

Personal Soul Winning

Sermon #0911

Study given by W. D. Frazee—February 24, 1962

Sometimes when I think of the experiences the Lord has given me I feel I am the richest man in the world. I am perfectly willing for everybody else to feel the same. One thing about our heavenly Father, He is delighted to have each one of His children feel especially privileged. I don't think He wants us to lose the wonderful thrill of being especially favored. As I look back at my experience I am thankful that the Lord early led me into contact with people who could help me learn the most wonderful thing in the world—soul winning.

When I was just a boy my parents moved to San Diego, California. When I was nine to eleven years old I got acquainted with Elder Luther Warren who came from time to time as an evangelist to hold meetings. Elder Warren is the man who started the first young people's work in the denomination. That was when he was just a boy in his teens up in Michigan. He and another boy talked things over, and decided that they would meet together with some other boys as a little band, and pray and work for souls. They did. That is how the work of the young people in the denomination started.

Forty years later those principles were still strong in Elder Warren's mind. At camp meeting he not only talked to the young people in meetings, but he would have little groups who came for special instruction in how to work for souls. He believed the instruction in *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, page 21 that the way to do work for souls was to have little groups in prayer bands working and praying for definite ones.

Just before I went into the eighth grade I made a new consecration to the Lord, and with it came a desire to work for souls. After I had been going to a school for several weeks, I felt impressed one morning to go and talk to another boy before school. I met him on the road and said, "Robert, the Lord says that one student in this school can have a molding influence. What would it do if two of us would unite together? What about you and me having prayer together and pray for some of the other boys?"

We met together at recess in a side room and had prayer together. We kept it up. Presently a chum of his, Irvin, joined our little prayer band, and there were three of us. Then presently there were four of us. Another boy we were working and praying for came in.

When enough came we divided our little prayer band. Irvin took one band and I kept the other. They continued to grow. We had three bands, and then four. Some of the girls heard about it. They got interested. They started having prayer bands like that too. Before the school year was finished we had over half the school in prayer bands.

So I had some good experiences in seeing the Lord answer the prayers of young people who would take Him at His word and get down and pray together. We didn't have anyone to give us long courses in how to do it. In fact, we had no adult leadership at all. We got hold of the idea that if two or three young people would get together and pray for some special soul, God would answer and things would happen.

God's plans are very simple. Every tree starts with two cells coming together and making one cell. That cell divides into two, four, eight, sixteen, and so forth. That is the way every bird and animal starts. That's the way you and I started. And that isn't just one way. That is the way. If you don't want certain kinds of trees to bear fruit, all you have to do is keep the pollen from another tree off the blossoms of that tree.

There must be something wonderful in soul winning about this simple plan that *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, page 21 talks about, because anyone who tries it and carries it through sees precious results. One reason I know it is true is because the enemy seeks so hard to keep people from doing it.

The next year I got into some types of amusements at school that were not the best. They caused me to lose my fervor for prayer bands and soul winning. Before the year was over I was sorry for the way things were going. I told the Lord that the next year in another school we were going to that I would do better and get into prayer bands and soul winning again. The Lord in His providence changed my plans and sent me right back to that school where I had lost out.

That year I took hold of prayer bands again and had some precious experiences working with some of the children and young people who were younger than I was. I was in my middle teens then. Several years went by in which I had some experiences in personal soul winning, but I shall not take time to go into all those details.

In the providence of God, when I finishing my training as a medical missionary at Loma Linda I got acquainted with Elder Tindall. He asked me to go up to San Francisco with him and get a training with him in field medical evangelism, and help him in his work. I was just turning twenty at the time. I felt unprepared, which I was in many ways. But the Lord impressed him to take me with him, and he gave me a training in soul winning both private and public.

Elder Tindall asked me to take charge of the young people's work in San Francisco. We had two fairly large churches there. During the campaign we were holding it was decided that we would combine the two young people's societies, and that I would take the leadership and lead the young people into the evangelistic work of the campaign. With these experiences that the Lord had given me previously, I felt a great desire that each one of those young people should have a personal experience in a little prayer band. So that is the way we arranged it.

Instead of our society being made up of a group of young people sitting there while two or three or half a dozen people talked, each young person belonged

primary to a basic unit of a prayer band, made up of two or three. A group of those prayer bands were grouped together in divisions. Those divisions were grouped together in our whole society. The result was that we had quite a number of young people getting a real experience in getting down together and praying together.

A young man who had been attending a local high school in San Francisco was my right-hand assistant in this young people's work. His father was not an Adventist. He had no help from his father in any religious matters. His father opposed him. But his mother was a very earnest and dedicated woman. She prayed much for her children, and was burdened for this older boy.

He had been baptized a few years before, but he was losing his experience attending the worldly high school, and in contact with other worldly young people. He was very much interested in athletics. In fact, he was on the championship swimming team of all the high schools in Northern California.

In our testimony studies we were having with the young people, we came to the study of competitive athletics, and the motive of love in contrast with the motive of rivalry. The test came to him as the test that Jesus gave to the rich young ruler. Fortunately, instead of going away sorrowfully, this young man surrendered. The Lord soon began to fill his heart with a joy that more than compensated for all the sorrow surrender had cost him, and he plunged into soul winning. He helped me organize young people's prayer bands of two or three.

This young man, Warren, eventually trained with us in San Francisco in medical missionary work, and went into self-supporting soul winning work. He later went into conference work. He has for many years been a young people's worker leading hundreds of young people in soul winning. Recently he accepted the pastorate of the Madison College church. He is my good friend. I wish he were here this afternoon to tell you what these prayer bands meant to him thirty-five years ago in San Francisco.

I remember his younger sister. She too was a high school student. She came into our young people's work and began to get interested in soul winning. She was in a little prayer band. Our plan was that as young people were in a prayer band for awhile we looked forward to their becoming prayer band leaders. Eventually Evelyn became a prayer band leader. After several years of experience she became the leader of a group of prayer bands. The Lord blessed Evelyn's work in soul winning.

We had an expression in our young people's work there in San Francisco in those prayer bands. It was to get hold of somebody. That meant that those prayer band leaders, about a dozen to start with, would watch in young people's meetings to see if there was any young person they had not seen before. Believe me, nobody got out. They were nabbed by some young man or some young woman.

Evelyn was very good at getting hold of young people. She grew up and took training in Bible work. She eventually married Arthur Delafield. He was for many years with the Voice of Prophecy, and later with the *Review and Herald*. He is now secretary of the Ellen G. White publications.

I like to think of Warren and Evelyn, and what God did for them in that simple young people's work back there in San Francisco, and what it did in preparing them for their life's work in this denomination. I could tell you of other young people back there who have since served this cause in positions of responsibility in foreign fields as well as here at home. I have seen these principles work.

I want to tell you an experience Warren and I had together of getting hold of folks. One Friday night I was speaking in an effort Elder Tindall and I were holding together, and two young marines came in and sat down in the back of the room. Our young men got hold of those fellows before that night was over. One of them came back Sunday night, and came back Tuesday night. After the meeting Warren told me the young fellow wanted to talk with me.

We went into a side room. I opened the way for him to tell me what was on his heart. He said it was the Sabbath business. He told us his experience. He had been around the world with the USA Navy. He was the personal orderly to the captain on one of the largest ships. In the library of the naval base in Virginia he happened upon the book *Great Controversy*. He read that book until he knew this message quite well. In the providence of God, he was in San Francisco harbor, and had come to our meetings. Warren had gotten hold of him.

He talked with us and asked what he should do. How could he keep the Sabbath? How could he take a position on not bearing arms? I asked him if he believed it. He said yes, it was quite clear. But what could he do about it? Well, we studied and prayed together, and he made his decision. He let his decision be known to the captain. After a number of experiences he was finally bundled off the boat and taken to the naval hospital as a psychiatric case. He spent his first Sabbath in an insane ward. They kept him there for six weeks, and finally decided to give him a medical discharge. He went away to one of our schools to prepare for the work.

At the very first meeting this young man came to, someone got hold of him and never let go. The Sabbath he was up at the naval hospital Warren was in touch with him. They corresponded back and forth. Warren went up to see him. I went up to see him. Somebody was hold of him and never let go. That is the way souls are won.

There is something about this thing of two or three meeting together and pleading with God that is part of the program. Pleading with God for some special soul, and then with still another. Anyone can do it. Everyone here this afternoon can do it. All you have to do is kneel down and pray to God and say, Lord, give me somebody to pray with and somebody to pray for.

All of us in our daily work come across things that one person can't do alone. What do we do? Spend the rest of our lives wishing we were as strong as Samson and leaving the task undone? No. We get hold of somebody. We ask if somebody will help us. Here is something that is too heavy to lift or too long to carry. Will you help me? And two of us together do what one person couldn't do in a hundred years. That is what we are talking about this afternoon.

Back there in San Francisco in over a two year period we saw twenty-nine baptized into this message. I don't mean this was the only agency that was being used. Elder Tindall and I were holding evangelistic meetings. Many of those who were baptized were people who came to these meetings. My point is, the young people themselves were praying and working for these twenty-nine souls over the two year period.

I remember the first baptismal class we held. Elder Tindall was holding the class, and I was assisting him in review. A young girl and her mother were getting ready for baptism. I was sitting along side of her helping her find the places in the Bible. She didn't know how.

Every one of the young people who came in got into one of the little prayer bands, and some of them became prayer band leaders by and by. That was the plan. It is all there, as simple as can be.

"Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another. As they work and pray in Christ's name, their numbers will increase" *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, page 21.

Sister White did not get this out of her own head. She said it was presented to her by One who cannot err. It came from Jesus. On the next page she shows it came not only as Christ's personal instruction to her as the messenger to the remnant, but she quotes what Jesus told His disciples:

"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven" Matthew 18:19.

Isn't that nice? I have thought about it many a time. Suppose the man down at the bank heard about our work out here, and said to one of us, "If you will get one of the men at the sanitarium or the school to come down with you and present your request at the bank, we will give you a hundred dollars for your work out there." If he would say that to any of you, what would you do? Would you find someone to go down there with you? Or would you say, It would be nice if we could ever find the time. It would be nice if I could find anyone interested to go with me.

What would we do? We know we would find time. We know we would find someone. If the first person we asked wouldn't go with us, we would ask another and another until we found someone, wouldn't we?

And I am not just telling an experience. To me the thing that makes experiences interesting is whether they have any application to the present and the future. Charles Kettering once said, "My interest is in the future, for that is where I expect to spend the rest of my life."

Some of you young people setting here this afternoon are going to get a vision of what you can do. You can do it as well as anybody else.

I like to think of that experience back in the Old Testament days when all the army was in a discouraged mood. Jonathan said to his armor bearer, Let's do something for God. The Spirit of Prophecy tells us that Jonathan and his armor bearer had been praying together. They had a little prayer band. That is what caused them to hatch that idea, and they put a whole army to rout.

What is the Bible plan? One shall chase a thousand, and two will put ten thousand to flight. When two people get together, it isn't just twice as much accomplished, it is ten times as much.

That is what the Bible teaches. There are various reasons. I don't understand them all, but I know I don't have to understand electricity to make it work. All I have to do is plug in. I don't have to understand all the reasons why two people getting down and praying together make things happen, but they do. And it is more important to know that they do than to figure out all the reasons why. Anyone can test it.

I warn you. Don't think it is necessarily going to happen because you pray once or twice or three times. These prayer bands I was telling you about went on week after week, month after month, and in some cases, year after year. That's the way trees grow. That's the way people grow. That's the way souls are born and nurtured. It takes a simple faith in what God has said in Matthew 18:19 and *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, page 21. That's all you need for references.

I think this plan gets killed by complexity and a lot of dressing; extra things thrown around it. You should keep to the simplicity of this plan, and stick with it like a bulldog until your prayer band grows. When you get to be four or five, divide so you have two or three again. Every prayer band leader should be training some other prayer band leader.

I will tell you things that kill prayer bands. One is having somebody preach at the prayer band, or have a long reading, or anything like that which lengthens it out and makes it like a meeting. That is not the purpose of it. Two or three meet together and do what? Pled with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another. So one way to kill a prayer band is have somebody preach.

Another way is to have it get too big. It is all right to have a big prayer meeting. It is all right to have a big evangelistic meeting. Suppose you have fifty people, and each one leads in prayer. If there is anyone there who is timid, they won't pray that night, will they? No. Nor the next night. And there is no way for fifty people to get as close together in a prayer season as two or three can get, other things being equal.

So I emphasize, as your prayer band grows, do what cells do. When any animal or vegetable cell gets so big it divides. Then you have two. When each of those divides, you have four, eight, sixteen, thirty-two. It runs up fast if you keep it going. But there is no reason why the tenth step should not be like the first one, two or three meeting together in prayer for the salvation of some special one.

Talk about atomic power. What I am talking about has far more power than that atomic bomb stuff. That has destructive power. This has power to win souls. And long after all those things have been forgotten, the people who have been won through this message are going to be singing the praises of God in the kingdom. They are going to be coming up again and again and throwing their arms around those who prayed for them saying, Thank God, you won my soul to Christ.

I see children here this afternoon. I see older people. I see young people in your tens and twenties. What I am talking about anyone can do. Anyone who is old enough to understand what I am talking about can do it. An eight or nine year old child can do it. A sixty or seventy year old grandmother can do it. Anyone can do it. I suppose that is why we don't do more of it. Somehow we get an idea that something anyone can do isn't for us.

I am so glad God has made available to the largest number the methods of the greatest power. Aren't you? I hope those of you who have been doing something along this line will keep at it. I hope those of you who have been dabbling in it will quit dabbling and get out into the deep and swim. I hope any of you who have never been in will do as Jesus said to Peter, launch out into the deep and let down your nets. And remember, all you need to do is first get down on your knees and say, Lord who have you got for me to pray with, and who do you want me to pray for.

Let me tell you another way to kill a prayer band. It is having objects of prayer of people at a distance. Sister White says,

“When the subjects of our prayers are at a distance, the closet is the proper place to plead with God for them. When in the house of God, we should pray for a present blessing and should expect God to hear and answer our prayers. Such meetings will be lively and interesting.”
Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 1, page 145

Suppose Brother Palmer and I are going to get together and pray for some special soul. Who should we pray for? his uncle in Texas and my cousin in California? I don't know his uncle in Texas, and he doesn't know my cousin in California. There is no bond of contact.

It is true that, as a matter of courtesy, I can kneel down and pray with him about his uncle, and he can pray with me about my cousin, but there is nothing about that which does this we are studying about.

There is good common sense in this like everything else. The place for me to pray for my loved ones is in my closet at home. There are exceptions to all rules. There are times when the Lord may burden us to request prayer for some loved one. But if we understand this principle, we will see that the purpose of two getting together and praying about someone is so they can do something together about that someone.

Do you see what I mean? It needs to be someone who is near enough so you cannot only pray for them, but work for them. Visit them. Get them to come to meetings. Watch for them at meetings. Sit with them. Get hold of them. Never let go. That's it.

Every time I tell these stories, I ask myself why we don't do more of it. I understand why Sister White herself worded it that way in *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7, page 21. And that is the question. Why not do it?

Will you do it? Will you find a prayer partner? Not just anyone, but the one of God's appointment. God has someone for you to pray with. Dear young friends, God has someone for you to pray with, and someone for you to pray for.

I was telling different ways to kill a prayer band. I have one more to tell you. It is to make a great long prayer list. If you get fifty people together, or even ten or twelve, and try to call that a prayer band, you would dilute something. So if you have a great long prayer list and two or three of you get down and run all the way through that list, it dilutes it.

There are forms of life where the newborn are multiple. The possum can take care of thirteen in one litter. But you never saw a human father or mother carrying around thirteen babies, did you? It is unusual when twins are born. Triplets are very seldom born. Quintuplets is something to write and talk about for generations. Usually it is one at a time.

It isn't for me to tell you how many you can carry, but I can tell you that one way to kill a prayer band is to have a list a yard long. Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another? This is what we have done many times in years past.

If two people are going to meet together, let each one of them have a special person they are praying for. If Morgan and I are going to pray together, and his burden is for George and mine is for Harry, I will pray with him about George, and he will pray with me about Harry.

Do you see? And both of us will be alert to help each of those. And we won't try to make a prayer list of twenty-five or a hundred.

Someone say, but there are so many.

Yes. I know there are so many. But even if there are a thousand apples out here on the trees, most of them you will pick one at a time. Right?

That doesn't mean you have to limit all your soul winning work to one or two names. No. You can be working for many souls. But don't kill your prayer band with a long list. When you get down in your secret place of prayer with God, you pray with just as many as you have the time and mental burden for. You and God work that out.

When you get together in your little prayer band with one or two others, concentrate and focus on a very few names. That is what is indicated there in *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 7.

In a little while we are going to be up in heaven together, and I will be meeting some of you around the supper table, or out under the tree of life. You will tell me you want me to meet someone. You will tell me the reason that person is here is because you got a vision and prayed with someone, and here is the person you prayed for. He gave his heart to God and came all the way, and is here in the kingdom. I would like to make an appointment with you to meet that person.

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