

1. He Who Wins Souls Is Wise!

Think about the people you spend the most time with: teammates, family, people online, friends at school and church. Have you ever thought of them in light of eternity?

There is a proverb in the Bible that says, “He who wins souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30). This was written by Solomon, one of the wisest men who ever lived, so it makes sense that we’d want to take the saying seriously. But what does it mean to “win souls”? And why would winning souls be something that a wise person does?

WISE PEOPLE WIN SOULS

“To win” in this context means something like grabbing hold of or rescuing; it means to take or capture. The wise person is the one who captures people for Christ. You might associate winning with sports, games, or competition. But what we’re speaking of here isn’t about

beating others, it's about seizing them from danger. It means bringing others to the side of God, "into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:9). It means to rescue souls from destruction. It means converting them to God.

The apostle Paul viewed his ministry this way. He speaks of persuading men, pleading with them on God's behalf to be reconciled to Him. In another place, he describes evangelism as a kind of rescue mission, where sinners may "come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Tim. 2:26). Check out his words about winning in the following passage:

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all

men, that I might by all means save some.
(1 Cor. 9:20-22)

Thus, evangelism is nothing less than snatching people out of Satan's grip and bringing them into Christ's kingdom!

This is why the task is considered to be something done by the wise. It takes wisdom to realize the plight of human beings who are living without Christ. To want to do something about such a plight is wisdom. To realize that few things are more precious than eternal souls is wisdom. After all, Christ is the greatest evangelist who has ever lived, and to walk as He walked is great wisdom: "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10 ESV).

HOW ARE SOULS WON?

..... So, how are souls to be won? We can't force them to the side of God. We can't bribe them with money or threaten them with a weapon—nor would we want to, since the change would only be on the outside. In order to win souls, we must work at a heart-and-mind level, but man's heart and mind is hostile to God by nature.

.....Consider the following passages from the Bible: “The carnal mind is . . . not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). Paul reminds the Ephesians that we “once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others” (Eph. 2:3). Jeremiah declared, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). The apostle Paul also insists that “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Again, he writes of our former state: “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled” (Col. 1:21).

You don't have to look far to see this hostility toward God played out in real life. Think about the way people live today, chasing after money, popularity, or pleasure while ignoring the one who made them. Notice the selfishness that breaks friendships, divides families, and fuels constant fighting online and in person. Look at the student who mocks anything to do

with church and laughs at Christians for being “naïve.” Even worse, look at the rise of drug use and murder. Many people hear the truth about Christ and simply shrug, too busy with their own lives to care. All of this is evidence of what the Bible has already told us—that the human heart is naturally set against God.

This presents us with a difficult problem as it relates to winning souls: if our friends are not on the side of God, then how can they ever be brought to Him? What are we supposed to do? We want to be wise as the proverb says, but how does this act of rescuing souls happen?

EVANGELISM IS SHARING THE GOSPEL

..... Thankfully, the Bible is clear on this. The tool that God uses to win people’s souls is the gospel, which alone is “the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). But how does God get this gospel to unbelievers? Does He write it in the sky with clouds? Does He stamp it on the leaves of trees? Does He zap people’s brains so that they automatically know about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus?

No—He does something even more profound because it’s even more surprising. He uses men

and women, and even boys and girls. It's not so much about a person's skill level or expertise, but about God's power working through them. When it comes to evangelism, God uses people who don't have all the answers: people who are still growing in their own faith; people who still struggle with sin; people who don't feel worthy to carry such a glorious message. These are the people God uses to share the gospel with lost people. This is God's way of winning souls.

This is why the topic of evangelism is so vital. This is why even young men and women should care about evangelism. Every Christian has a role to play in this all-important task of winning souls. All Christians are called to be fishers of men. Imagine standing before God one day and seeing someone there because you shared Christ with them. That is what Proverbs means when it says, "He who wins souls is wise."

In the following pages, we'll explore what evangelism is and how we can incorporate it into our everyday lives. What does winning souls look like? What should we expect along the way? How do we overcome fears and other limitations? If he who wins souls is wise, how can we be counted among the wise ones?

By the end, you'll see why evangelism is both the simplest and hardest task that any Christian is called to do. But by Christ's power, every believer can do it, no matter how young or unsure you feel.

MAIN POINT

True wisdom is winning souls for Christ.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- When you think of your closest friends, teammates, or classmates, do you see them in light of eternity?
- Why do you think God chooses to use ordinary, imperfect people like us instead of angels or supernatural displays to spread the gospel?