

Words to Winners of Souls

Study Guide

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This document contains discussion questions and exercises to assist your group in studying “**Words to Winners of Souls**” by Horatius Bonar.

Theme to watch for throughout the book: pouring out our lives for Christ

2Tim 4:6-8 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷ I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. ⁸ Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (NKJV)

Note to participant: You will likely gain more from the book if you read a small amount at one sitting.

Notes to leader:

- You may want to spend more than one meeting to discuss chapter 4.
- The Self-Assessment Exercise is for each person’s personal reflection. Some participants may prefer not to discuss it.
- The Personal Action Plan is an opportunity to form accountability partnerships for those who wish to do so.

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1-Importance of a Living Ministry

Exercise: Free-association - Pick a Pastor

Purpose Explore what we tend to seek in a pastor.

Participant Instructions

step	action
1	When the session leader says, "begin," write as many words as you can that describe a good pastor . [Session leader says, "begin," gives participants 60 seconds then says, "stop."]
2	Take turns reading your list of words. What words were repeated on several lists?
3	Briefly discuss if these were the words you would have used before reading the chapter "Importance of a Living Ministry." After reading that chapter, in what ways has your view changed regarding what makes a good pastor?

- Bonar states that even if a man is free of scandal and bad conduct, he may still be an obstruction in the spiritual development of people. How can that happen?
- Next to securing the salvation of his own soul, what should be the overwhelming focus of a pastor's life? Should this also be the focus of our lives? Why or why not?
- Bonar speaks to the danger of apathy. When comparing our energy and enthusiasm for recreational pursuits to our energy and enthusiasm for winning souls, is apathy an issue in our culture? What can we do to protect against apathy in our role as winner of souls [Gal 4:19]?

2-The Minister's True Life and Walk

- Why is early morning quiet time important [Mark 1:35]?
- In a typical week, on how many days do you spend time in God's Word within two hours of rising [Jer 29:13]?

0-1	2-3	4-5	6-7

- Make a list of things that come between us and God [Mark 7:6].
- Under what circumstances is it advisable to consider yourself first?
- What is the advantage of praying each day

BEFORE you see anyone?

- Discuss ways we can translate truth into action. What changes to our daily routines would make this more likely?

Study the Speakers, Not the Sermons

- To be a powerful minister, what is more important than education, speaking skills, or persuasiveness?

Faithfulness Essential to Success

- The closer you walk with God, the more life flows from you [John 7:38]. When we don't see evidence of souls being saved, what areas of our lives should we examine?

3-Past Defects

- When you consider your ministry, what comes to mind? Do you think of what you do? Do you think of the difference you have made in other's lives? What do you use to gauge how pleasing your efforts are to God?
- What can prompt you to examine your heart and seek to know how well it aligns with God's heart?
 - a challenging word from a sermon
 - the Holy Spirit speaking to you as you read God's Word
 - an "innocent" comment from someone close to you
 - an undefined sense of discontentment
 - the emotional outpouring of those around you
 - other _____

The Tragedy of a Barren Ministry

- Bonar asks, "...of what use are sermons, sacraments, schools, if souls are left to perish...?" When and how can we inquire after the spiritual state of people in our church?

Submission Involves Renunciation

- In what way can contentment become indifference?

Covering Falsehood with Truth

- Using the following words from Bonar as a springboard, pray for the souls of those around us.

"Give us thy tears to weep; for, Lord, our hearts are hard toward our fellows."

4-Ministerial Confession

Bonar cautions us to study to “be in Christ” ([John 17:3](#) and [Php 3:10](#)) before we do the work of ministry. Although this thought came from the Church of Scotland in 1651, how does it apply to each believer today?

- In what ways do you take care to “be in Christ” before you serve?
- What may cause you to feel ignorant of God or far away from His presence? What are ways of growing closer to Him?

Glad to Find Excuses

- What is your reason for reading the Scriptures?
- What things in the world make your heart heavy?
- What things in your heart and mind cause you concern?

Loving Pleasure More than God

- When you think of people in our church, what do you appreciate most about them?

Trusting in Our Own Ability

- Discuss ways we can remember to pray more for how God is using us than for how He can help us personally?

Confessing Our Shortcomings

- When we don’t confess our shortcomings to God, how can this interfere with our ability to serve Him?
- What are some practical ways to remind ourselves to confess our shortcomings to God?

Archbishop Ussher’s Example

- Ussher was noted for making the best use of the time available to him. He appeared to constantly hear the words “redeem the time” ([Eph 5:15-16](#)). What practical methods have you used to make better use of your time?
- Often, our sins of commission (what we do) are more apparent than our sins of omission (what we fail to do). In the context of day-to-day life, how can we make our bodies a living sacrifice ([Rom 12:1](#))?

Worldliness Stunts the Conscience

- The reason we study God’s Word and the way we study it makes a difference.
 - ▶ Why do you study God’s Word?
 - ▶ How do you approach the study of God’s Word?

Our want of usefulness is much oftener to be ascribed to our want of spirituality than to any want of natural ability. -Andrew Fuller

- To what degree do creature comforts occupy your mind and heart?

I think of myself as a living sacrifice.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5	I constantly seek ease and comfort.
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Afraid to Tell the Whole Truth

- Under what circumstances do you hold back from sharing what God’s Word says about a life issue?

Preaching Self Instead of Christ

- When it comes to speaking God's Word (or doing anything in His name), our motives are key.
 - ▶ How can we tell if we are seeking to exalt ourselves or magnify Christ?
 - ▶ What can we do to be sure our motives are pure?
- What can help us order our lives by God's wisdom rather than the enticing words of man's wisdom?

Too Little Emphasis on God's Word

- Bonar describes human opinions and writings as "human cisterns." Of the reading that you do, what percentage of it is reading God's Word?

Time for Everything but Prayer

- Do you agree with Bonar that a single quiet hour of prayer nourishes a soul more than many hours in the company of others? Why or why not?
- How does our time alone with God ([1Sam 3:9](#)) become a benefit to others?

Seeking the Spirit's Strength

- In what ways can we honor the Holy Spirit as teacher ([1John 2:20](#)), comforter, and sanctifier?
- How can we tell when we have grieved the Spirit ([Eph 4:30](#))?

Too Little Imitation of Christ

- Which of Christ's characteristics do you most seek to imitate?

5-Revival in the Ministry

Perhaps you don't have the determination to embark on a full renewal such as the one that Bonar describes of a 17th century minister. What is one small change you can make to your schedule to begin a revival in your spiritual life?

How Myconius Learned His Lesson

- To stimulate your faith, you don't have to have a striking dream like the one Myconius had. What motivates you to pour yourself out for Christ?

Preaching to Plague Victims

- Bonar describes the way preaching changed during the time of the plague. Many pastors fled out of fear. Others stepped in desperately seeking to lead people to Christ in their little time left on earth. Discuss how facing death or being around others facing death can alter

our priorities. What makes you more effective or less effective during those times?

Should We Ever Be Less Earnest?

- What can we do to remember the brevity of our lives without it taking a life-threatening situation to remind us ([Psa 39:4-5](#))?

Unbelief Weakens Our Testimony

- Do thoughts of everlasting joy or torment occupy your mind ([Mat 25:46](#))? If yes, how does this change your life? If no, why not?

Ready to Tremble

- In what ways does our use of time, talents, and treasures indicate that we take our responsibility to Christ too lightly ([John 9:4](#))?

Exercise: Self-assessment

For each statement below, indicate a number from 1-10, where "1" means you strongly disagree and "10" means you strongly agree.

	disagree ————— agree 1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
My enthusiasm for spiritual pursuits is greater than my enthusiasm for recreational pursuits.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
At least four times a week, I spend time in God's Word.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
Often, I examine my heart to see how closely it aligns with God's heart.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I regularly confess my shortcomings to God.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I seek God's guidance in using my time, talents, and treasures to serve Him.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
At least once a day, I spend quiet time praying to God.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
Frequently, I pause to listen to and honor the Holy Spirit.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10
I take my responsibility to Christ seriously.	1 -2 -3 -4 -5 -6 -7 -8 -9 -10

Things to Ponder:

- As you carefully consider your responses, which areas are you ready to address in your relationship with God?
- As you consider your responses overall, where in your life will you likely have the biggest struggle in your relationship with God?

Exercise: Personal Action Plan

Create a personal action plan to apply a lesson you learned from this book.

My Lesson to Apply:
My Accountability Partner: (Person who will ask about my consistency, encourage me, urge me to continue, and praise me for progress)

Specific Behaviors I Commit to Demonstrate as I Apply My Lesson

Behavior	Where	When