

7 ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF A SUCCESSFUL SOUL WINNER¹



Introduction

1. The parable of “The Man Who Was Cured Of An Incurable Disease”.

There was a man that had an incurable form of cancer and the doctors had said, “We estimate that you have about three months to live”.

It was during the last month of his life that he happened to meet a particular doctor that claimed, “I have developed a natural cure for the type of ‘incurable’ cancer that you have. If you believe me and take this pill – which contains a special, natural compound – you will be healed, instantly!”

The man believed the doctor and took the pill. The effect was instant: the cancer left his body and he was restored to full health. He couldn’t believe it! He shouted and danced with joy for a long time. The man responded, saying, “Doctor, this is just unbelievable! How can I ever repay you? What can I do to show my gratitude?” The doctor said, “If you really want to repay me, if you really want to show your gratitude, then all I ask is that you tell others how you have been cured and send them to me that I might cure them, also”.

The man was twenty-five years old when he was cured of his cancer and he lived to a ripe old age of ninety-five. He went to bed one night and passed away peacefully in his sleep. During the seventy years between his cure and his death, this man came across many, many people that had the same incurable disease that he once had. But do you know what? He never told any one of those people that he once had the same disease and was cured, and he never told any one of them about the doctor that had the cure. What do you think of that man?

Brethren, how blessed we are to have encountered the Great Physician by whose stripes we have been healed. Yes, it was Jesus Himself who “bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24). What does your healing mean to you? How can you repay the Lord? What can you do to show your gratitude? If we are truly concerned about those who are dead in trespasses and sins, then we will share the gospel with as many people as we can before we pass from this world.

If we never share the gospel with others, then what kind of a person are we? If we never direct people to Jesus to receive salvation, then can we really expect to go to heaven?

- a. If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2:3), then you will surely desire to find others and say, “We have found the Messiah” (John 1:41). Just as faith and love manifest themselves in works (James 2:14-26; 1 John 3:16-18), gratitude too will manifest itself in an appropriate way (1 Kings 2:7; 1 Samuel 15:6). One of the ways we can show our gratitude to the Lord is to share the gospel with others (cp. John 1:41; Acts 8:1-4; Jude 1:20-23). Solomon says, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who wins souls is wise” (Proverbs 11:30).
- b. Just as faith without works is dead (James 2:26) and love without action is dead (1 John 3:17-18), so thankfulness and gratitude without expression - in sharing the gospel with others - is dead. Consider these verses:

“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33).

“For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels” (Luke 9:26).

¹ This sermon outline is based on a brief outline by Dale Grissom (see <http://lakesidechurchofchrist.com/lakesidecoc/article.php?story=20070906214517413>).

2. There are those of us that certainly are zealous in preaching the gospel to others, but are we as effective in winning souls as we ought? Consider this parable of “The Ineffective Salesman”.

It was Tom’s first day on the job as a door-to-door vacuum salesman. He came to the first house, rang the doorbell, and a young lady answered, “Yes, how can I help you?” Tom replied, “I was wondering if you’d be interested in this new vacuum cleaner?” The young lady asked, “Well, is it any good?” Tom replied, “Well, I don’t really know but I suppose it’s as good as any vacuum. I do have one at home but, if I’m honest, I don’t really do any vacuuming. Anyway, there might be some better vacuum cleaners out there, but I’m sure this one will do a reasonable job”. The young lady replied, “Would you like to come in and demonstrate it?” So Tom says, “Demonstrate it! Well I’d rather not because it’s a bit of a hassle getting it out of the box and setting it up. But if you buy it and you’re not happy with it, you can return it”. The young lady replied, “Well thanks for calling but I’m not really interested and I need to get on. Good day”.

- a. Are you surprised that Tom didn’t make a sale? He had a good vacuum cleaner to sell but he wasn’t effective, why? Well, I think it is clear to all of us that he lacked certain attributes.
- b. Now I know we are not salesmen but surely we want to present the gospel to the lost in the best possible light and in the most effective way, don’t we (cp. **Titus 2:10**)? Certainly, if we followed Tom’s example of presentation, then we too are bound to be ineffective.
3. In this lesson I’d like us to consider seven attributes that I believe are essential if we desire to be effective soul winners for the Lord.

7 ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF A SUCCESSFUL SOUL WINNER

1. He is assured of his own salvation (**2 Timothy 1:12**).
2. He lives a surrendered life (**Philippians 1:19-21**).
3. He lives a clean life (**1 John 3:2-3**).
4. He exercises love toward God (**1 John 5:3**) and man (**1 John 3:23**).
5. He perseveres at all times (**Ephesians 6:13; Hebrews 12:1-3**).
6. He devotes himself to prayer (**Romans 12:10-13**).
7. He possesses a good overall knowledge of the Scriptures (**2 Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14; cp. Malachi 2:7; e.g., Apollos – Acts 18:24**).

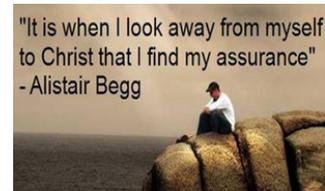
7 ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF A SUCCESSFUL SOUL WINNER

1. HE IS ASSURED OF HIS OWN SALVATION

It is essential to have an assurance of our own salvation before we can preach salvation to others.

- a. There are many scriptures to which we could turn to demonstrate the *certainty* we ought to have of our salvation (which is what fills us with joy). Let us just consider a few:

- 1) “He who believes and is baptized **will be saved**; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (**Mark 16:16**). This is Jesus Himself speaking and He states the absolute truth... we **will** be saved. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul reminds them of the power of Jesus’ blood, for some of them were fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners (**1 Corinthians 6:9-10**), but then he says, “But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but **you were justified** in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (**1 Corinthians 6:11**). There is no sin that was not washed away by the blood of Jesus when we were baptised for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38; 22:16**). In fact, Paul says that God “has delivered us from the power of darkness and **conveyed us into the kingdom** of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (**Colossians 1:13-14**). When we obeyed the gospel, God saved us, justified us, and conveyed us into His kingdom.



2) Paul writes of the great struggle he had with sin, and it is a struggle with which we can all identify. Listen to what he says: “I don't really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don't do it. Instead, I do what I hate” (**Romans 7:15**), and, “I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway” (**Romans 7:19**). Finally he cries out in despair, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (**Romans 7:24**). But Paul found deliverance: “I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (**Romans 7:25**). This is why he says, “There is therefore now **no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus**, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (**Romans 8:1**). If we are in Christ and walking according to the Spirit (i.e., living according to the direction of the Spirit in the word He has revealed), then it is impossible to be under any kind of condemnation. How can anyone in Christ be under any condemnation?!

“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of Jehovah, and their righteousness is from Me,” Says Jehovah” – Isaiah 54:17.

3) Paul tells us that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (**Romans 10:17**). If we do have doubts about our salvation, then it is likely a faith issue. God has testified in His word that He has given us eternal life (**1 John 5:11**). Does God lie (**Titus 1:2**)?! Can we know that we have eternal life? John says, “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God” (**1 John 5:13**). If you will read the epistle of 1 John at least once a week, you'll have that knowing; that certainty and assurance of salvation.

b. What is in our heart is reflected in our words and behavior (**Proverbs 23:7; 27:19**).

1) Have you ever listened to a salesman, politician, preacher, etc., and thought, “There's something about this person that doesn't ring true”? There's something about the tone of their voice and body language that leads you to believe they're insincere.

2) People are often more perceptive than we think. If you are trying to tell someone they can have the hope or expectation of eternal life and you yourself have doubts about your salvation, then it is likely that many – or some at least – will perceive this and “switch off”, as it were, and not take you seriously. After all, how can you expect to persuade others to believe in something of which you yourself have doubts?!

How can you hope to convince others to believe in something of which you yourself have doubts!

c. If we are going to be a successful soul winner for the Lord, then it is essential to be fully assured of our own salvation. Many don't have this assurance, possibly because they have not yet completely surrendered their own lives to God.

2. HE LIVES A SURRENDERED LIFE

It is essential to surrender our own lives to the Lord before preaching to others that they must surrender their lives to Him.

a. There are many scriptures that teach us that the Christian life is about living, not for ourselves, but for the Lord. Let us just consider a few:

1) The day we obeyed the gospel was the day we surrendered ourselves to the Lord; the old man was put to death (**Galatians 5:24**) and a new man was raised to walk in newness of life; a life surrendered to God (**Romans 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11**).

2) As we continue to grow in the Lord, the more we learn to surrender our lives to His service and the service of others (**1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Ephesians 4:20-32; James 2:8**).

3) Our aim is to reach that point where we can say, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (**Galatians 2:20**).

“I Surrender All”
All to Jesus I surrender,
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.
I surrender all, I surrender all,
All to thee my blessed Saviour,
I surrender.

b. Why is it so essential to be living a surrendered life in order to be a successful soul winner? What is in our heart is reflected in our words and behavior (**Proverbs 23:7; 27:19**). It is our words and behavior that will have an influence on others - whether believers or unbelievers. This is why it is so essential to set a good example.

1) Paul says, "Let no one despise your youth, but **be an example to the believers** in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (**1 Timothy 4:12**). To the Colossians, Paul wrote, "**Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside**, redeeming the time" (**Colossians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:12; cp. 1 Timothy 3:7**).

2) The following verses show that our example can have either a positive or negative effect on others:

"Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives" (**1 Peter 3:1**).

"However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of Jehovah to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die" (**2 Samuel 12:14**).

How can you hope to convince others to surrender their lives to the Lord when you yourself are trying to serve two masters!

c. If we are going to be a successful soul winner for the Lord, then it is essential to live a surrendered life; a life surrendered to the Lord. Many have not completely surrendered their lives to the Lord because they are not committed to living clean lives.

3. HE LIVES A CLEAN LIFE

It is essential to be living a clean life before we can call others to repentance (**cp. Matthew 7:3**).

a. You might think that if a person is living a surrendered life, then he is living a clean life. While this is true, there are also some brethren that sincerely believe they are living surrendered lives, but are genuinely unaware of the uncleanness in their lives².

1) This may be difficult to grasp but I do know people like this; they have a good heart, but are ignorant of the uncleanness in their lives. The thing is, while you are trying to help them to see their uncleanness, they may be sharing the gospel with others (which is good), but their influence is nullified when others see their uncleanness (which is not good).

2) Such a person's passion for the Lord may convince an unbeliever that they have surrendered their lives to the Lord, but the uncleanness they witness has a negative effect on their influence.

b. This is why self-examination is so essential. We must examine our thoughts, words, and behavior and purge ourselves of all uncleanness if we are going to be useful to the Lord (**Lamentations 3:40; 2 Corinthians 13:5**).

1) Paul says, "Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from these things [which are dishonorable-disobedient, sinful], he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified [set apart for a special purpose and], useful to the Master, prepared for every good work" (**2 Timothy 2:21 AMP**). We can only be useful to the Master if we cleanse ourselves (**2 Corinthians 7:1**).

2) God doesn't want hypocrites preaching to the lost: "You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, Do not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?" (**Romans 2:21-22**).

How can you hope to convince others to purify their lives when there is uncleanness in your own life!

3) If you are not living a clean life (whether you're aware of the uncleanness in your life or not) and others see the inconsistency of your claims and your lifestyle, then you instantly lose all credibility - who will listen to you?! "The point is, if we tell others that we're Christians, but we're living in disobedience to God, unbelievers will mock the Christian faith" (Steven J. Cole).

c. If we are going to be a successful soul winner for the Lord, then it is essential to live a clean life. An unclean life is evidence of one's lack of love for God.

² They might be loud and boisterous, judgmental, divisive, gossips, slanderers, railers, tale-bearers, etc.

4. HE EXERCISES LOVE TOWARD GOD AND MAN

It is essential to be exercising love before preaching the love of God to others.

- a. There are many scriptures that teach us to love God (**Matthew 22:37**), love our neighbor (**Romans 13:9-10**), love our brethren (**1 John 4:7, 11, 21; 1 Thessalonians 4:9**), and even love our enemies (**Luke 6:27**). God demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us (**Romans 5:8**). Thus, “We love because He first loved us” (**1 John 4:19 NASB**). Indeed, we must “walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (**Ephesians 5:2**).
- b. Just as genuine faith is always expressed (**James 2:18**), so genuine love is always expressed (**1 John 3:18**). (i) Jesus said, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (**John 3:16**). (ii) Paul writes, “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (**Romans 5:8**).
 - 1) It was God’s love for the world that motivated Him to give His Son, and He demonstrated the depth of this love in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. This is how we know that God “desires all men to be saved” (**1 Timothy 2:4**).
 - 2) Do we have a love for lost souls? It is easy to say that we do, but genuine love is always expressed; it always acts (**1 John 3:18**). Well we cannot demonstrate our love for the lost in the same way as God, but we can express it by sharing the good news with the lost – the good news that “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (**John 3:16**).
 - 3) We all know the end of the wicked – they will spend eternity separated from God in Hell; forever suffering torment (**Romans 2:5-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; Revelation 21:8**). It is inconceivable that one could claim to love lost souls and desire their salvation and not share the good news with them, isn’t it? The first Christians were eager to preach the gospel (**Acts 8:1-4**) and commanded to support those who did (**Galatians 6:6**).
- c. Where a love for lost souls is lacking, one has little or no desire to share the gospel with others. But even on those rare occasions where one does share the gospel with someone, there is no passion (your heart is not in it). People can be very perceptive and such a lack of genuine love is bound to show itself eventually, which will certainly weaken your influence.
- d. If we are going to be a successful soul winner for the Lord, then it is essential to have a love for the souls of the lost – men and women that need to hear the good news, the gospel: “The power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (**Romans 1:16**).

How can we hope to be successful soul winners for the Lord if we don’t have a genuine love for the lost!

5. HE PERSEVERES AT ALL TIMES

We will face temptations, rejection, and all manner of difficulties in sharing the gospel with the lost, and perseverance is necessary.

- a. The word “perseverance” means “continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition” (Merriam-Webster). In connection with our topic, it means one that continues in his efforts to share the gospel with others despite unfavorable circumstances, opposition, and discouragement.
- b. The religious leaders sought to halt the spread of the Christian faith and so they arrested the apostles (**Acts 5:17-18**). An angel released them from prison and they continued preaching (**Acts 5:19-21a**). The apostles were rearrested, beaten, and threatened not to preach Christ anymore (**Acts 5:26-40**).
 - 1) Despite contrary circumstances, opposition, and discouragement they (i) were resolved to continue in the will of God, saying, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (**Acts 5:29**), (ii) rejoiced “that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (**Acts 5:41**), and, (iii) “daily in the temple, and in every house, **they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ**” (**Acts 5:42**).
 - 2) As we zealously seek to share the gospel with family, friends, associates, and even strangers, we will face contrary circumstances, opposition, and discouragement. We must look to Jesus, the apostles, and Christians for inspiration, encouragement, and motivation to persevere in preaching the gospel.

- 3) You must not let unfavourable circumstances, opposition, and discouragement prevent you from sharing the gospel with others – you must see past your circumstances, opposition, and discouragement and persevere. Solomon says, “If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small” (Proverbs 24:10).
- a) Consider: A person trains for several years to be a fireman and, after graduating, is assigned to a particular fire station. The first time he attends an emergency he refuses to run into a burning building to rescue a small child because he is overtaken with fear. And so it continues: every time he attends an emergency there is some circumstance that causes him to faint in the day of adversity. How many times has he put his colleagues in danger, and how many people have lost their lives because of his cowardness? Do you wonder why he continues in that job? Do you wonder why the station chief hasn’t fired him?
- b) Likewise, to commit ourselves to sharing the gospel with others and then flounder and fall in the face of difficulties only reveals that our strength is small. What real use, then, are we to the Master?
- c. If we are going to be a successful soul winner for the Lord, then it is essential to persevere in preaching and teaching regardless of unfavourable circumstances, opposition, and discouragement. As we persevere, God will bless our efforts and will prove ourselves to be strong in the Lord.

How can we hope to be successful soul winners if we keep floundering and falling in the face of unfavourable circumstances, opposition, and discouragement!

6. HE DEVOTES HIMSELF TO PRAYER

If we do not have a relationship with God then how can we expect God to be with us and bless our evangelistic efforts?

- a. Prayer is an essential element of the Christian life. Jesus encouraged His disciples to continue in prayer and not lose heart (Luke 18:1). The first Christians devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 2:42), and throughout the New Testament Christians are exhorted to continue steadfastly in prayer (Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2) and pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).
- b. Prayer is an important and essential element in evangelism:
- 1) We must pray for preachers to be sent out (Matthew 9:37-38) and then send them out (Romans 10:13-14), we must continue praying for those that are preaching (2 Corinthians 1:8-11; Philippians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:1).
- 2) As we share the gospel with family, friends, associates, and strangers, we ought to solicit the prayers of our brethren: (i) that the word runs swiftly (2 Thessalonians 3:1), and, (ii) for strength and perseverance when we encounter unfavourable circumstances, opposition, and discouragement (Luke 6:28; James 5:13).
- c. If we are going to be a successful soul winner for the Lord, then it is essential to have a close relationship with God (evidenced by our devotion to prayer and study), to be supported by the prayers of our brethren (for the prayers of the righteous accomplish much - James 5:16), and wholly dependant on the providence of God to lead and direct our steps (Jeremiah 10:23; Proverbs 16:9; 19:21).

How can we hope to be successful soul winners if we don’t have a relationship with God, which is evidenced by our devotion to prayer and study, refuse to solicit the prayers of our brethren, and have no reliance on God!

7. HE POSSESSES A GOOD OVERALL KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES

We cannot effectively teach others without a good overall knowledge of the scriptures.

- a. If we hope to teach others and lead them to Christ, then it is essential to have a good overall knowledge of the scriptures. The problem is that many are woefully ignorant of the scriptures and don’t know it! They are ignorant of their ignorance!
- b. What knowledge is required to teach others? It will, of course, depend on *who* you are trying to teach and *their* level of knowledge. Since there are many different types of people all at different levels of knowledge, we can’t possibly take all such into account in this lesson.

- 1) So let us just consider some of the questions that a family member, friend, work associate, or stranger might ask (these are not in any particular order).

What is “the gospel”?

Who is Jesus?

What, exactly, is sin?

Can you prove that the Bible is the word of God?

What does “repentance” mean?

Where does it say in the Bible that Jesus is God?

What is the reason for the hope you have within you?

How can you expect to lead others to a knowledge of the truth if you don't have a good overall knowledge of God's word!

- 2) Remember, these are just a few of the common questions that people ask. Do you have the knowledge to answer some of these common questions?

c. I hope you can see that a good overall knowledge of the scriptures is necessary to answer common questions and lead someone to a knowledge of the truth?

- 1) There are also other situations that will require even more knowledge: (i) teaching those that have obeyed the gospel, (ii) answering questions of those that belong to one of the many hundreds of denominations, and, (iii) if you desire to teach a class.

- 2) There are those that sincerely believe they have a good overall knowledge of the scriptures, but don't! Another way of putting it is “they are ignorant of their ignorance”. Perhaps it would be good for each one of us to approach someone we believe to be wise and knowledgeable and ask them to put us to the test!³

d. If we are going to be a successful soul winner for the Lord, then it is essential to have a good overall knowledge of the scriptures. Such knowledge comes through reading, meditating, and studying (properly); the evidence of which is increased knowledge, wisdom and understanding, and good works. Unfortunately, there are some who go about teaching that “don't know what they are talking about, even though they speak so confidently” (1 Timothy 1:7 NLT).

Conclusion

1. Our hearts are filled with praise and gratitude to God for the forgiveness of sins in His Son Jesus who bore our sins in His own body on the cross. We are grateful that we have been saved from eternal torment in Hell and that we now have the hope of eternal life in heaven.
2. We are naturally concerned about those who are still dead in their sins and we desire to share the gospel with them. We can certainly tell others what we did to be saved, but if we desire to be successful soul winners for the Lord, then there are several attributes that are necessary:
 - a. He is assured of his own salvation (2 Timothy 1:12).
 - b. He lives a surrendered life (Philippians 1:19-21).
 - c. He lives a clean life (1 John 3:2-3).
 - d. He exercises love toward God (1 John 5:3) and man (1 John 3:23).
 - e. He perseveres at all times (Ephesians 6:13; Hebrews 12:1-3).
 - f. He devotes himself to prayer (Romans 12:10-13).
 - g. He possesses a good overall knowledge of the Scriptures (2 Timothy 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14; cp. Malachi 2:7; e.g., Apollos – Acts 18:24).

³ There is a brother that I regard as godly, wise, and mighty in the scriptures, and I regard him as my mentor. I approached him several years ago and asked, “Do you think I am knowledgeable enough to teach?” He said, “No, I don't! I think you need to spend a lot more time pursuing knowledge” (a friend will tell you what you *want* to hear, but a mentor tells you what you *need* to hear). Every now and again I would ask the same question and get the same answer. There came a day, though, when he thought I had an *adequate* amount of knowledge and so I began teaching.

3. Consider: (i) If you possess all these attributes, then you can be a successful soul winner for the Lord, but they must be maintained. In other words, they can be lost. For example, a person may be living a clean life, but he can easily fall into some habitual sin, can't he? (ii) We must continue to grow and abound in these attributes. For example, our love for God and man is not yet perfect, which is why Paul says, "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment" (**Philippians 1:9**). (iii) If you can see that you don't possess some of these attributes, then you can begin to develop them. For example, if you don't possess a good overall knowledge of the scriptures, then you can seek advice from a knowledgeable brother or sister on the best way to increase your knowledge.

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