



A Course

In

HOW TO WIN TO CHRIST

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Prepared by the
Committee on Religious Education
of the
American Bible College

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Pineland, Florida 33945

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Convention Press
NASHVILLE TENNESSEE

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The Sunday School Board
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Southern Baptist Convention
Nashville, Tennessee

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CHAPTER ONE

WHAT WE PROPOSE AND WHY

CHAPTER I OUTLINE

I. What We Propose

1. Evangelism
Hardly adequate to express our task
2. Sunday School Evangelism
Not a complete perspective
3. Educational Evangelism
Hardly Sufficient
May seem to obscure the revival element
4. Child Evangelism
Seems inadequate
Wrong implication
5. Soul-winning
Suggestive, but hardly sufficient
6. How to Win to Christ
Chosen because both adequate and sufficient: sets forth our complete task and indicates the studies which we propose

II. Why Study How to Win to Christ

1. This task is supreme and supremely glorious
2. The place which winning to Christ holds in the Sunday school
3. The place which the Sunday school holds in winning to Christ
4. Winning to Christ is an art which, having its own laws, requires intelligent effort

I. WHAT WE PROPOSE

It has not been easy to find a suitable designation for these studies. Many phrases have suggested themselves. A brief glance at these phrases, with a statement of the reason why some were rejected and why How to Win to Christ was chosen, will indicate the scope of study which we propose.

1. Evangelism has, of course, been considered. Strictly speaking, evangelism means winning to Christ by a proclamation of the evangel, the good news of the Christ. It carries the idea of the simple process of bringing to Christ; it speaks of the glorious work of bringing to discipleship, of the initial bringing into the

Kingdom of Grace. It can hardly be said to embrace the preparatory processes which are essential to an early and full surrender to Christ, as it does not include the later measures of training and culture which are essential to the rounded completeness of Christian life and character.

The phrase does not seem to serve our purpose for the reason that we wish to include a study both of the preparatory steps and of the later processes of care, and culture. Certainly, conversion, the initial coming to Christ, is a central and vital point, but we wish to consider also the influences and training which pave the way for conversion, together with the after-experiences and the training which go to make possible the best fruits of conversion. In a word, we would study the whole rounded process of winning to Christ. We aspire to win to Christ the whole nature with all of its powers and possibilities. While the phrase "Evangelism" is hardly adequate to set forth the purpose of our present study yet the word is so significant and so widely used, that for which it stands so strikes at the heart of what we desire, we shall find ourselves frequently employing it.

2. *Sunday school Evangelism* was proposed. Assuming that the scope of the phrase "Evangelism" is expanded to include the preparatory processes which pave the way for surrender to Christ and the succeeding measures which make for fruitful Christian living, why should not our studies be called "Sunday school Evangelism"?

The Sunday school certainly has come to hold an enlarged place in all winning and life-making efforts. We would emphasize and magnify that place in all proper ways. But we require here a right perspective, giving to all agencies and elements proper place and due emphasis. Apart from the personal element which must always loom large, there are three divinely-given agencies upon which we must chiefly rely - the home, the teaching service, and the preaching service.

Normally, the home is the mightiest factor. It has the child in the early, plastic years almost exclusively. Its silent and persistent influence is all but irresistible. It is for the home to give the earliest bent

and bias toward God. The influence of a Christian father and mother may count for more toward conversion than all teachers and schools, all preachers and churches; more than all other individuals or institutions. The church school further plants the seed of the gospel. Touching the home on one side, it supplements its instructions and appeals; touching the preaching service on the other side, it seeks to win and prepare the life for the service of Christ and his church. Finally, the preaching service comes in with its glorious word of atonement and its message of life in Jesus, and reaps in salvation and abundant life the harvest which has been prepared in the work of the home and the Sunday school.

Certainly it is possible to conceive of conversion with one or another of these influences lacking. Men are saved who receive no Christian impress in the home; men are converted who never knew the blessing of the Sunday school; men are sometimes brought to Christ when other influences than the preaching service seem to operate for their salvation. But we cannot "win to Christ" in the best and largest sense without the co-operation of these three agencies. It is of course possible to bring to a decision for Christ in the home or in the Sunday school - even so, it seems good to let the home and the Sunday school stand in line as contributing and preparatory agencies and to bring the lost to a confession of Jesus as Saviour and Lord in the fine atmosphere of the morning or evening worship, when the whole congregation is gathered before the Lord. So it falls out that while we propose to magnify the Sunday school and give it due emphasis in this work, yet *Sunday School Evangelism* seems hardly adequate to set forth our real task.

The Sunday school will best fulfill its mission by doing team-work with the home on the one hand and the preaching service on the other hand. The superintendent and the teachers will do well to count their efforts as links in a golden chain which is to bring and bind to God. They must magnify the home, exalting the parents and supplementing their efforts in all proper ways; they must also dignify the preaching service and magnify its blessed ministry. Not the teaching service alone is sufficient in itself, but the Sunday school doing team-work with the home and the preaching service is to be mighty and is to prevail.

3. *Educational Evangelism* was proposed as a possible designation for these studies. Here again we need to regard the larger perspective and to preserve a proper relative emphasis.

Two elements are essential in soul-winning efforts; education and the evangelistic appeal. When a soul surrenders to Christ in a blessed experience of grace, such surrender comes through a twofold process, educational preparation and the revival influence. The education to which we refer may be imparted in an

endless variety of ways; it may be by passive influence or by active teaching; or, better by both of these. It is safe to say that no soul ever comes to Christ without some such preparation, and in the light of Scripture example and precept it is safe to insist upon the place and meaning of the educational element. It is further true that no soul can come to Christ save through the revival influence. As with education, so with the revival; it may come in a variety of forms and with various manifestations. The revival may or may not involve a protracted meeting. Whenever and wherever a soul is saved, there is a revival, a revival effort, a revival atmosphere, and a revival fruit. "*Educational Evangelism*," as emphasizing the necessary educational processes in soul-winning, is well enough. But if educational evangelism is to obscure the revival element and to eclipse the special and glorious work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, it becomes a delusion, offering a stone instead of bread.

Because "*Educational Evangelism*" seems to give scant emphasis to the special evangelistic element, the high and mighty work of grace in the heart by which the soul that is dead is made to live, it was not quite acceptable as describing our task.

4. *Child Evangelism*. So far as distinction may be properly made, we wish to approach evangelism from the viewpoint of the child rather than from that of the adult. Such approach seems natural and normal. At the same time we must insist that in its essentials, in its final analysis, child evangelism is not different from adult evangelism. Some one has said, "The New Testament is a book dealing almost entirely with adults." Rather let us say that the New Testament deals with man as man, without regard to age or condition. It is universal in its message and scope. The conditions precedent to baptism are such as are suitable and inevitable for all who come to baptism.

A while ago only adult conversion was believed in or sought, and it was scarcely believed that a child could be saved. The word to children seemed to be, "Except ye be converted and become as grown men ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." Little effort was made for the conversion of children, and a widespread skepticism existed as to the genuineness of child conversion. Now the pendulum has swung back the other way. Everybody believes in the possibility and necessity of child conversion, while some have almost come to question whether we can any longer win men and women. An eminent minister said a while ago, "In my early days there seemed to be a question as to whether children could be really converted; now there seems to be some question as to whether anybody besides children can be converted." It is well to remind ourselves that the same Lord who took little children in his arms and blessed them also came to seek and to save that which was lost, that he gathered about him publicans and sinners, giving himself and delivering

his message to sinful men. Only by deserting the method of the Master can we give the conversion of mature men, yes, of hardened sinners, a secondary place in our expectations and Christian efforts.

The conversion of a child may differ widely from the conversion of a man, as the conversion of a given man may differ widely from the conversion of another man. The experience of a child is usually different from that of an adult in the depth of feeling and in many other particulars, but we do well to lay it to heart that the essentials are in either case the same. Our Lord did not make two atonements, one for the child and another for the man. There were not wrought out two plans of salvation, one for the child and one for the adult. There are not two processes by which we are to come into the kingdom of God, one for children and one for mature people. Insidious peril lurks in the tendency to regard child evangelism as an essentially distinct type of evangelism, and to consider the child as somehow possessing inherent innocence which, if it does not make conversion unnecessary, yet makes salvation possible to the child on some easier basis than to the adult.

The Scriptures bring us the conditions of salvation with no hint of distinction between child and adult or between man and man. "There is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3: 22, 23). "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1: 12).

Child evangelism, as indicating and magnifying the winning of children is well enough, but *child evangelism* as hinting that the need and experience of the child is in any essential different from the need and experience of the adult is not for a moment to be accepted. We will approach the great question of how to win to Christ from its normal and natural viewpoint, that of the child in unfolding life, but we will demand and expect conviction for sin, repentance and faith, regeneration; in a word, all the constituent elements which enter into any experience of grace.

5. *Soul-winning* was considered. This phrase is widely used and is deeply suggestive. Certainly, it may be said that we are concerned to save lives, not simply to save souls; our commission is to deal with the whole man, the man physically and mentally, no less than the man spiritually. The gospel is not meant alone to cure ills and aches of the heart and wounds of the soul, but to sweeten and save the whole man. It is not simply an insurance agency by which we are to be guaranteed immunity in death and safety in eternity. It is not merely a transportation medium by which we are to have safe transfer from this life to realms of bliss. Our gospel proposes to save men, to save the whole man, here, in time, and this to the end that he may be saved in eternity.

Yet we may not forget that the gospel in saving men deals primarily with sin and concerns itself first of all with the soul (the mind). It will sweeten and bless the whole life by cleansing the inward man from sin. It deals primarily with the soul, the spirit, where sin dwells and whence are the fountains of life. True, it is not merely an insurance against loss at death, but it is such insurance. It is not simply an agency for safe transfer to heaven when this life ends; yet it is such an agency. Successful evangelism is always based on the conviction that the gospel saves in the crisis of death and the judgment, that it gives sure entrance into the presence of God.

If we will purify and sweeten the life we must first see that the soul, the deep inward source of life, is purified and sweetened. Sin in the soul is the source of all the real ills of life. The gospel deals primarily with sin and begins by saving the soul. "The soul of all improvement is the improvement of the soul." While the phrase, "soul-winning," seemed hardly adequate to set forth the whole work of the Christ in the life and hence hardly sufficient to describe our present task, it yet strikes at the heart of that work.

6. Why did we adopt *How to Win to Christ*? Because this phrase expresses our full-rounded task. It really includes all that is essential in the phrases which we have presented; it includes evangelism and culture, education and the revival, soul-winning and all that accompanies soul-winning. Our real task is to win to Christ, to win and save the whole life through atoning grace, to redeem the whole being, all its elements and powers from sin to the kingdom and service of God. This phrase faces out toward all life, toward the child and the adult alike; it includes all that is essential and likewise excludes all that is non-essential.

"Win" is a strong scriptural word. It implies what must never be obscured or forgot - that we are by nature alienated from God, that we must be won back to God. "He that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). The word here used is suggestive; it is taken from the hunter's craft and literally means "ensnareth," "taketh alive." Sinful souls, alienated from God, must be ensnared, taken alive, and delivered back to God. This is winning to Christ.

We have adopted this subject, *How to Win to Christ*, as the best possible designation for these studies because it fully describes our complete task, which is evangelism, together with its preceding processes of preparation and its succeeding measures of training.

II. WHY STUDY HOW TO WIN TO CHRIST

1. The task of winning to Christ is supreme and it is supremely glorious. We are saved in order that we may save. We are chosen and redeemed that we may win others to love our great Saviour and to know His great salvation. The supreme end of every Christian life

is somehow, somewhere, to fit into God's mighty plan to save men. Not only is winning to Christ supreme in individual life; it is pre-eminent in the mission of the churches of the Lord Jesus. Each particular church is set in the kingdom for the winning of lost men. In the broad sense in which we are using the term, as saving and building, winning to Christ is the one outstanding obligation of every church.

And this work is supremely glorious. It engages the thought and employs the effort of the Triune God - the Father planned it in the councils of eternity; the Son came to the earth and executed the eternal plan; the Holy Spirit applies and carries forward the atoning work of Christ. This work of winning men which thus engages the efforts of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, also commands the attention and interest of the unfallen angels and the hosts of the redeemed. As the saints and the angels look down upon the earth and view the affairs of men, they are not so much interested in political revolutions, in ebbs and flows in the financial world, or in social upheavals, as they are concerned for God's redemptive work among the sons of men.

2. *Winning to Christ holds central place in the Sunday school.* Beyond all question the supreme business of the Sunday school is winning to Christ. We do not forget or obscure the necessity of divine grace in the saving of men and in their spiritual growth, when we urge faithful human effort. This is our task; taking the child at the threshold of its life, we are, through the ministry of the Cradle Roll and through the experiences in the Nursery, the Beginner and Primary departments, to prepare him for Christ; very early we are, through divine grace, to bring him to a personal surrender to Christ and acceptance of him as Lord and Saviour; then we are to seek to bring his whole life into harmony with God's will and to make him Christian in all the depth and sweetness of that term.

Failing here, we have failed utterly. It is of little avail that our youths shall grow up to know the Bible if they do not come to know by a vital experience the Christ of the Bible. It is of little moment that men shall come to know the frame-work of Bible history if they are not to know the living Spirit which breathes in every part of that history. We have signally failed if, having taught our youths the Ten Commandments of God, we do not bring them to know and obey the God of the Ten Commandments; if, having taught them to know the Twelve Apostles of our Lord, we do not bring them to know our Lord himself. Let all the estates of Israel, let all the forces of the home and the Sunday school set forth this as the supreme goal, that the young life about us shall be redeemed by the blood and brought into complete subjection and conformity to the will of Christ.

We do well as Sunday school workers to face quietly and faithfully the question as to what in the

work of the school shall hold first and commanding place in our thinking. We make much of *numbers*. We bend unrelenting efforts to enlarge our attendance. This we ought to do; we cannot teach people until we have first reached them. We make much of *organization*. Well we may; order is God's first law and an orderly organization is essential to success. We are, however, to keep a clear eye on our real goal. We seek numbers and organization with a view to soul-culture and evangelism.

A man in Texas invented a cotton-picking machine. It was a notable achievement. Thousands of earnest men had bent their energies to this end and had failed. This man was elated over his success. Certain officials and government experts came to pass on the merits of the new machine. They looked it over, tested it, found it a perfect bit of machinery, wonderful and complete. They had only one fault to find it would not pick cotton. If the Sunday school fails in winning to Christ, it fails its main business.

3. *The Sunday school holds a chief place in winning to Christ.* We have already seen that the Sunday school is one of three institutions divinely given for this end; we have entered plea that the Sunday school can only realize its highest usefulness by doing team-work, recognizing the home and co-operating with it on the one hand and supplementing the church on the other hand. The Sunday school, holding as it does, the early plastic years and gathering alike the saved and the lost, thus touching and blessing life literally from the cradle to the grave, must hold a commanding place in winning to Christ.

Sane evangelism comprises two essential elements, (1) education, and (2) the revival, or the evangelistic appeal. These elements are not to be separated from each other. Education, which is not permeated with the spirit of evangelism, is unavailing; revivalism, which does not build upon education and the many processes of preparation, must be likewise worthless. In the language of Dr. L. R. Scarborough, "Let us evangelize our education and educationalize our evangelism."

We would hardly care to say that our day is witnessing a transfer of emphasis from the revival to education. Let us rather say that there is increasing disposition to put emphasis on the processes of education and training which make possible a perennial revival. We are depending on quiet, persistent evangelism more than on special revival efforts. We are drawing our educational processes and our revival efforts closer together. Our educators, pastors, teachers, and parents are becoming their own evangelists. We have perhaps overworked the saying, "one soweth and another reapeth." God's plan is that sowing and reaping shall be simultaneous, that men shall sow with one hand and reap with the other. Seedtime and harvest need not be widely separated. More and more, pastors

are coming to be their own evangelists. Teachers and superintendents are coming to be their own revivalists. The workers who sow are at the same time quietly and persistently reaping. The Sunday school is the fruitful evangelistic opportunity.

The evangelism of tomorrow is to find here its mighty field. The Sunday school holds a first place of influence in the incoming tides of child life, while through its advanced departments it is reaching and influencing adult life as no other agency can hope to do. Because the Sunday school is a pre-eminent evangelistic agency and opportunity, Sunday school workers ought to study the principles and methods of evangelism.

4 *Winning to Christ is an art, the finest of the fine arts, which has its own laws and which requires intelligent effort.* If the impression has prevailed that piety and fervor alone are essential, we may without depreciating these prime essentials, insist that no other art more imperatively calls for equipment and skill. It is true that any fervent soul may accomplish wonders here, but that soul might with skill won by training wield a far wider and safer influence in soul-winning. Here as elsewhere in Christian service, even a little instruction, starting aright and giving some guidance as to method and intelligent efforts, must be helpful.

It is impossible to estimate the harm done by untrained and misguided workers. The soul is peculiarly sensitive and impressionable in those days when it seeks through conviction and confession of sin to know its Lord. Error planted, wrong bias given, in that critical time may bear an evil harvest in all after-years.

A vision of the meaning of evangelism and an experience of the joys which come from winning the lost would transform many a Sunday school. Is it difficult to find among the great numbers of cultivated men and women in our churches those who will teach and bear the burdens of the Sunday school? Do those who teach lack joyful and triumphant zeal? Let the fires of evangelism burn, let the community be pervaded by a quiet, gracious revival, let the workers get a vision of the meaning and matchless dignity of what we are doing, as these things touch life and destiny, and all will be changed. "If I had the trumpet of God," said D. L. Moody, "and could speak to every Sunday school teacher in America, I would plead with each one to win at least one soul to Christ each year."

END OF SAMPLE