." She was full of truth, and she could never open her mouth without saying something that was calculated to expose shams and falsehoods, overthrow the devil's kingdom of lies and build up God's kingdom of righteousness and truth in the hearts of men.

Whitefield read the Bible through many times on his knees with Henry's notes. Again and again the writer has read his Bible through on his knees, and it is ever new and as David said, "sweeter also than honey or the honeycomb." And like Job he can say "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food."

Wesley in his old age called himself "A man of one book." It is from this armory that the soul-winner is to draw his weapons with which he fights all hell. It is here that he is to study the mind



and heart of God, the truth about Jesus Christ, sin and the way of escape from it, and the facts about heaven and hell, a Judgment Day and eternity. Here he is to find a law for the lawless, warnings for the careless, promises for the penitent, encouragement for the distressed, balm for the wounded, healing for the sick, life for the dead. He is to "preach the Word," for it is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" And in preaching it, if he preaches as they did of old, "with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven," he will find it living and active and "sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart." I have sometimes read or quoted the Word of God to people, and it fitted their case so pat that it smote them like a lightning bolt.

"Is not My Word like a fire? saith the Lord, and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?"

But the soul-winner must not study it simply that he may preach it, but that he may himself live by it, be furnished, strengthened, enlightened, corrected and made wise by it. It must pass through his own soul and become a part of his own spiritual life before he can preach it with power and apply it effectually to the saving of men. And in order to do this he must be filled with the Holy Ghost. In fact, it is only as he is filled with the Spirit that he will be able to get much benefit from the Word of God or have much love for it.

The Bible is a sealed book to unspiritual people, but when the Comforter comes it is unsealed and its wondrous meaning made clear. I read recently of a lad, who could not read, receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Then he got his unsaved sister to read the Bible to him and he explained it to her. Hallelujah! The Holy Ghost in him enabled him to understand what the Holy Ghost in holy men of old enabled them to write. Only the Holy Ghost can help men to understand His Book.

An old colored lady loved her Bible very much. A friend who found her reading it frequently, gave her a commentary to assist her in getting at its meaning. A few days later seeing her, he



asked, "Well, Auntie, how do you like that book I gave you?" She replied, "Oh, dat be a very good book, but de Bible do throw a lot o' light on dat 'er book."

The Bereans show us the way to read the Bible (Acts 17:11). 1. They received the Word with all readiness. 2. They searched the Scriptures. It was not with them just a hasty, careless, thoughtless reading; they searched as men would search for hidden treasure. 3. They did this daily.

Personally for years I have given the best hour of the day to the Bible, until I want it more than I want my food.

It should be read early in the day, before other things crowd in. What is read should be remembered. In eating it is not the amount we eat, but the amount we digest that does us good, and just so is it in reading and studying. It is not the amount we read, but what we remember and make our own that does us good.

2. Besides the Bible, the soul-winner ought to lay out a course of reading for himself, and stick to it, reading a few pages each day. Ten pages a day will mean from ten to fifteen books a year.

Every Salvation Army officer ought to read the General's "Letters," "Holiness Readings," the "F. O.," and Mrs. Booth's works. "Books that Bless," by the Chief, will prove invaluable.

"Holy Living and Dying," by Taylor; Law's "Call," "Saint's Rest," by Baxter; Edwards' "Life of Brainerd," Wesley's works, "Life of Fletcher," "Life of Bramwell," "Pilgrim's Progress," "Half Hours with St. Paul," by Daniel Steele; "Holiness and Power," by Rev. A. M. Hills, and Finney's and Caughey's works will make a library that can be read again and again with untold profit by soul-winners.

Not too much time should be spent over newspapers. It would probably not be wise to discard them altogether, but better do that than let them rob you of the time that should be spent in deep study and earnest prayer. I once heard the General say, "I have not read a newspaper for ten days." All useful knowledge may prove valuable to the soul-winner, and he should seek



information everywhere. It is well to carry a notebook and constantly make notes. Gladstone made notes on the margins of books he read.

The soul-winner should study not only books, but men and methods. John Wesley became a supreme master in practical and experimental theology and a matchless soul-winner largely through his study of men. He examined thousands of people – men, women and children, with reference to their religious experience, and especially their experiences of sanctification, until he became acquainted with the human heart and the workings of the Holy Spirit as few men have ever done. I know of no better and surer method of acquainting one's self with the human heart and the way the Holy Spirit works with men to save than by this close, personal, private conversation and inquiry about the religious experiences of the Christians around us. This is the scientific method applied to the study of the human heart, the Christian life and religious experience, and it can be carried on wherever you can find a human being to talk with you. "He that winneth souls is wise."