

## “THE GOLDEN PATH TO SUCCESSFUL PERSONAL SOUL WINNING”

By Dr. John R. Rice

The objective of Dr. John R. Rice’s book *The Golden Path to Successful Personal Soul Winning* was to stir Christians, specifically pastors, to make soul winning the priority of life. In this premise, Dr. Rice was very effective. Each chapter was filled with an abundance of information, tips, and strategies. Dr. Rice’s book demands the sincere Christian’s attention for souls, helps erase distractions, corrects your thinking, and awakens the dulled passion of the reader.

This book helps refocus the preacher’s priorities and the church’s direction toward winning souls to the Lord Jesus Christ. Each chapter was like a convicting sermon on soul winning as Dr. Rice consistently hammered in the message of soul winning. Although Dr. Rice’s main focus was on soul winning in general, at times he narrowed his focus to the responsibility of the preacher to do the same. His exhortations and reprimands produce monumental changes in thinking due to the conviction stirred within the heart of the reader.

Many of Dr. Rice’s quotes are not only practical but humorous examples of the reality of church ministry. The illustration regarding the church and the fire department (p. 60), the example of the church building (p. 79), and his reference to the Great Commission still being binding (p. 300), added to the overall enjoyment of reading this book.

Dr. Rice’s use of certain Scriptures to validate a few of his points was troublesome. When addressing the “fullness of the Spirit” as it pertains to soul winning and a special anointing to win souls, Dr. Rice stated that great soul-winners have

supernatural power and he went on to say that, “the fullness of the Spirit is a special endowment for witnessing” (p. 155). This statement is a borderline exaggeration. Every Christian possesses divine enablement because all receive the same Holy Spirit. God may endow the spiritual gift of evangelism on certain individuals, but not an extra anointing to carry it out subsequent to all other spiritual gifts.

Another example of Scripture used tantalizingly close to being out of context is found where he referenced James 5:19-20 and seemed to refer to those people as “the unsaved” (p. 55). The overall writing of the book of James is intended for a regenerate audience and in verse 19 it clearly states “brethren“ and applies to rescuing erring brethren. Dr. Rice later stated that, “the Lord being with us always is conditional in the context of the Great Commission” (p. 280). This is another example of troubling exegesis when Dr. Rice declared that, “those who go and win souls have the promise, and the promise is only to soul-winners.” The Scriptures are clear regarding the “earnest” and indwelling of the Spirit of God. I understand what Dr. Rice is trying to express, but it is never a good practice to use Scripture perilously close to being out of context.

Dr. Rice’s book formed the basis for the development of five sermons that were shared with our congregation and has in turn stirred their hearts toward the heartbeat of Christ. Upon finishing this series of messages, our church had a time to share how they had put all of the teaching into practice. Many shared how they had simply, but boldly shared their faith with family members, co-workers, and even a waitress at the local Pizza Hut. A summary of these five messages was given in our Easter services, focusing on the mission, passion, and heartbeat of Jesus Christ, as prescribed by Dr. Rice.

This book had a tremendous impact upon my life and it was hard to put down. The principles and practices outlined by Dr. Rice have been implemented into our ministry. The main thing I carried away with me from reading this book was exactly what Dr. Rice wanted to deliver in writing this book, a passion for souls. I unknowingly had fallen prey to the idea of sinners coming to the church for salvation and had seldom shared my faith verbally with others. I was under conviction early and often while reading, consequently stopping and praying over my life and our church ministries. Even though Dr. Rice's thesis was repetitive throughout the text, he stressed his message comprehensively. I have become "soul-conscious" again and have made soul-winning a personal priority. As a result of reading the book, my personal goal has been to witness regularly and lead a person to Christ every week.