

Proverbs 11:30

WINNING SOULS

As we have had an Outreach Service, let us remember some important things regarding winning souls for Christ. Our text tells us we need **wisdom** to do so. Not human wisdom but the wisdom that is from above.

In fact human wisdom can be **counter-productive**. It is an honourable desire to be used by the Lord in enlightening someone regarding the **most important matter in the world** – the salvation of a soul. There is nothing more important. It's a pity more people do not realise that! The present day **apathy** towards the **salvation** of a **soul** is very serious.

It reveals that, as a nation, we have lost the whole concept of what it is to be human. To be human means that we have been **created** by God and are **accountable to Him**. That is **not** big on our **agenda** today – if it is on the agenda at all! David said *“Say to my soul ‘I am your salvation’”* [Psa 35:3] It ought to be a **daily prayer** that we will be helpful to those who need the Lord's salvation.

Our role on earth as Xns, is to be **'healers'**, not **condemners!** Jesus, the Perfect Man came to heal and restore mankind to His **original state** *“I am not come to call the righteous but **sinner**s to repentance”*! [Mat 9:13] *“For God did **not** send his Son into the world to **condemn** the world, but to **save** the world through Him”* [J3:17] Let us look at some things to help us in our desire to win souls!

SOME PRINCIPLES to HELP US

One We must be **humble!** We too were **sinner**s, and if it were not for **God's grace** and **mercy** towards us, we would be left in our sins and hating the Lord. That means we should have a **softness** towards the wicked – a **pity** for them – not an anger against them! That is the way Jesus responded to sinners. As He looked over the city wall of Jerusalem – He **wept!** Do we weep for sinners?

One of the great revivals in the OT was under good King **Josiah**. When he realised how sinful his land had become (through the Book of the Lord being found), this is what God said to him *“**Because** your **heart** was responsive and you **humbled** yourself **before** God when you heard what he spoke against this place and its people, and **because** you **humbled** yourself before me and tore your robes and **wept** in my presence, I have heard you, declares the Lord”* [2 Chr 34:26,27]! We need first to humble

ourselves before we begin to deal with others!

Two This will mean that we will **avoid judging** and **condemning** people. I am not saying this because it is not politically correct to do so – I am saying it because Jesus said it! *“**Judge not**”* and He **meant** it. It is the easiest thing in the world to condemn! Remember the MacAulays and Sunday newspaper man! Say ‘No thank you, I don't smoke’ rather than ‘The Bible is against smoking, our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and must not be polluted’! Silence, as we ourselves practice godliness, can be one of the best testimonies – teacher across the road running out to explain her sore back in the pews!

Jesus could have said so much to the **Woman of Samaria** about her past life, and present life! He could have condemned so much. Jesus did not go around 'pulling people up' for their sins! Teaching the Xn life is important – but it comes **after** commitment to Christ!

Three Remember conversion is a **process** – it does **not** usually happen through **one** event alone! It is a **culmination** of experiences. Sudden, unexpected conversions are not the ‘norm’, but even they, are **not** sudden anyway – even Paul's conversion *“it is hard for you to kick against the pricks”* did it **seem** that Paul was kicking against God as he killed Xians?

As we encourage people to turn to the Lord, don't try and cover **all aspects** of the faith at one sitting! One point at a time. Over a period of time the **light dawns** – as indeed in nature! Jesus said the kingdom of God is like a farmer planting seed, clear away the rubble first, prepare the ground, sow, water, cultivate the growth - all **before** reaping the harvest! (It can be easy to throw seed on unprepared ground and get something that **looks like** fruit but actually is not as the parable says). So we must not be discouraged if ‘newcomers’ are slow in grasping some important doctrines – true faith is a gradual process of convictions!**!**

Four It is **best** to ‘witness’ when we are under **their agenda** – as Jesus in Levi's house at the feast – it was when **they asked** Jesus a question that He took the initiative and explained some things. *“**Why do You eat and drink with...**”*. The benefits are (a) they probably really do **want** an answer because they are **confused!** (b) their guards are down, whereas if we go in on our agenda with ‘all guns blazing’ they will be on the **defensive**. (c) they cannot charge us with ‘Bible thumping because they

asked us a question. Thus we need to be prepared when they do ask us!

Remember acceptance of someone does **not** mean **approval** of that person's behaviour. To be nice to someone does not mean we approve of their sins! Jesus accepted sinners **as they were!** Every person has the image of God in them, despite the corruption and perversion of that image, there is still the faint reflection of God in every soul. All classes of **people** are to be 'respected' although we do not **approve** of their sins. When we show respect to all classes of people (for all are made in the image of God), we will be listened to. We must not look down those coming out of the Bingo hall or even the man in the gutter! We must never forget "*who makes you to differ?*"!

Five It is important that we are **confident** about our faith/beliefs, do **not** be **embarrassed** or **apologetic** or **ashamed** about what we believe! Jesus said "*If anyone is **ashamed** of Me and **My words** in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His Father's glory with the holy angels*"[Mar 3:8] People **appreciate** and **value** strong faith (even when it is misplaced!) But be confident **because** it is the **Truth** of God. Say as often as you can 'Jesus said '...?' Many people are **looking** for **guidance** and are hungry for solid truth! People often say 'I wish I had your faith' – and many mean it!

A **weak, uncertain, compromising** Xn, is a **bad testimony!** (So is a proud **arrogant** one!) But a sure confidence in the **truth** is a powerful witness. People detect **superficial** and **shallow** faith quite quickly!

Six Evangelism is a **lifestyle** not something we turn on and off at certain times when certain people are around. It is a **way of life** – our lives should **appeal** and be attractive to unbelievers – not because of its liberality, but because of its **consistency!** There are actually plenty of opportunities **each day** for you/I to live out our faith in a consistent way. Read that Xian book at **lunch-break** instead of the papers. Put on that tape of that Xian **tape** in the car (as you would normally). Tell Kevin Pirie worker story! *Be **natural** be true to yourself and tell the whole truth – story meeting 'Xian' in Inverness street!! I would never have said what I did say if I knew he was not a Xian – why not? People will not be offended at **you** telling the truth about your inward thoughts.

Seven Don't forget it is the **Holy Spirit** that changes a person's heart – it is **not our business** to 'convert' anyone – we can't anyway – let God

deal with people's heart/souls! Our duty is to **confirm** the **reality** of Christ/salvation and to **inform** people of the truth, and if we can, **explain** the truth. "*Always be ready to give a **defense** to everyone who **asks** you a **reason** for the hope that is in you*"[1 Peter 3:15].

Eight Very often, it is **we, us**, not the unbeliever, who ought to **change** our habit. Paul said "*I **became** a Jew to **win** the Jews...I became **weak** to win the weak, I have become **all things** to all men that I might by all means **save** some*"[1 Cor 9:22]. He shaved his head, in order to get a hearing (of course we do not commit **sin**) but we can change our **customs** or even **traditions** in order to 'accommodate' and encourage an unbeliever to talk of religion and faith in Christ. To stop repairing a neighbour's burst pipe to go to the prayer meeting **may** be a very bad witness! *To expect unbelievers to change their dress, programme in order to worship 'our style' is not what Paul teaches.

We must **love** people for what they **are**, not for some ulterior motive such as a **target** for evangelism. People will 'suss that out pretty quickly' if they are a target for your evangelism! Be a **friend**, the first to say '**Good morning**', the first to **congratulate**, first to **welcome**, first to **apologise**. Paul "*I have **made myself** a **servant** to **all***". We should be willing to give up watching our favourite TV programme to visit our neighbour in hospital or mow his lawn!

Finally – remember every Xian **is** an evangelist, whether he realises it or not. The Bible never **says** '**Be** a witness', it always says 'we **are** witness' – **good** ones or **bad** ones. Every thing **you** as a professing Xn do, is seen in the context of Xianity! Xian people are the only 'Bible', and the only 'Christ' some folk today will ever read! When people see **you** Xian man or woman, they will **make judgments** about **Christ!** (they ought not to, but they do!) It's a fact of life.