

He That Winneth Souls

or, “Soul Winning on God’s Scoreboard”

Proverbs 11:30 The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; and **he that winneth souls** *is* wise.

1 Corinthians 3:6 I have planted, Apollos watered; but **God gave the increase**.

In nearly every type of sport or game, there are points. In basketball, each successful, regular shot is two points while balls shot and going through the hoop from a certain longer distance are worth three points. In football, a touchdown is six points and a field goal is three. But if the ages-old adage, *It’s not whether you win or lose, but how you play the game*, is true, then why keep score? Points are not only used in a positive manner to win, but they can be used negatively on a job or with a driving record.

In contrast to earning points in a game or job, God has expressed His design for our service to Him which involves creation: His process of sowing seed, cultivating plants, and reaping fruit. In His Word, He has given clear pictures that help us understand His will for “soul winning,” illustrations which help us to work more effectively in His cause of making a difference in the lives of people.

Origin of the Term

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree...” **Proverbs 11:30**

The term, “**soul winning**,” comes from Proverbs 11:30 (above), and the subject matter is inextricably tied to “fruit” and “tree,” which are subjects of God’s creation that involve the process of sowing seeds, watering (or cultivating) a plant, and (often) reaping fruit. Continuing God’s message of sowing and reaping, we see more of His design concerning “soul winning” in the first epistle of Paul to the Corinthians:

“I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.” **1 Corinthians 3:6**

As we **connect the dots** from our modern idea of “soul winning” to what God actually *said*, we see many things from the process of preparing and sowing the seed, to cultivating a plant, and to the harvest of fruit. In the same way that man cannot cause a plant to grow and produce fruit, he cannot make the seed of God’s Word germinate, grow, and bear fruit in someone’s life. We can only employ the same process we use with plants: sow the seed and water it (i.e. cultivate). Just as He causes plants to develop and bring forth fruit or flower, God also causes faith to grow. However, there is much more to the process than we might initially think. What of the process of preparing both seed and soil? What about recognizing when the fruit is ripe and ready to pick? Is there more underlying the words in Proverbs that will help us avoid the many false ideas of today?

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise.”

Proverbs 11:30

This key verse clearly has a conjunction in the middle that connects “he that winneth souls is wise” to “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.” The word translated “and” is the sixth letter of the Hebrew alphabet (*wau*) and is a connecting conjunction that joins the first part (“The fruit...”) to the second (“he that **winneth**...” (also, “takes” or “receives”). In fact, the two lines are one thought expressed through parallelistic writing, a critically important literary style that exists throughout both Old and New Testaments. Through the first half of a familiar poem, we can see basic parallelism illustrated:

Roses are red
↓ ↓
Violets are blue

“Roses” parallels “violets” as they are both flowers; similarly, “red” is parallel to “blue” since both are colors. This is a very simple illustration of the more complex parallelism we see in Proverbs 11:30. The Biblical text shows an emphasis on God’s handiwork with its reference to “tree” and “fruit,” combined with the **character** of one who “winneth souls,” describing such an individual as being “righteous” and “wise.” *Can a person be righteous without being wise, or vice versa?* No, a truly wise person will be righteous, and

a righteous person is wise. This is synonymous parallelism, as illustrated previously, and it is helpful to our understanding by adding an understood, “fruit of a” (*see below*). In addition, the words “wise one” and “righteous one” help to clarify the parallelism by “balancing” the two lines. In other words, God states that a righteous/wise individual **is** a tree, a *life-giving* tree, with *life-giving* fruit for all who will partake. The emphasis here is not on the “going to the world” aspect that we see expressed in the New Testament (e.g. Matthew 28:18-20). Rather, the emphasis here is the character of a righteous/wise person being such that the individual will be a fruit-bearing tree for all to partake.

The fruit of	the righteous (<i>one</i>)	is a tree of life
↓	AND (connecting conjunction)	↓
(<i>the fruit of</i>)	(<i>a</i>) wise (<i>one</i>)	(<i>is</i>) winneth (<i>taking/receiving</i>) souls

This verse perfectly mirrors what Jesus said:

*“Let your **light so shine** before men, that they may **see your good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* **Matthew 5:16**

Sowing and Reaping

In the New Testament, we see the process of gardening (as applied to influencing people with the Word) is expounded extensively in passages such as Matthew 13, Mark 4, and 1 Corinthians 3. We must remember that there are many methods that men use which are designed to elicit solely an external response, thereby circumventing and potentially hindering the design and working of God. In placing an undue emphasis on external responses, many focus on the outward actions, a focus that may be referred to as the “numbers game” (i.e. how many attend a service or the number who “get saved” during a meeting). Indeed, we can achieve a great outward response through various methods that are designed to achieve results, for instance, by sponsoring a certain high profile speaker or music group. However, what must be examined is the kind of fruit that comes from such efforts that are often based solely on the external. What about people who ‘have’ the externals (appearance, actions, appeal) down pat, but suddenly leave the faith? They look the part, but something happens at some point that reveals their *true* belief and character. More importantly, what can we do to bring our culture back to what *God says* in His Word and to *His design* for impacting souls with truth?

The Faith for the Message

*“Now faith is the **substance** of things hoped for the **evidence** of things not seen”* **Hebrews 11:1**

The faith for believing God and His Word begins with “evidence,” the same word we see in 2 Timothy 3:16:

*“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for **reproof** ...”*

According to Hebrews 11:1, faith **is** “**substance**” and “**evidence**.” We can subdivide the word “substance” and have the original meaning from the Greek (*hupostasis*): “sub” = “under” (e.g. “submarine”) and “stance,” how one stands. We can use the English *under-standing*, to state that faith is that which is under one’s standing, or one’s **foundation**. Faith is the ultimate basis upon which the entirety of our knowledge rests; it is the foundation which underpins everything in our lives.

However, there are two kinds of faith:

1. Faith that has no basis in fact.
2. Faith that has basis in fact.

For instance, I may say that I *believe* the moon is made of cheese. However, I have no evidence, no basis, for that belief. But if I say that I believe that Jesus Christ is God, I have a basis for that belief. I have both secular and Biblical history that confirms His existence, as well as surrounding historical evidences that have remained until modern times, such as the existence of the nation of Israel and the Roman government

which was instrumental in the crucifixion of Christ. The Bible has evidence and is worthy of our complete trust.

The Greek word that is translated “evidence” in Hebrews 11:1 is also translated “reproof” in 2 Timothy 3:16, so that we can understand that faith in God and a belief that He is the Maker and Designer of His creation is not a “pie in the sky” belief that has no evidence. One major body of evidence that exists all over the world is **fossils**. Fossils are extraordinary evidences that God’s Word is true, particularly when it speaks of the global flood. Otherwise, how could fossils of sea lilies be at the top of the highest mountain in the world, Mt. Everest?

*“Through faith we understand that the **worlds were framed** by the Word of God so that things which are seen **were not made** of things which do appear.”*

Hebrews 11:3

Hebrews 11:3 is the kind of *evidenced* faith that was foundational to the “Hall of Faith” heroes that are recounted in the rest of the chapter. A couple of years ago, I was astounded to hear a series of messages from Hebrews 11, preached by the head of a mission board, that **totally skipped** the aspect of creation that is clearly expounded in the first verses! In fact, his first main point was “Faith Focuses Forward by Reviewing the Past.” During the series, I was especially attentive as I anticipated an emphasis on creation (clearly in the passage) as that is the foundation for the faith exhibited by the individuals in the rest of the chapter. I was surprised that he did not once reference creation as the basis for the faith of ones such as Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Sarah; in another sense, the absence was not surprising because of what we have observed over the years. It was yet one more example of the times in which we live, that we see on *every* hand conservative, Bible-believing preachers, pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and other ministers **totally ignoring the foundation of all things!** The faith that God exists is absolutely critical for salvation, *and for the faith to **continue** trusting Him with our lives* just as did the “heroes of faith.”

*“Without **faith** it is impossible to please Him...he that cometh to God must **believe that He is**...” **Hebrews 11:6***

In our culture, it seems that most Christians and preachers have their “heads in the sand” regarding the ultimate need of this generation. Ignoring or excusing this need may be a convenient response that allows such leaders to neglect the study of science-related subjects such as dinosaurs, fossils, or carbon dating. Regardless, we must **wake up** and realize that it is through the arena of science that Satan has wrought great destruction, causing people to doubt the Word of God from its founding verse:

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” Genesis 1:1

Ultimately, it has been and continues to be through a constant barrage of an assertion of “millions of years” of time (a phrase that is aimed at the historicity of Genesis) that Satan has used his ages-old tool of doubt: “**yea, hath God said...?**” In other words, a basic question might be stated: “How can one have faith in a book that recounts only **thousands** of years of history, when we *know* the earth is **millions** of years old?” In order for Bible-believers to begin a restoration process of faith in God and His Word from its foundation, we must “connect the dots” and realize that the necessary faith for the gospel *begins* with creation!

The Fruit from the Message

*“Not because I desire a gift: but I desire **fruit** that may abound to your account.” **Philippians 4:17***

As a Christian and preacher of the Gospel, I **love** to see people come to Christ! Whether in our meetings or elsewhere, it is wonderful to hear the good news that people are rescued from sin and its devastation. This is true whether or not **I** am the one involved in any *observable* way. In fact, the only One Who does the “winning” is the **LORD**. All human effort involved is “sowing” or “watering” the Seed that has already been sown (1 Corinthians 3:5-9). When one believes on the **LORD**, it is the result of **God** bringing about the increase, in the same way that *He* causes a physical plant to grow. He causes the ‘plant’ of one’s faith to grow and produce ripened fruit, so that the “harvester” need only

recognize and “pick” it. The work of sowing and watering had been done by many different influencers prior to the harvest.

Over the years of our creation ministry, I have become increasingly aware of and burdened for those who make multiple “decisions” for Christ, who more times than not, claim to be “saved” but do not even attend church, who perhaps went through a “flash in the pan faith” but later became agnostic or atheist or at most live a life unbecoming a Christian. It is sobering to hear of ones who thought they were saved when they were young, but did not actually come to true faith in Christ until many years later. Had they died during those years of false confidence, they would have gone into eternal hell fire! These things deeply concern my soul! At times, I wonder why numbers of Christians struggle with doubt about their salvation or exhibit obvious lack of dedication. When Saul of Tarsus believed, he immediately asked the LORD: “*What wilt Thou have me to do?*” (Acts 9). An Ethiopian eunuch was reading the book of Isaiah when he was saved and asked Philip if he could be baptized (Acts 8). There is also the familiar account of the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) who went and told the men of the city, “*Come see a man which told me all things that ever I did. Is not this the Christ?*” None of these accounts involve what is often called the “sinner’s prayer.”

*"And Philip said, If thou **believest** with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, **I believe** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* (Acts 8:37)

*"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth...and **believe** in thine heart..."* (Romans 10:9, 10)

The fruit of one’s hearing the message is true **belief**. Without a settled belief in the heart, external action is fruitless. There may be an outward response to a sincere and spirited urging by an evangelist or a “soul winner,” but human effort cannot bring about an increase of the harvest. We can and should create opportunities for people to hear and believe, but we are unable to cause the fruit of one’s faith to grow and remain.

In Proverbs 11, we see that the sharing of truth is compared to a plant—a tree with fruit—and that the emphasis is on the “righteous/wise one” who, by his fruit, “winneth souls.” Jesus, while on earth, used His creation to teach:

*"Behold, a sower went forth to **sow**; And when he sowed, some **seeds** fell by the way side, and the **fowls** came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear."* (Matthew 13:3-9)

Jesus gave four types of “heart soil”: the wayside heart, the stony heart, the thorny heart, and the good heart, each one exhibiting a different response to the seed of God’s Word. Much has been, can be, and shall be written from this parable. However, one thing of which we must be cautious are the various unBiblical and humanistic ideas that have crept into Christianity regarding soul winning (e.g. “1-2-3-repeat after me”). God has clearly communicated His perspective for how we should reach and “win” others; that is, through the process of sowing and watering and seeing the increase. The more we consider this process, the more we can understand God’s plan for how we should “win souls.”

The Foundation of the Message

As was noted earlier, the Bible does not record a “sinner's prayer” for salvation, or what is normally meant by the term today. Rather, the emphases in God’s Word are belief for the unbeliever and witnessing for the “soul winner.”

*"...and ye shall be **witnesses** unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."* (Acts 1:8)

How Shall They Call?

In the Bible, believers are never told to “win” others (i.e. through our own efforts to instigate a response from the hearer). For those who have yet to come to Christ, the emphasis is on belief in the heart. Are the words of a prayer *effective* without belief? No. God through the Apostle Paul stated it this way:

*“How then shall they **call** on him in whom they have not **believed**? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not **heard**? And how shall they hear without a **preacher**? And how shall they preach, except they be **sent**?”*
(Romans 10:14-15)

If we have a pyramid in mind, we can envision the “call” of verse 13 as the pinnacle stone that rests on a number of underlying (foundational) layers: belief, hear, preach, etc. Rather than beginning from the foundation, through a series of “how” questions, Paul reveals foundational layer after layer as he works his way to the ultimate bedrock foundation for the prayer for salvation: **creation**.

Similarly, if we consider a house, we can liken the “call” to the shingles. Prior to the roof, there must be solid trusses, walls, and floors, all which must have a sure ultimate foundation. Romans 10:18, Paul uses a quote from Psalm 19 after tracing “how questions” to the bedrock foundation for the entire “structure”:

*“But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, **their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.**”* (Romans 10:18)

*“**Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.**”*
(Psalm 19:4)

In essence, using the building analogy, we can ask: “How can there be shingles without the roof? How can the roof exist without walls? How can the walls stand without a floor?” These questions take us all the way to the bedrock foundation of creation (v. 18). In referring to that foundation, Paul quoted from Psalm 19, a psalm that today is known as a “creation psalm,” and wrote that creation is communicated to the ends of the world. The message of creation “lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9) and it reaches every language and people group (“there is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard” Psalm 19:3). In other words, the design of the Great Designer is evident and revealed to mankind so that ALL are without an excuse in recognizing the existence of the Creator (Romans 1:20)! Hence, the Book that carries this message, a message that stems all the way back to the beginning, covering all of creation, is a Book that is no ordinary book. A myriad of evidences from archaeology, history, prophecy, DNA and more only serve to confirm the fact that the Bible is MUCH more than a “religious book.” It is THE miraculous Revelation of God to mankind for the ages!

In contrast, evolution in school textbooks and through many other venues is taught as a fact of science. However, this indoctrination is **not** solely a ‘science subject.’ Rather, it is a philosophy, a world view aimed at the foundation of *everything*: creation! Though it is impossible to construe evolution as observable science, when it is believed as fact, the foundation of a God-oriented philosophy is removed and replaced with God-less, man-centered thinking. Therefore, with a man-centered philosophy in place as the basis for one’s thinking, the foundation for all issues of life, from the Bible, to marriage, music, and everything else, is humanistic and up to each person to decide. Therefore, the evolution believers will live according to their sinful hearts.

What about “the Heathen”?

Does the fact that God's creation “lighteth every man” mean that the “heathen” in “deepest, darkest Africa” do not *need* missionaries since they already have heard the message and are “without excuse”? No! The same God Who made all things has commanded believers to “go into all the world and preach the gospel” (Matthew 28:18-20). The ages-old question regarding the “heathen” not hearing the name of Jesus or the Gospel stems from believers not being obedient to God! Why do many churches have an annual emphasis on missions? If part, they seek to give an opportunity for someone to respond to God touching their heart to perhaps go to a

foreign land. Why do most, if not all churches, support missionaries prayerfully and financially? God works in the hearts of His children, burdening some to go serve in another country and others to serve in their home country. Regardless, He has tasked ALL believers with being witnesses wherever we are. We can *all* be involved in foreign and home missions by prayer, by finances, by going ourselves, or through all of the above. Missions and “soul winning” involve SO much more than just finances or even *being* a missionary! The ageless problem of “the heathen in deepest Africa” not hearing the name of Christ is not God’s fault. He did His part. Are we doing ours?

The Carnality of Division

Since “winning” is often associated with sports, the Scriptural view of “sowing seed” may seem, to some, to be a new concept. It isn’t. As was already referenced, Jesus used sowing seed to illustrate sharing the Word. In addition, Paul used “planting terms” to illustrate the propagation of truth:

"Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." (1 Cor. 3:6, 7)

An obsession with sports in modern times can easily result in an un-Biblical philosophy when it comes to the crowds that may or may not attend certain scheduled activities (e.g. visitation, church services), or the methods that are used to draw them. Due to many factors, people may think that if they don’t see so much outward response (aka “points”), God isn’t blessing them or that they aren’t “doing it right.” Such an emphasis couldn’t be further from the truth! As we see in Acts 8, Romans 10, and 1 Corinthians 3, individuals sow the seed and/or water it, and God brings the increase. According to God, “winning souls” is *any* part of that process of sowing, watering, or picking the “fruit”.

In addition, an abnormal focus on following men is **carnality** that will hinder the increase. As the apostle wrote:

*For ye are yet **carnal**: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of **Paul**; and another, I am of **Apollos**; are ye not carnal?" (1 Corinthians 3:3, 4)*

This theme and thought is continued from chapter 1:

*Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of **Paul**; and I of **Apollos**; and I of **Cephas**; and I of **Christ**. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:12)*

As there was in Paul’s day, are there divisions over men today? Sadly, a great deal of this division exists in modern times, with a great catalyst for division being Christian education. While much is accomplished for the cause of Christ through Christian institutions of learning (I am a grateful product of them), there is a vast amount of division among men who follow other men (aka, “I am of Bob Jones”... “I am of Arlin Horton”... “I am of Ron Comfort”... “I am of Clarence Sexton”... “I am of Jack Hyles”... “I am of Paul Chappell”... “I am of Bob Gray,” etc.). God calls this **carnality**! Paul was brutally honest with the Corinthians in calling them out on their men-following. Yet, humbly, he denigrated himself as a servant and placed the emphasis exactly where it must be placed: God, Who brings the increase.

*Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the LORD gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but **God gave the increase.**” [literally, “causes to grow”] (1 Corinthians 3:6)*

There is SO much division going on today, it is no wonder that our culture is in such a slide into immorality and wickedness, that politics is such a filthy game, and that there is no revival in our land. May God help us to lay aside division over men and to say with Paul, “Who am I but one minister among others as we together sow or water the Seed of the Word? I plant, someone else waters, but it is GOD Who gives the increase, and HE is to receive all the glory!”

What about the increase? It certainly is Biblical to desire, to invite, and to see folk come to Christ. As with planting and sowing, in time God brings the increase. It is not up to us to connive, to “clinch a deal” (as a

salesman), or to “conquer” a sinner (as in “winning a game”). As an evangelist, I have often given opportunities for people to respond to a message *I* brought. I have been and will go visiting door-to-door, usually with a special week in view. However, some years ago, God did something for me during a creation revival meeting. A lady and her husband who had helped in the children’s meetings were actually *saved* in their home during the week! If she had not obeyed the LORD and come to our trailer to tell us what had happened, we would never have known what the LORD did that week at their home through God’s Word and His works! As a result, I have come to realize that my faithfulness to preach the Word **IS** “soul winning.” Was Noah faithful to God? Was he a faithful “soul winner”? Scripture calls him a “preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), but how many did he “win” as a faithful preacher? During the time he was working on the ark, he didn’t even see one person more than his own family come into the ark after *many* years of preaching! Certainly, he was successful, for we are all here because of Noah’s faithful labor! Noah was a successful “soul winner”—successful on **God’s** scoreboard, the only one that matters.

How can we faithfully witness to souls? Can we use technology such as websites, social media, email, texting, video, radio, and more? Certainly! Distributing tracts, printing Scriptures, living a Godly life, prayer...all are a part of reaching and influencing people for righteousness! *Any and all* of these are part of the entire process of winning souls in **God’s economy**--producing "fruit" on the "tree" of **eternal** life.

What Must We Do?

First, we must present ourselves to God a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1-2). Second, God has gifted each one of us with gifts to be used for Him (Ephesians 4:8-15), and we should develop those gifts! Third, we must get into His Word and study what HE said and separate that from what MEN say. Men will lead us astray. “...let God be true but every man a liar...” (Romans 3:4) Fourth, we must look around us. The culture is saturated with evolution and a humanistic worldview, particularly after a critical turning point in America, an infamous trial in 1925 called the Scopes “Monkey Trial,” during which noted statesman and creationist, William Jennings Bryan, gave a foothold to evolution by allowing for the days of creation to be “millions of years.”

In Chronicles, we read that the men of Issachar had “understanding of the times...”

*And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had **understanding of the times**, to know what Israel ought to do; (1 Chronicles 12:32)*

Satan has convinced a generation that they are nothing more than an evolved ape and that there is no Creator. This critical idea makes man **unaccountable** to anyone but himself, *and the Word of God nothing more than a collection of ideas by men thousands of years ago!* We can no longer ignore the damage that evolutionary ideology has done in our land, and we **MUST** address the issues of origins, “earthly things” (John 3:12), and Biblical history!

“Wait for Rain”

Some years ago, my brother and I were helping our parents till the garden. My brother was helping with the tiller out back while I was doing something inside the house. After a short time, I came to the back yard and found them loading the tiller back into the storage building! This was odd, as I was expecting to hear the sound of the motor. Though they had been able to start the tiller, they could not till the ground. It was too hard! When I asked why they weren’t tilling, Dad responded: “*Ground’s too hard. We need to wait for rain.*” Later, the thought hit me that the “ground” of our culture has been hardening more and more, as younger and younger ages are influenced to doubt the Word of God. Even young people who are growing up/have grown up in good churches and homes are being infected by Satan’s lies. The effects of his tool of doubt are even affecting older believers, ones who seem to be the most faithful among us, and he is quickly and effectively working to negate years of past Godly influence in our land. America has long been at the point where the overall “ground” is too hard for the “tiller” of the Word, as people no longer view the Bible as the infallible and perfect Word of God. More and more, we see the effects of this view in government, in the news, in churches, in families, among youth and children, and in every other area of our culture. People generally view God’s Word as a book of fairy tales and consider evolutionary ideology as factual and trustworthy. What must we do? Will we continue to spread Seed on concrete-like ground? Or, as the men of Issachar who “had understanding of the times,” will we see the need for foundational truth and say with Nehemiah: “Let us rise up and build”?