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The Psalmist's Soul-Winning Formula

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"Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, And sinners shall be converted to You." -- Psalms 51:12,13 (NKJV).

The Psalmist may be saying that if the Lord restores the joy of his salvation then he promises to teach transgressors. Or he may be saying that when the joy of salvation is restored teaching transgressors will naturally follow. In either case, sinners will be converted.

Answers to why we are not converting more to Christ are offered by the dozens. "How to" instructions abound. Several preachers specialize in "soul-winning techniques". "Specials" are held from time to time to consider the matter. Book stores stock books and kits that are supposed to tell us how to make virtually every Christian an effective soul-winner. Yet, all the above combined produce meager results. Even what appear to be spectacular results often turn out to be nothing more than a mirage -- a flash in the pan.

All this somewhat reminds me of a story that I heard several years ago about a company trying to increase its sales. They hired an expensive sales expert to lecture their salesmen on sales organization and technique. Their experienced salesmen and new recruits were required to attend so they, too, could become experts. The expert unveiled his plan. He demonstrated his sure-fire technique. He organized the territories complete with a wall map with pins placed at strategic points to illustrate the salesmen, customers and potential customers. He had refined his program to a fine art. During his lecture he spotted an old salesmen sitting over in the corner who was reputed to have been the top salesman for the company over several years. After, proudly and with fanfare, presenting his technique he asked the old salesman if he had any words of encouragement or advice that he might add to what had been said. The old salesman replied, "Yes, take all those pins out of that map and stick them into the salesmen!"

Could it be that our problem in teaching transgressors the Lord's way and thus converting them to Lord is not so much poor methods, materials, and facilities as it is poor motivation with no proper foundation? It may be that the joy of our own salvation is the missing element. Pep rallies and motivational hype on the subject of soul-winning may stir brethren into spurts of action, even producing some results. A sustained effort and lasting results will likely come from one who really knows both the plan and joy of salvation. Such a one understands what it means to be lost. He knows what it means to be saved. His knowledge is not based on fleeting feelings but on a knowledge of what God's word teaches on damnation and salvation. His joy is not the superficial cart wheel turning, hand clapping, "praise the Lord" shouting variety, but a far deeper joy of thankfulness, knowing that he has been delivered from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear Son. One with such joy understands what it means to no longer be a sinner alienated from God. He understands God's plan of salvation. He understands what the Bible teaches about being a Christian. His joy is produced by that understanding and his knowing that his life is now in harmony with that understanding. Thus, he wants others to know what he knows and do what he has done to be saved -- and is doing to stay saved. His genuine faith in the promises and blessings in Christ produces the joy of salvation that leads him to teach transgressors the Lord's ways so that they can enjoy what he enjoys.

Brethren filled with the knowledge and joy of salvation will find ways (or techniques) to teach others consistent with their own temperaments and abilities and of those they are trying to reach. Their methods may vary widely but their message and results will be the same - the gospel will be taught and sinners will be converted.

It may well be that the best personal work program that a church can develop is to set about to restore that genuine joy of salvation to its membership by building them up in the faith through teaching.

Remove Your Sandals

David Maxson

A shepherd was out tending his sheep when he saw an incredible thing: a bush on fire that did not burn up! As he came closer to investigate he heard a voice from the midst of the bush call him by name. The voice then said, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground" (Exodus 3: 5). That shepherd was Moses, and the voice from the bush was God's. In this extraordinary scene we learn a much-needed lesson about worship.

Worship is a holy occasion. When we worship God we leave the mundane and trivial to come before the one, true and living God! Indeed, when we approach the Creator, whether it be in public or private worship, we must understand the seriousness and gravity of the occasion. We are entering into holy space. We are treading on holy ground!

When Moses led his people back to the mountain where God appeared to him in the bush, the children of Israel trembled before God. When they stood at the foot of the mountain and felt it tremble, seeing the smoke ascend from it, and hearing the blast of the trumpet and the voice of God, they said to Moses, "You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Exodus 20:19).

Do we understand what it is we are doing when we worship? Do we understand that we are involved in something that is even higher and holier than what occurred at Sinai? As children of God under the new covenant, we have come to "Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all" (Hebrews 12: 22-23).\ Considering the magnitude of these incredible facts, the Hebrew writer prayed that we might have grace, "by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28-29).

Listen, dear readers, to what I tell you now: the Lord is not our buddy, and God is not our chum... He is God! God is God and we are nothing! We are blood bought mortals given the privilege of approaching our Creator in worship! We are undeserving sinners given the right through our Savior's blood to stand before the King of kings and Lord of lords! We must never forget who we are and who He is when we come before His throne! So when we worship, may we get down on our knees and remove our sandals, for the place where we stand is holy ground!!!