

How To Be A "SOUL WINNER" (AND LOSE CONVERTS)

by Francis Anfuso

WHY AREN'T more Christians fruitful in sharing their faith? Why do many even dislike the very thought of getting involved in evangelism? I am convinced one of the main reasons is because they are given a wrong concept of what fruitfulness is. At times Christian leaders, all with good intentions, attempt to motivate their congregations to evangelize by telling them to go out and be "soul winners." Though this may be effective in a few cases, I have found it not to be in the hundreds of churches I have ministered to.

The Bible says that we are called to be "witnesses." In Acts 1:8, Jesus himself firmly establishes this principle: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Here we have the primary purpose of the powerful Baptism in the Holy Spirit—to make us "witnesses." Being a witness for Jesus can come in varying degrees. We can witness a great deal or only a little bit and still be a witness. We can tell someone our testimony, pray for him to be healed, hand out a tract, share all or part of the gospel, invite him to a church meeting, or minister through one of the gifts of the Spirit. These are all aspects of witnessing.

But being a "soul winner" implies that someone was "born again," "got saved," "became a Christian," "received the Lord," or whatever term we like to apply—in other words, his soul has been won for Christ. Consequently, if this doesn't happen, then we were not a "soul winner." We may have been a tremendous witness, but if that was not our goal, then we have not succeeded.

Many Christians try to evangelize, only to experience frustration and failure because they never measure up to their false expectations. Defeated and dejected, some eventually stop witnessing altogether. Many eventually conclude one of the following: "I guess it's not my gift," or "Maybe I'm making things worse,"—or, "Someone else can probably do it better."

It is true that Prov. 11:30 says, "...he who wins souls is wise." But Romans 16:27, 1 Timothy 1:17, and Jude 25 all say that God alone is wise. Truly, whatever wisdom we have comes from him. So, if a soul is won, God did it. God is the great soul winner, not us.

The apostle Paul verifies this point when he says, "So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase" (1 Cor. 3:7). Without God's increase, all of the planting and watering that we do in evangelism is worthless. But Paul provides further confirmation. "Not that we are sufficient of

Many Christians try to evangelize, only to experience frustration and failure because they never measure up to their false expectations.

ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God..." (2 Cor. 3:5). This very appropriately gives all the glory to God when we lead someone to Jesus. Glory is like "divine radiation": you don't want to get any of it on you.

At times the "soul winner" identity can even bring out the worst in an evangelistically-gifted individual. He begins to visualize himself as a gospel commando, with notches on his Bible and scalps on his belt.

There may even be a tendency to exaggerate what really took place while evangelizing, in order to maintain his "soul winner" mystique.

Witnessing, on the other hand, enables any Christian to return from evangelizing with a sense of accomplishment. Consequently, we're emboldened to witness again. Every spiritual morsel is savored, and no genuine attempt to share Christ is seen as insignificant. Even apparent mistakes in witnessing can provide the foundation for future triumphs.

Think of the great Christian "strike out kings." There's "Duke" Paul the Apostle, who, early in his career, organized the opposing team to strike down Christian players. Yet, he ended his illustrious career as the "All Time Writing King" of the New Testament League.

Then there's "Babe" Peter the Apostle, who got three strikes before "the cock crowd" with bases loaded in the bottom of the ninth out at Golgotha Field. But in the very next game, along with his eleven team mates, he hit the ball completely out of the Upper Room, and went on to fan 3000 in the first game of its kind at historic Pentecost Stadium.

And, we must not forget Elijah, the MVP (Most Valuable Prophet) of the Old Testament League. At one point, after getting struck out by Jezebel, he hid in the dugout claiming he'd never play again, until Coach challenged him to not be a quitter.

When we begin to see evangelism from Christ's perspective, that of being his "witnesses," then we'll eagerly anticipate every witnessing adventure that comes our way. And the results will be eternally appreciated. □



Francis Anfuso is the Vice President of Christian Equippers International and an elder in the Church of Glad Tidings in South Lake Tahoe, California where he resides with his wife Susan and twin daughters, Havilah and Deborah. Over the past few years, Francis has traveled extensively equipping local churches through Glad Tidings School of Evangelism which he established in 1980. He has written dozens of booklets, tracts, and pamphlets for use in evangelism, as well as training courses, books, and seminars equipping both evangelists and individual Christians. His life goal is "to train thousands of evangelists, to equip millions of Christians, to reach billions of unbelievers."