

Paul H. Dixon  
How to Be a Winner  
circa 1980

Unedited Transcript

Paul H. Dixon:

I got saved when I was a senior in high school. That's the greatest thing that ever happened to me. After I got saved, the Lord led me to a tremendous Bible school called Tennessee Temple College in Chattanooga, Tennessee. I got on a train in Cincinnati, got off in Chattanooga, walked on that campus, then about 800 students. They now have around 2,500 students, but then they had about 800. I hadn't been on the campus five minutes, I only knew two people on the entire campus and a great big fellow came running over to me and said, "My name's Vernon Blackburn, I believe you know yours." I looked at that guy, I knew I had met a strange one. You don't meet many people who give an introduction like that. He said, "I want you to be my deaf and dumb brother." I said, "What?" He said, "I want you to be my deaf and dumb brother." He said, "Listen, I want to take you all over this campus and tell them that you're my brother from Pensacola, Florida. You can't speak and you can't hear."

Paul H. Dixon:

He started telling all the kids I was his deaf and dumb brother from Pensacola, Florida. All the kids started coming around. They'd never seen anyone come to school who couldn't speak and couldn't hear. Some of them would come around and they'd start talking real loud. He'd say, "Can't hear a thing you say." All those would notate there distinctly so that I might read their lips. He'd say, "He's not even a very good lip reader." I guess they were trying to figure out how I was going to make it. Well, I went all day that day acting like I was deaf and dumb.

Paul H. Dixon:

I went to the basketball game that night, watched the game, couldn't shout, couldn't cheer. Just had to sit there and watch them go up and down the court. After the game was over, I was standing all by myself when across that gymnasium floor came over the prettiest teenage girl I'd ever seen in my life. She was a junior in high school. As she'd heard about this fellow, who'd come to school, couldn't speak and couldn't hear. She came flying across that floor. I knew she was excited, but I didn't know what was going to happen. She came running up to me, her eyes were just a flashing. She was one of those Southern Belles. All of a sudden she looked at me and started going.

Paul H. Dixon:

She worked with the deaf people in the Highland Park Baptist church. She could translate Dr. Lee Robertson's messages on her hands for the deaf people who attended. I started getting read right here, went all the way up. It took her about five seconds to find out I wasn't deaf. Three and a half years later, we got married and she still says, I'm the dumbest fellow she ever met. Now that's how I met her and that's why I like sign language.

Paul H. Dixon:

Well, it's just great to be here. I know the Lord has many things in store for us. I'm speaking tonight. Looking forward to hearing Brother Louis Lightfoot speak tomorrow night, a real friend of mine. Brother Alvin Louie, I understand will probably be speaking on Wednesday night. I'll have the privilege of speaking again Thursday night when I want to speak on How to Lick the Lions in Your Life. A very practical message. How to Lick the Lions in Your Life on Thursday night. Have another message coming, I believe from Pastor Wong on Friday. And then I'll be sharing another message with you as we go home

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on Saturday morning. Tonight, I have a message from second Timothy chapter two, if you turn there me please. Second Timothy two.

Paul H. Dixon:

Let's pray, shall we? Our Father, we're so glad tonight that in your grace you've brought us all here together for camp. This is a concentrated effort that I'm sure if we allow your spirit to have his way, that we will never forget, and that we'll have lasting and eternal value in all of our lives. Now Lord, in this camp, there are many young people who are not saved. They're here tonight, they're listening. I pray they might see the need. They might appreciate your love and grace and gladly receive the Savior. Lord, out of those who are saved, there are many needs in all of our lives. Use the message tonight to speak to us, convict us, challenge us. Lord, I pray that you'll raise up some real dedicated Christians as a result of this message. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Paul H. Dixon:

It was May of this year, Philadelphia Phillies baseball stadium, 60,000 people packed out that stadium. The Philadelphia Phillies were not winning the pennant. They generally don't. And the question is why would 60,000 people jam into that stadium to see the Philadelphia Phillies play the Cincinnati Reds. Granted Cincinnati had won the pennant the previous year. But the real reason was because standing on that mound was a young pitcher for the Philadelphia team by the name of Steve Carlton. Steve Carlton won something like 27 games last year. He was the Cy Young award winner, meaning the outstanding pitcher in all of major league baseball. He asked and receive for something like \$160,000 for this year because he pitched so well the previous year. The point is, they came out to see a winning pitcher.

Paul H. Dixon:

The Detroit Tigers who have been up close to the top in their division in recent weeks, their last 10 home games they have drawn almost 400,000 people. They've averaged almost 40,000 people a game. I was in Michigan for most of the month of May and June. And they were doing well to draw 20,000 people. What happened? In May, they were losing. Now in August, they're winning. People go out to see winners. Most of us recognize the value of a winner in athletics. We recognize the value of a winner scholastically and in every area of life. Did you know that God is interested in you being a winner? I don't know, sometimes we get the mentality within Christianity that it's spiritual to be a loser. Did you know that God talks about being more than conquerors? Did you know that God talks about coming out with a victory in Christ Jesus? God talks about triumphing in Christ Jesus. God's plan for you is to be a winner. Now, the man who wrote second Timothy was probably the winningest Christian who ever lived. It was none other than the Apostle Paul.

Paul H. Dixon:

And in second Timothy, we have the last book that God ever inspired him to write. In fact, in chapter four, we have his benediction upon his life. You might call it his swan song. He's about to die. And he says, "The time of my departure is at hand. I fought a good fight. I finished the course. I've kept the faith. Henceforth, there's laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me in that day." In other words, he's about to die. Now, as he's about to leave this life, I think it's interesting that God did not inspire him to write another letter to a church. Apostle Paul believed in the local church. Don't listen to those today within Christianity who want to put down the local church, who all the time criticizing the established church. Now I recognize that some people, their image of an

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established church is some church that does not preach the gospel, but thank God for every Bible-believing, Bible-preaching church like most of you come from.

Paul H. Dixon:

You ought to praise the Lord for every day. This is God's plan, the importance of the local church. God didn't inspire Paul to write another letter to a church. He inspired him to write to a young preacher. A young preacher by the name of Timothy. And I almost get the picture, just like Elijah got into his fiery chariot and was going to take his trip to glory and the last thing he did was to cast his mantle upon the young Elisha. And he's saying, "Elisha, I want you to take up where I left off. I want you to carry on for God." And Paul is saying, "Timothy, I'm leaving the scene. My ministry is over, but Timothy, you can be a winner just like I was. You can accomplish great things for God, just like I did."

Paul H. Dixon:

Now in the second chapter, he gives Timothy a formula for being a winning Christian. I want to read the first seven verses. Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except these strive of lawfully. The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits. Consider what I say and the Lord give thee understanding in all things.

Paul H. Dixon:

I like that seventh verse. It's the type of verse that we many times slide over. Paul has just given these instructions to Timothy and he says, "Consider it Timothy. Think seriously about what I've just said, but wait a minute, Timothy, you can't understand it by yourself. The Lord give thee understanding." We can't understand anything of ourselves, unless the spirit of God give us the enlightenment. I pray, he'll do that for every one of us here tonight. I pray that he'll open your understanding. I pray for all of us to lift the veil, that he'll keep us in thinking about the ball game this afternoon, and thinking about the snack shop later, and thinking about the campfire and all of the things that crowd in on a camp schedule. And for these few minutes that we might seriously consider what Paul had to say to Timothy and in turn has to say to us. The first thing that Paul said to Timothy was in verse one, "Timothy, if you want to be a winner, you've got to be on the winning team."

Paul H. Dixon:

Verse one. Thou, therefore my son, be strong in the grace that's in Christ Jesus. He said, "Timothy, if you're going to be strong, the only way you could do it is by the grace of Christ." Almost like Philippians 4:13. I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me. He called Timothy his son from reading the first chapter. Paul had utter confidence that Timothy was saved. He knew that Timothy's grandmother had faith. Verse five, that his mother had faith. Therefore, he said, "I am persuaded that it is in thee also." And listen, he said, "Timothy, I know that you can be strong because you're on Christ team. You've been saved." Listen, gang, if you want to come out on top for God, you've got to be saved first. That's the starting point. And you notice he said, "Be strong in the grace that's in Christ."

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Some of you listening to me tonight are in the church, but you're not in Christ. Some of you have been in the baptistry, but you've not been in Christ. Some of you have been in a Christian home and you've been taught morality, but you've never had an experience with Jesus Christ. Others of you here and you would make no pretense of being a church member, having a religion or anything like that and you need to be in Christ. There are church members who need to get saved tonight. There are non-church members who need to get saved.

Paul H. Dixon:

I was in a meeting in Joliet, Illinois, back in the fall. There was a sharp young fellow who came every night, a pre-med student at Wheaton College. I appreciated this young man. I appreciated his whole attitude and the way he listened and he brought his girlfriend each night and they sat down in a particular section. And I knew every night when I looked out, they'd be there. One night I was invited to the young fellow's home and his parents prepared a nice meal. His dad was a deacon. We had great fellowship.

Paul H. Dixon:

And Sunday morning I gave the invitation and that young man walked down the aisle, met me at the front and said, "Paul, I am not a Christian." He said, "I have been in the church all of my life, but I must confess that I have never been saved." And he said, "I want today to receive Jesus Christ as my personal savior." And he explained to me how it happened. His parents had been in a church, another Baptist church, and years ago, they preached the gospel and were saved. But they went through that time as they were going liberal, as they were getting away from the word of God, a transition time, where they were still preaching the Bible. But they were getting people in who were not sound doctrinally and were not careful with those they dealt with.

Paul H. Dixon:

And during that time, this boy, as a seven year old boy made a decision of some sorts. But he said, "I know that no one really explained to me what it meant to be saved to lead me to Christ. Said, "Finally, the church got so bad that my folks left that church and brought the whole family over to this Bible-believing church." So he said, "When they transferred their membership, I did too. Though I had problems then as to whether I was really saved or not." He said, "I learned the language." Said, "I knew how you were supposed to act as a Christian. I did all this. But he said, "I really never was saved." And he said, "I want to get saved today."

Paul H. Dixon:

There are many people in our churches like this. John Scanzoni is a professor at the University of Indiana in Bloomington. He teaches sociology and I understand he's a Christian. He said that he received so many inquiries from Christian parents to him as to why their children who were seemingly so fine at home and in the church, left, went to the secular school and lost their faith. As to how it could happen that he made a study of it. The result of that study was an article he wrote entitled, No Faith to Lose.

Paul H. Dixon:

He says there are three kinds of faith. Number one, there's an indoctrination faith. You learn all the answers. You win all the sword drills. You're number one on the quiz team. You know what you're supposed to say. And you have it all up here, but you don't have anything down here. It's all

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indoctrination. That kind of faith, when it's put in a given situation where someone else has something up here that can blast your intellectual Christianity, that kind of faith cannot stand the furnace. It can't take the test. It's not Bible faith.

Paul H. Dixon:

Then he says, there's the conformity faith. Parents are Christians. The pressure of the parents. The pressure of the pastor. The pressure of the friends. You learn like this young fellow did what you're supposed to say, how Christians are supposed to act. You take on all the trappings, but it's not really yours. You've never really evaluated it for yourself. You've never really settled this thing. I am lost, I need a savior, I am trusting Christ as my savior. He said that kind of faith won't stand the test either. He says the only kind of faith that's Bible faith, and that makes it on the secular campus is a commitment faith.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now the Greek word, believe, it's found 150 times in the New Testament, could very well be translated commitment and it is translated on some occasions, commitment. It has to do with you a lost center, totally by fate, embracing Christ as your savior and as your Lord, the best, you know how. It has to do with you realizing your need and totally trusting Christ as your savior. Not the church, not your life, not the baptistry, not your name. Getting saved.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now I want to put this to you, gang, are you really saved? You say, "Paul, I don't like this. You evangelist all the time going around trying to get people to wonder whether they're saved or not." Listen, if I can say anything this week, that makes you question your own salvation. If you can't stand the questioning I give, how do you think your faith is ever going to stand before God's all searching eye? You better get this thing so settled, that you are saved that no one can cause you to doubt that you're born again. Nail it down once and for all. Are you really born again? You've got to be on the winning team. I don't know if anyone who's ever really accomplished anything for God, unless they knew they were saved and on their way to heaven. Number two. Paul said, "Timothy not only be on the winning team, but be a witness." Verse two. The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.

Paul H. Dixon:

This is a great verse on witnessing that we don't use very many times. I like this. Look at verse 12, chapter one. "For the which cause," Paul said, "I also suffer these things, nevertheless I'm not ashamed for I know whom I have believed." Paul knew he was on the winning team. And am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have, circle this, committed unto him against that day. Paul made a commitment to Christ as his savior. Now look at verse 14, same chapter. That good thing which was committed unto thee, Timothy, keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. Paul said, "I made a commitment to Christ. I, in turn, have committed this same thing to you, Timothy. I've passed it on to you. I've won you to Christ. I've had a part in your salvation."

Paul H. Dixon:

Now he says in second Timothy 2:2. The things which thou now hast heard among me that which has been committed unto you, Timothy, commit down to faithful men. Circle the word, commit again three

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times. Who shall be able to teach others also. Now look up from your Bibles. This is great. Paul committed himself to Christ. After he got saved, he led somebody else to Christ, Timothy, and committed unto him. He said, "Timothy, you go out and you commit unto others and you train them so they can commit it unto others. And they trained them so they can commit it unto others." And that's God's plan of evangelism. John wins me and he trains me so that I can be a soul winner. And there are two of us and we go out and win these two guys and we train them. And now there are four of us and we go out and win four more and train them and eight. And then there's 16 and 32 and 64 and 128 and 256. And the wonder they call it evangelism explosion.

Paul H. Dixon:

It's God's plan of evangelism. And listen, gang, you will never be a winner for God, unless you're a witness. I don't care what else you have in the Christian life. You have to be sharing Christ with others if you're going to be on top. "Your faith index will rise 50%," says Paul Little, "when you have anything to do with somebody else coming to know the savior." And he's absolutely right. I was in a meeting in Indiana back a few months ago, probably April. One night, group of teenagers walked in, sharp kids. The reason they didn't sit down in the front and listen gang, when you go back to your local church, you sit down the front. The only reason you sit down the back is if the front seats are full, but you fight to get those front seats.

Paul H. Dixon:

The only reason these kids didn't sit on those front seats right down there under the spigot where the blessings come out, is because they were already full. And they sat back behind the local kids there and I mean, they sat on the edges of their seats. They were drinking it in and their eyes were like flashlights. They were just coming on and off. They were really with it. When it was over, I went up to the leader and I said, "What in the world has happened in your youth group?" "Well," They said, "we prayed for it for two years. We prayed that something would get a hold of our kids." And a few of them went out on the lay witness team, into churches with some lay people to share Christ with the congregations and people started getting saved.

Paul H. Dixon:

They came back, changed kids. And this thing started catching with the rest of our kids. And they started going to school, carrying their Bibles and talking about the savior. And we have new kids, coming into the church all the time. We have them coming over to our house, asking all kinds of questions and it's literally changed our young people. It'll change anybody. When you get involved in the work that God has saved you to do, and that is winning souls to Jesus Christ. You not only have to be on the winning team, you've got to be a witness if you're going to be a winner. Number three. Paul said, "Be at war." Verse three and four. Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier. Now in verse three and four, he likens Christians to a soldier, in verse five to an athlete. And in verse six, a farmer.

Paul H. Dixon:

And if you're going to be a soldier, you're involved in a battle, it's work. If you're going to be an athlete and be a winner, it takes work. It's a long race. It's not a sprint in the Christian life. It's a two miler, it's a 10 miler, it's a marathon. If you're going to be a farmer, it takes work. Getting up early, staying up late.

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When the many times the crops are going in and the harvest is coming out, the guys are up at sunrise. And I see them out in their fields at nights on their tractors, with their lights still on. They're working at this thing.

Paul H. Dixon:

And you're saved by grace. But listen, gang, I know where we got the idea, but if you're going to be on top for God, it's a battle. And I am tired. Listen closely. I am weary of the image of Christianity that says, "Look, we've got a great thing going. We've got a new revolution. You just join us and you'll find out how great it is. You won't have to worry anymore about your problems. You're really on top. Come on and join it." That's a lie.

Paul H. Dixon:

Listen. If some of you kids get saved this week, I want you to know that you're going to have problems like you never had before. You say, "Paul, don't tell them that. They won't get saved." Listen, when they came to Jesus, Jesus tried to talk him out of getting saved. He said, if you counted the cost, do you realize all that's involved in following me? And I want everybody who's lost here tonight to realize, number one, if you get saved, the devil and his forces are going to work on you like they never worked on you before you became a Christian. The Apostle Paul said, Ephesians six. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, spiritual darkness, wickedness and high places. That's the lot of the Christian. After you get saved, all of a sudden, you've got a war going on inside of you that you didn't have before.

Paul H. Dixon:

Before I got saved, I could do things and they didn't even bother me. After I got saved, there was one thing inside of me that said, I like that. There was something else inside of me that said, that's wrong. There was that battle between the flesh and the spirit. There was a civil war going on inside. And that's part of the battle that you have when you're a Christian. Some of you get saved and I mean, you're going to have it rough when you go home and your parents find out. Some of you get saved and you're going to have it rough when you go back to school and your buddies find out. I am telling you, it's a battle, it's a race, it's a conflict, if you're going to be on top as a Christian.

Paul H. Dixon:

Now I don't know about you, but I don't like to be a benchwarmer. I've participated in some sports throughout high school and some in college, but I never was a super athlete. I was just mediocre and therefore I had to do my share of sitting on the bench. Somebody said that the reason I didn't play too much football was because I had back trouble. Great, big yellow street could ride up and down my back. But did you know that no one has to be a benchwarmer in the clouds of Christ. Did you know that everybody can be on the first team in the work of Christ? And the problem is some of you tonight are saved, but you've been dragging your feet. You've been allowing others to be up there on the front line, others to carry the ball, others, to do the witness. And you've just been sitting back letting them do it. And it's time you got off the bench and started being involved in the conflict for God.

Paul H. Dixon:

I wish I could close the message right now. That's the way I like to preach. Paul didn't close it there. So I'd better not. Today we would say that he closed on a low key. So I guess that better be how we close it

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if he's going to close that way. After he has challenged them, and I get excited about the work of God. I like to try by the power of God to excite others to the work of God. But enthusiasm will not carry the day, it will only go so far. Do you ever notice this? You can go to camp and after camp's over, kids can come back and give the glowing testimonies, "And boy isn't this tremendous. We have made decisions that are going to stick and this is real." And just give it a couple weeks. Right back where they were before. Why? Because it's been a lot of enthusiasm many times without verse five. If any man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully.

Paul H. Dixon:

What'd he say? Well, very simply he takes us into the middle of the Olympic races and if any man strive for being a winner, for coming out on top, he does not receive the winner's crown unless he strives, unless he runs lawfully, unless he runs by the rule book. They get out there in the Olympic race. And the man gets on the line and they're all crouched down. And he says, "Get on your mark, get set." And the gun goes off, go. If he says, get on your mark, bang. Some of them are so enthusiastic, they take off running. That doesn't count. They're either thrown out or they got to come back and start all over again. If they start on getting set, it doesn't count. Got to start on go. There're some rules that say how you've got to run that race. If you're running along and you want to pass a guy and as you pass him, you say, "Boy, I'm going to fix him and give him an elbow on the ribs." Doesn't work. There's a rule book that says you can't do that.

Paul H. Dixon:

And I'm afraid we have a lot of Christians who are not running the race, according to the rule book, because Paul said we not only need to be on the winning him and be a witness and be at war, he says, you need to be in the word. I suppose, one of the things I've been challenging young people to do for the last 15 years is carry their Bibles to school. And I can tell you of kids who have been saved as a result of other kids, carrying their Bible was to school. I get a letter from a girl who's a missionary to the Jews. Every year I hear from her, I know what's going on. God's using her and she was saved in one of my meetings as a result of somebody carrying their Bible to school. It's great. But it's not going to do you any good to carry your Bible to school.

Paul H. Dixon:

Did you know that the girl who carried her Bible to school and who had a great impact upon this young lady getting saved, who's now missionary to the Jews, has had to get a divorce? And her life is in shambles. Evidently she was carrying her Bible, but she didn't let her Bible carry her. A lot of people are marking their Bibles, but as Warren Worby says, they're not allowing their Bibles to mark them. The thing is, you've got to get into the word for you, junior highers who were not here this morning and James just taking a glance into the mirror, a glance into the word will not do it. You've got to take a good look into the word of God. That five minute devotional is not enough. You've got to really get into the word and saturate yourself in it and see how it works and make it work in your life.

Paul H. Dixon:

I was in a meeting. I was out in my car one day in Chattanooga and a guy was sitting next to me in the restaurant. I started talking to him and told him about a radio broadcast I had just heard that told about how several Chattanooga young men had been killed during the second World War. All of them from Chattanooga, and it had been 25 years ago and that's why they brought it up. And that man said, "I

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know all about that. I trained those young men." He said, "Listen, Paul, those were the biggest bunch of goofs offs you ever saw." He said, "There they were. The battle was raging out there on the foreign front. We were supposed to get them ready and they wouldn't get serious. They didn't prepare. We tried to put them out there where we thought the enemy would never have any contact with them. We missed it. The enemy found them and wiped them out." They didn't get ready for the battle.

Paul H. Dixon:

The reason many Christians suddenly face a trial in their life and they're defeated and they're down is because they haven't been day by day getting themselves ready for the battle. Now there's nothing spectacular about studying the scriptures. There's nothing sensational. You don't get all the headlines for your scripture study, but we've got to be in the word if we're going to be a winner. Now, let me say this. When the athlete was running out there during the Olympics, before he started the race, they could come up to him and they could say, "Prove. Prove to me that you are a citizen of this country and therefore have a right to run in the race."

Paul H. Dixon:

So I would close this evening with asking you, can you really testify beyond any shadow of a doubt? I am a member of the winning team, therefore I have a right to run for Christian race. Are you really sure you're safe? If you're not, make sure tonight. If you are safe, are you really involved for God? Can you really say tonight, I am a winning Christian? Or would you have to say tonight, I've just been a backsliding, indifferent cold Christian. I'm tired of it. I want God to make me a winner, just like he did Paul and Tim...