

The Soul Winner (2)

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[0 : 0 0] Let us read now in Mark chapter 4, the gospel according to Mark and chapter 4. This is on page 787 of your Black Pew Bible, the Bible you have in front of you, page number 787.

Remember, next Sunday morning is our guest service, so please be thinking in your mind, who can I invite to church next Sunday morning? The message will be specifically geared toward visitors. Again he began to teach beside the sea, and a very large crowd gathered about him so that he got into a boat and sat on it on the sea, and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land. And he was teaching them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them, listen, Behold, a sower went out to sow, and as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it.

Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it did not have much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil. And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root, it withered away.

[1 : 2 0] Other seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. And other seeds fell into good soil and produced grain, growing up and increasing, and yielding thirtyfold and sixtyfold and a hundredfold.

And he said, He who has ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables.

And he said to them, To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside, everything is in parables, so that they may indeed see, but not perceive, and may indeed hear, but not understand, lest they should turn and be forgiven.

And he said to them, Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word, and these are the ones along the path where the word is sown, when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown among them.

And these are the ones sown on rocky ground, the ones who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy. And they have no root in themselves, and endure for a while, then when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

[2 : 5 1] And others are the ones sown among thorns. They are those who hear the word, but the cares of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entered in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful.

But those that were sown on the good soil are the ones who hear the word, and accept it, and bear fruit thirtyfold, and sixtyfold, and a hundredfold.

And then one verse in Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 30. Proverbs 11 verse 30. I'm sorry, I don't have a page number for this.

Maybe someone can shout a page number out. Proverbs 11 verse 30. 502. Proverbs 11 verse 30. Roger Carswell is a force of nature.

[4 : 0 6] Now in his mid-seventies, he has lost none of his enthusiasm for telling people the good news of Jesus Christ and his gospel.

I had the privilege of spending a whole week with Roger at the Bucky Convention where we were the main speakers, and we stayed together in a house by ourselves. He is half Armenian on his mother's side.

Armenian, not Armenian. Armenian, ethnically Armenian. His grandfather was a famous Armenian evangelist called Sisak Manugian. Sisak planted 33 churches among Armenian refugees in the early 20th century.

I've got his biography at home. If anyone wants to read about Sisak Manugian, speak to me afterwards. I'll give you his biography. Roger himself was converted as a young boy for the witness of his uncle in Lebanon.

And since then, Roger's been a tireless evangelist through whom literally tens of thousands of people have come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

[5 : 16] Over the week we spent together, Roger reignited my own passion for personal evangelism, what Evan talked about earlier.

I think I said last time that through my preaching, many people have become Christians. But through my personal evangelism, few, if any, have responded in faith and trust.

Well, Roger constantly inspired me by the way in which, as we would walk up and down the streets of Bucky together, having a blether, he would just stop and talk to strangers.

He would casually introduce them to the Christian gospel. And then he would give them a tract. And afterward, he would say to me, Colin, you need to realize that in 100 years' time, every one of these people will have stood before the judgment seat of Christ.

Every one of these people will have stood before the judgment seat of Christ. And he would say to me, we don't have the time or the luxury of timidity, cowardice, or inhibition when it comes to personal evangelism.

[6 : 31] Who cares what people think about us as long as we've been faithful in sharing the gospel with them and offering them eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ?

Who cares if they should think that we're misguided fools or religious idiots? For if even just one person among the many hundreds to whom we speak the truth about Jesus should believe in him and be saved, it's all worth it.

The problem we face in today's church isn't that we're doing personal evangelism all wrong. It's that we're not doing it at all. This is a quite apropos, appropriate statistic.

I recently heard a statistic when we were in Holiday in Anik and went to church. Eight out of ten Christians have never invited another person to church.

Eight out of ten Christians have never invited another person to church. Well, one thing's true. You can't spend a week with Roger Carswell without being inspired to go and speak for yourself to non-Christians about Jesus.

[7 : 44] To become a soul winner. In this verse, Proverbs 11.30, we read, The one who wins souls is wise. The wise Christian is the one whose aim and purpose.

It is in life to win souls for Jesus. And last time we saw why it was so needful. Because it's the fruit of righteousness. Because it's the greatest need of souls.

Because it's the perspective of God and wisdom. We also saw that anyone whose soul has already been won for Christ can be a soul winner. That sharing our faith in personal evangelism is every Christian's responsibility.

Well, this evening, we want to wrap up our short study and ask three more questions about soul winning. First, whose souls can we win?

Second, when can we win souls? And thirdly, \$64 million question, how can we win souls? On our recent holiday to Northumberland, I saw an inscription on a gate on the holy island of Lindisfarne, which speaks powerfully to our need as Christians to engage in personal evangelism.

[9 : 03] I think this is a class saying. Whether it was uttered by St. Aidan or St. Cuthbert or one of the other Celtic saints, I don't know. But it read this.

Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap, but by the seed you sow.

Well, in Bucky, Roger Carswell planted many seeds because he shared the gospel with many people. We judge him, therefore, a success. What about us?

Have we planted any gospel seed recently? First of all, then, whose souls can we win?

Whose souls can we win? The answer to this question is in the text itself. The one who wins souls is wise. In other words, we aim to win the souls of anyone whose soul has not already been won for Christ.

[10 : 10] Anyone who is not yet a Christian. This seems obvious to us. But is it? Anyone who is not yet a Christian really does mean anyone.

There is no one too low whose souls we should not aim to win for Christ. Nor is there anyone so high whose souls we should not aim to win for Christ.

There is no one whose sins are so ugly that we should not aim to win for Christ. There is no one so clean living that we should not aim to win them for Christ.

There are areas of our city, as we all know, the wealth of which almost defies imagination. People live in almost hermetically sealed communities shut off from the wider problems of society.

Their biggest problems in life consist in having moss in their lawn or not being able to buy a half decent flat white at the local coffee shop.

[11 : 11] We might wonder to ourselves, of what need have these wealthy people of the gospel of Jesus Christ? After all, they seem contented.

They are healthy and wealthy and seem to need nothing. In 100 years, they will all stand stripped of all their respectability before the judgment seat of Christ.

Think of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Without Christ, they'll be the poorest of the poor and spend eternity in tormented misery.

We need to win their souls for Christ. There are other areas of our city, the poverty of which defies imagination. Life expectancy is lower than in many third world countries, and virtually no one has a job.

Their only income being state benefit. And we might wonder to ourselves, what has the gospel got to offer such people? Would it not be better to feed and clothe them? Yes, we should.

[12 : 19] But listen to what Roger Carswell writes in this magnificent little book, *Evangelistic Living*. Page 21. Jesus does not say that the kingdom of God is about giving porridge to the poor, flip-flops to drunken revelers, or saving the whale.

The gospel is not service to the community, valid as that may be. There are many noble works in which Christians are involved, but Jesus taught that the work of the kingdom of God is getting the word of God into the hearts and minds of people.

We need to win the poor for Christ, proclaiming to them the riches of the kingdom of heaven through faith in Jesus. And then there are people in our city whose sins are unspeakably ugly.

The apostle Paul once said that it's shameful to talk about what the disobedient do in secret. But what the disobedient once did in secret, they now parade in public.

We represent everything they hate. They see us as loveless hypocrites who belong in the Middle Ages. A friend of mine ministers in a multicultural church in the south side of Glasgow.

[13 : 40] Fifty years ago, his community was dominated by Jews. Twenty-five years ago, by South Asian Muslims. Ten years ago, by Roma gypsies.

But is now increasingly dominated by the LGBTQI++ community. Out of them all, he tells me that the LGBTQI++ community are the most resistant to the gospel, by far.

But for all their resistance, they too need to hear the good news of Jesus, which can set them free from a cycle of self-loathing. But, you know, the vast majority of people who live in our city are clean-living, law-abiding, nice people.

Among them, the majority will say that they're atheists. We live beside them. We work beside them. We laugh with them. We cry with them. We engage in our hobbies with them. They don't see any need of God.

In a hundred years' time, every single one of them will have stood before the judgment seat of Christ and had to account for their rejection of the gospel.

[14 : 55] What a shock it will be to them to stand before the judgment seat of a God whose existence they spent their life denying. We must win them for Christ by sharing with them the good news of Christ crucified and risen from the dead before it's too late.

Well, these and a thousand other kinds of people are those we want to reach with the gospel. There are tens of thousands of Glaswegians who hold to different religions than ours.

We need to win them. There are others who claim to be Christians but don't know what that means.

We need to win them. There are tens of thousands of Christians for whom the football stadiums of our city are the churches at which they worship.

We need to win them. There are family and friends. There are workmates. Those we play football with. Those we go running with. We need to win them. They will never darken the door of a church. So we must go out to them and engage in personal evangelism. We need to be soul winners. Okay, second question.

[16 : 09] When can we win souls? When can we win souls? You'll notice from this verse the writer of Proverbs doesn't place conditions upon when we can win souls. He doesn't say in Proverbs 11

30, the one who wins souls when he feels like it is wise.

The one who wins souls when the church organizes an outreach event is wise. He just says the one who wins souls is wise. The message is clear.

Anytime, any place, anywhere. Paul commands Timothy saying, preach the word in season and out of season.

We don't need the church to organize outreach events to engage in personal evangelism as much as personal evangelism needs to become our way of life.

I met a remarkable man in Kenya. I don't know his name. But having worked as a successful businessman in the capital city of Nairobi, he retired to a small village in the middle of nowhere.

[17:17] Every day he would walk three miles from his house to another village on the other side of the valley. And he would sit under a biobub tree, the kind of most famous tree you see in Africa.

And there he would sit and he would engage local people in discussions about Jesus and the gospel. Slowly but surely over many years, through his personal evangelism, many villagers from that little village in the middle of nowhere became Christians.

And a church was planted there under a biobub tree in a nameless Kenyan village in the middle of nowhere. He had every excuse.

He was a very old man. He had every excuse after a long life of business to put up his feet and let others get on with the hard work of evangelism. But he was a soul winner.

And a wonderful man. Just to be with him for five minutes was an inspiration. And even though he couldn't speak a word of English, to listen to him pray was a heavenly experience indeed.

[18:36] Yes, we can be soul winners even when most other people are putting up their feet in retirement. I've been deeply impressed by Christians in our congregation who I've visited in hospitals over the years of my ministry in Glasgow here.

They've gone on with serious, painful medical conditions. But during their stay, they've spoken to doctors and to nurses and to their fellow patients about their faith in Jesus.

There are others among us who engage in personal evangelism in the workplace, wisely and carefully saying what we can to win souls for Christ in business.

Others take up hobbies with the express intention of reaching new people with the gospel. When we can be soul winners is as vacuous a question as asking, when can I breathe?

But in particular, the witness of suffering Christians is especially powerful. Many non-Christians, because let's face it, most non-Christians, they're just lovely people.

[19:50] Learning that a Christian is suffering extends their sympathy, but then expects that Christian to begin to lose their faith and blame God. But when that non-Christian sees that suffering Christian through her tears of pain, talking about God's presence and God's help in the valley of the shadow of death, it is a strong testimony and powerful witness to the truth of the gospel.

Suffering need be no obstacle to personal evangelism, rather an opportunity. So, if we're looking for a short answer to the question of when we can be soul winners, the answer is always.

On our morning commute to work, at home, in the shops, picking up litter in the street, like we did yesterday, whenever, whenever, we've got 24 hours in the day to redeem the time for Jesus.

Well, then lastly, how can we win souls? Well, this surely is the \$64 million question.

How can we win souls? Evangelistic programs like Word One-to-One, A Passion for Life, and Christianity Explored are really great and really helpful. the motivation for evangelism and the building blocks must first be in place.

[21:21] We could spend weeks discussing the how-to of evangelism. If you're looking for a solid starter on this topic, let me recommend to you this book.

It's called Evangelistic Living by Roger Carswell, which I believe as a church, we're going to buy copies of for you to use. There, you find valuable lessons and helpful advice on how to win souls for Christ.

You can borrow my copy if you like. Let me give you five foundational blocks from which each of us can draw applications to our own personal situations.

The first is this, relationship, relationship. To share the gospel with someone else is best done in the context of having a relationship with them, a relationship of friendship or family.

A number of years ago, I attended a big conference at which Rico Tice, the evangelist and Christianity Explored guy, was speaking. And he told us that he had to leave the conference early, in fact, immediately after his slot at speaking because he had promised to play tennis with a

non-Christian friend of his he was trying to build a relationship with with a view to sharing the gospel with them.

[22 : 44] Just as a personal testimony here, that's one of the reasons that Catherine and myself took up running because we wanted to form new relationships with people with whom we could share the gospel.

Just like Priscilla and Aquila in the book of Acts formed a relationship with a young man called Apollos with a view to sharing the gospel with him, so we too are to think of forming relationships with non-Christians with soul winning in mind.

Second, relationship. Second, both to build meaningful relationships with people and to share the gospel, presence is required.

Presence. If we want to reach a community with the gospel, we need to be present and visible in that community. That's one reason as a church we started our warm space.

Not just because we have a responsibility to be the best neighbors we can be, but because we want the community to get to know us. We want to be present here. We need to ask the question, how can I be more present with those I want to share the gospel with?

[23 : 57] The apostle Paul in his missionary journeys went to where people were. He became incarnate in the communities. We need to do that too. Thirdly, to become a soul winner means that we need clarity about the gospel.

Clarity. Clarity. This is where courses like Word One to One and other evangelistic courses can prove very helpful. They clarify for us the gospel we're sharing.

We do not need any theological degrees to be personal evangelists. Roger Carswell has no theological qualifications at all, but through him tens of thousands of people have come to a living faith in Christ.

All we need to do, all we need to know is who Jesus Christ is, what Jesus Christ has done, and what Jesus Christ calls every human being to do, to repent and believe in him.

Roger very helpfully covers this book, covers this in his book Evangelistic Living under the chapter Sowing the Right Seed. Sowing the Right Seed.

[25 : 08] Again, I advise as many of you as can to read it. Because of God's great love for the world, Jesus has died on the cross to take all our sins away and give us the hope of eternal life with him.

And if we're struggling, what, if we're struggling to kind of say those things to a non-Christian, what better way to make the most of our relationships with our non-Christian friends than just to tell them our own stories of how we became Christians?

Fourthly, we need to be patient. Patient. Very few, if any of those Christians we speak to will immediately become Christians. Ray Evans is another British evangelist.

I heard him speaking about church-based evangelism at a conference recently when he quoted a statistic. He said, from the first time a non-Christian hears the gospel to the point at which he or she is converted takes on average 14 years and requires the witness of seven different Christians.

From the first time, from the point at the first time a non-Christian hears the gospel to the point where he or she is converted takes on average 14 years and requires the witness of seven different Christians.

[26 : 35] He likened church-based evangelism to a chain containing seven links each of which corresponds to the witness of an individual Christian. Our personal evangelism may be one link in that chain but without it the chain is broken.

Patience is required on average 14 years of it. We may be the first link to that person with whom we share the gospel but it will take another six Christians on average 14 years for that person to become a believer.

We may be the first link in that chain. We may be the last link in that chain but patience is required for the whole chain to be linked together and for that person to become a believer in Christ.

Lastly prayer is required if we're to be soul winners. Prayer. Most evangelistic courses will challenge us to identify three people with whom we want to share the gospel and then to start praying for them and for opportunities to speak to them about Jesus.

They'll also suggest that we ask other Christian friends to pray for those three people with whom we intend to share the gospel. At present we may not be able to speak to those people about God but we can speak to God about those people and that's what we call prayer.

[28 : 08] If conversion is a miraculous work of God and it is then we're praying for God to do a miracle of grace through us. Think of those to whom we may give a Christian tract.

Think of them. Pray for them. That God would use the message of that tract and the words we spoke to them perhaps to bring them just that one step closer.

At our prayer meetings on a Wednesday at 2.30 and 7.30 we are more than happy to pray for those with whom you're sharing the gospel.

So, relationship, presence, clarity, patience, and prayer. In short, soul winning requires loving commitment to those who for good or for ill in a hundred years time will have faced the judgment seat of Christ.

To be wise in the eyes of God is to be committed to proclaiming to them the offer of salvation through Christ of sharing with them the best news the world's ever heard that Jesus Christ has died and risen again and that through faith in him there is salvation.

[29 : 19] forgiveness of sin and eternal life. Some of us may have seen the second world war film Hacksaw Ridge.

Hacksaw Ridge is named after a battle the American army fought on the Japanese island Okinawa in 1945.

During that battle thousands of both American and Japanese soldiers were killed. Among those in the American army was Seventh-day Adventist Desmond Doss.

He was a conscientious objector who went into battle refusing to carry a weapon and so served as a medic.

You need to watch this film. During the fierce battle Doss stayed on the front line with his fellow soldiers dodging bullets and enemy soldiers.

[30 : 20] Under heavy enemy fire Doss dragged injured soldiers back to safety both American and Japanese.

He is credited with saving the lives of 75 soldiers at Hacksaw Ridge and was later presented with the Medal of Honor by President Harry S.

Truman. But from our perspective the most powerful part of the film comes right at the end where Doss is dragging one by one the injured back to safety.

He is physically exhausted. He is dodging bullets and enemy soldiers and he is mentally traumatized and after saving one soldier he prays please Lord help me to get one more and he plunges back into the front line in the battlefield looking for another injured soldier.

Please Lord help me to get one more and he plunges back into the battlefield to get just one more out. He prays those words 74 times and saves 75 soldiers from death.

[31 : 35] In 100 years time every person who is now alive will have stood before the judgment seat of Christ. Every single person.

man and we have an option today to be a spiritual Desmond Doss to engage in this most desperately needed task of soul winning and personal evangelism.

Not leaving the saving of souls to others rather every morning what better prayer could we make than that of the American conscientious objector Desmond Doss who on Hacksaw Ridge prayed and prayed and prayed please Lord help me to get just one more Thank you.