

## book of the month | September 2025

### Words to Winners of Souls by Horatius Bonar

Words to Winners of Souls is a book that I have read a number of times in my life. It haunts me. The words and admonitions of Bonar ring in my ears as I prepare communion messages and Student Ministries lessons. Each time I read it, I realize just how important his counsel is to the way I lead my family's time in the word. His call for me to personally be alive to Christ, to have relationship with Him founded upon time with Him through prayer and His Word have shaped my life. I know this book is precious to many at Grace Bible Church. Please read it with the rest of the church during September.

If you have been a long-time member of Grace Bible Church, you may have been influenced by Bonar and the contents of this book without even realizing it. Bonar is probably the clearest teacher I know of in laying forth the criticality The BUILD and Wellspring Discipline 3. The book is written for ministers (full-time pastors serving in 19th-century Scotland), but it is applicable to all. He saw that far too many were content to go through the actions of ministry without a heart that longed above all that people would come to know Christ and to grow in Him. He writes, "Take heed to thyself. Your own soul is your first and greatest care. You know a sound body alone can work with power, much more a healthy soul. Keep a clear conscience through the blood of the Lamb. Keep up close communion with God. Study likeness to him in all things. **Read the Bible for your own growth first, then for your people.**" This is what we teach in BUILD and Wellspring, to let your ministry come from the overflow of shepherding your own heart and home. Don't play leapfrog over your heart.

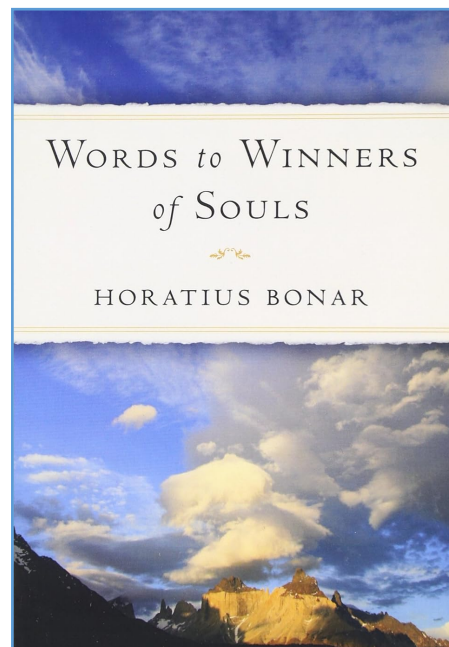
What struck me most forcefully was the author's contention that "the lukewarm ministry of one who is theoretically [doctrinally sound], is often more extensively and fatally ruinous to souls than that of one grossly inconsistent or flagrantly heretical." This is sobering. Having all the right doctrine but no true love of God or spiritual fervency to match, can inoculate people against the gospel more effectively than outright false teaching or no teaching. Every Christian—every one of us at Grace Bible Church—must be a preacher of the gospel who shares the gospel regularly and calls people to repentance and faith. We must teach, and our lives and affections must match the glorious gospel we proclaim. When our lives do not match our words, our hearers conclude, Bonar says, that there is no need for them to believe them as well.

This has dramatic implications for parents.

The book doesn't merely diagnose problems; it points to the cure. Richard Baxter and Robert Murray M'Cheyne (and others Bonar knew) becomes a recurring example of what ministry should be. Of Baxter: "When he spoke of weighty soul concerns, you might find his very spirit drenched therein." This is ministry that flows from genuine communion with God, where "it is living fellowship with a living Saviour, which, transforming us into his image, fits us for being able and successful ministers of the gospel." I am certain that a slow read of this book and a commitment to listen to Bonar's wise teachings will help us grow in godliness and, each of us, be more useful slaves to our Lord who bought us with His own blood.

It's a short book, able to be read in 90-120 minutes. But read it slower than that over more time with lots of thought. If we each do that together as church, I'm excited for how God may grow us.

*Jacob Hanftla*



#### Suggested One-Month Reading Plan

##### Week 1: Monday 9/1 - Sunday 9/7

Preface, 3 pages

1. Importance of a Living Ministry, 10 pages
2. The Minister's True Life and Walk, 7 pages

##### Week 2: Monday 9/8 - Sunday 9/14

3. Past Defects, 8 pages

##### Week 3: Monday, 9/15 - Sunday, 9/21

4. Ministerial Confession, 27 pages

##### Week 4: Monday, 9/22 - Sunday, 9/28

5. Revival in the Ministry, 11 pages