

Fishing Techniques

Matthew 4:18-22

May 19, 2024

A couple years ago, I had the privilege to go deep sea fishing. It was a new experience for me. I met the boat early that morning along with 5 other hopefuls. On the way out, the mate explained how it worked. We each were given a number from 1-6. When a fish hit the line, the captain would shout a random number and whoever had that number was to go to the chair ASAP, get strapped in and do battle with the creature from the deep. The mate discussed reeling, holding, and all the details. And then we waited, and waited. And then it happened. Fish on! Adrenaline rush! The captain shouted 3! Whoa! That's me! I rushed to the chair, got strapped in and prepared to pull in the world record marlin which had just jumped out of the water. How cool! Utterly cool! A fish and I'm the first one! As I tried to remember all I was told, through no fault of my own, the fish was off as soon as it was on and that was that. A brief spike in all bodily functions followed by no further bites at all on that trip.

But I had to be ready. I had to be prepared. I had to remember what I'd been told. And I had to snap into action and depend on the mate to give me guidance. How much like fishing for men. We must prepare. We must be ready, we must depend on the Holy Spirit, and we must act. Failure to do any of these, will result in failure to land the fish. We're going to get prepared a bit today like I did on the way out in the boat so please open your Bibles to Matt 4:18-22

Last week we talked about Jesus down by the seashore only He wasn't with Sally selling seashells. He was with Peter and Andrew, James and John and He was calling them into His service! We gave a little background on the Sea of Galilee as well as typical fishing boats and methods. If you missed last week, go online to catchup. Online---to catch---sorry. Anyway, we noticed last week how Peter and the other three left everything and followed Jesus when He called them to be fishers of men. But we ran out of time before we could actually talk about Jesus' fishing methods so today, we want to. Last week, we read Luke's account and today, if you are able, please stand as we read Matthew's: 4:18 As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 19 "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." 20 At once they left their nets and followed him. 21 Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Say fishers of men. That's what He called them to be and us too. His analogy of fishing is actually very helpful as we think about fulfilling His Great

Commission. Today, we want to think about some practical ways of fishing for men and women and let's start with the where. Say where.

Every fisherman has their own honey hole. The hot spot. The go-to place. Because you can fish all day in the wrong spot and never catch anything. One of the problems with many Christians is that we fish in the wrong pond. If we only fish in church, in Bible Studies, or with other Christians, we're probably not going to catch too many unbelievers. We've got to get out into the world. Into the community. Jesus said **go** into all the world, **go** to all nations, don't sit still and expect them swim to you. The banner here says, GO! Fishermen **go** fishing, they don't wait for the fish to swim into their living rooms. People travel many miles to catch a marlin or even a trophy catfish. We have to go where the fish are. Let's talk about some honey holes.

1. Say Home. Start where you live. Certainly with any unsaved family members but also with our neighbors. Do we even know our neighbors? Bro John Neff shared two things that have ruined our communities: air conditioning and garage door openers. We pull in and shut the door and stay in. We enjoy our AC instead of sitting on our porches. How about taking a walk and talking to our neighbors along the way. Asking them how you can pray for them. Inviting them to special church events, not fundraisers – some people think the church only wants their money anyway. Bible School, baptisms, youth Sundays, fellowship meals, guest speakers, Sunday School, etc. Start at home. But don't stay there.

2. Where you work or go to school. This is a fishing spot God chose for you. You can reach people there that your pastor can't. You know them. Your classmates, coworkers, bosses, and employers. Don't just bunch up with other Christians, interact with everyone. It's good to have a prayer group at work and ask others to join it or how the group can pray for them. Many people who might not come to church with you probably have something they'd like you to pray about. Now be sure your work ethic honors God. A slacker is a poor witness for Jesus, a bad representative. We don't have to be perfect to witness, thank God, but we ought to obey the Scripture and work hard as unto the Lord.

3. Where you play. Say play Your ball teams, your children's teams, their parents, those you watch sports with or go yard sailin' with, etc. After a game, you can hand out invitations to worship to each family. Or host a picnic at your home for the team, or something similar.

4. Other places like jails and prisons, places where you find addicted and poor folks. This too is part of "all the world." You may not feel comfortable at first, eventually you will. And while fish at work or next door might not be very hungry, many times these folks are starving for the gospel. Starving for love, for someone to care. I'm afraid we often fish in the wrong ponds. Go to nursing homes and hospitals. Other good

places are the county fair, football games, festivals, etc. Wherever people are is a good place to fish.

Now once you find your spot, you need to bait the hook. Say bait. What do we use for bait? Whatever the fish like! You've got to know your fish! Some fish like madtoms, some like worms, some like chicken livers, etc. You're not likely to catch muskies and catfish on the same bait. Know your fish, in this case your people. Ask God to show you, but use the commonsense He's given you as well. If you know someone needs direction, they're at a crossroads in life, perhaps our graduates, offer the guidance of the Bible and God's Holy Spirit. Since most of us live and work with specific people, we can often tailor our bait to a particular fish. If their life is in turmoil, they're probably likely to bite on the peace that God provides. Or maybe it's comfort. In this crazy world, some are starving for truth. Most will bite on hope and no human fish can resist agape love, true friendship, and someone who genuinely cares. The Gospel of Jesus Christ comes with a fully stocked tackle box! There's something there for every fish, every soul!

Fishing instructors talk about presenting the lure in a way that's attractive to the fish. It's not enough just to have good bait, it has to look good. Which is where our attitudes come in. Say attitude. When we walk up to someone we've never met and the first thing we say is, "If you died tonight, would you go to heaven or hell," that might not be the best presentation. On the other hand, if you've known someone for a while and you've shared Jesus with them before and the Holy Spirit leads you, it may be very appropriate. Pray and think about the best way to share. Fishermen think about their bait long before they're on the water and so should we. Too often people say something like, "I don't know what to say." OK, but can we learn? People learn how to fish all the time! Like fisherman, can we think about it before we leave the dock?

One of the best things any fisherman can do is study his quarry. If you're going after muskies, learn as much about muskies as you can. If you're going for tuna, study tuna. What are they interested in? How deep do they typically hang out? So too with the folks we'd like to share Jesus with. What are their hobbies? Their goals? What are their fears? Probably the same as everybody else's-fear of dying. Fear of embarrassment. Fear of the unknown, fear of accidents, economic fears, political fears, etc. Is there a way you can share Jesus to speak to that? The primary message of the gospel is, "Don't be afraid! I've got good news!" You can even ask in a conversation, "What are you most afraid of? What if I told you a way to minimize that fear?"

Mark Cahill has written an awesome, but hard-hitting book, *One Thing You Can't Do In Heaven*. Say witness. We can't fish for men. It will be too late then. **Now** is the time to take full advantage of all the opportunities that come our way. He suggests some great questions to ask like, "What do you believe happens when someone dies? What do you believe about Easter or Christmas? Where are you on your spiritual journey?" Many

people wear crosses or have them tattooed but have no idea what they mean. Complement them on it and ask what it means to them. For graduates, ask what they'll do after graduation. When they tell you, ask, "What next? And after that? And after that? And after retirement?" Help others to think about eternally, for everyone will spend eternity somewhere and Jesus died so that no one has to spend it in hell. To many people avoid thinking or talking about it but many have questions and we have answers.

Be sure to talk to your friends and family about this. We must have these conversations if we are going to obey Jesus. It may be uncomfortable at first, but it's eternally worth it. The Devil wants us to keep our mouths closed. I was preparing for a funeral once for a person I didn't know and so I was asking someone who did know them, one of their best friends. Over many many years of close friendship this other person, who was a Christian, had never discussed eternity with them. They had no idea what this person believed. That person is not alone. According to Zondervan Church Source, 97% of church members have no involvement in any type of evangelism. Of the readers Christianity Today magazine, many of whom are pastors, only 1% had witnessed recently. I will make you watchers of men? NO! Let's get our lines in the water!

Don't wonder about your friends and don't let them wonder about you. If they turn away, they turn away, but please tell them. A friend of mine shared a short YouTube of an atheist to whom someone had given a Bible. Although it didn't yet change his mind, even this atheist said, "If you really believe it's true, and there is a possibility of eternal suffering, how badly do you have to hate someone **not** to tell them about Jesus?" Do you really believe the Gospel is true? Do you love your friends and relatives and teammates and coworkers enough to tell them? Oh please do. We talk about everything else. Politics, sexuality, etc.

You say, they've heard it before. Hopefully. But even **if** they have, research indicates most people have to hear the Gospel an average of 7-8 times before they get saved. You may be 1, 2, 7 or 8. Jesus commissioned us to be fishers, not necessarily catchers. Seed planters don't always harvest. We do our part and trust God to do His.

Next week God willing, we'll talk some more about practical suggestions and techniques. But before we finish today, I'd like to share a reading with you that I got from the Evidence Bible but was written by Mr. Anonymous. It's pretty powerful. It goes like this:

"They were surrounded by streams and lakes full of hungry fish. They met regularly to discuss the call to fish, the abundance of fish, and the thrill of catching fish. They got excited about fishing!

Someone suggested that they needed a philosophy of fishing, so they carefully defined and redefined fishing, and the purpose of fishing. They developed fishing

strategies and tactics. Then they realized that they had been going at it backwards. They had approached fishing from the point of view of the fisherman, and not from the point of view of the fish. How do fish view the world? How does the fisherman appear to the fish? What do fish eat? And when? These are all good things to know. So they began to do research studies and attend conferences on fishing. Some traveled to faraway places to study different kinds of fish with different habits. Some got doctorates in ichthyology, the study of fish, but no one had yet (actually) gone fishing.

So a committee was formed to send out fisherman. As prospective fishing places outnumbered fishermen, the committee needed to determine priorities. A priority list of fishing places was posted on bulletin boards in all the fellowship halls. But still, no one was fishing. A survey was launched to find out why. Most did not answer the survey, but from those who did, it was discovered that some felt called to study fish, a few to furnish fishing equipment, and several to go around encouraging the fishermen. What with meetings, conferences, seminars (about fishing), they just simply didn't have time to fish.

Now, Jake was a newcomer to the Fisherman's fellowship. After one stirring meeting of the fellowship, he went fishing and caught a large fish! At the next meeting, he told his story and was honored for his catch. He was told that he had a special "gift for fishing." He was then scheduled to speak at all the fellowship chapters and tell how he did it.

With all the speaking invitations, and his election to the board of directors of the Fisherman's Fellowship, Jake no longer had time to go fishing. But soon he began to feel restless and empty. He longed to feel the tug on the line once again. So he canceled the speaking, he resigned from the board and he said to a friend, "Let's Go fishing!" They did, just the two of them, and they caught fish. The members of the Fisherman's fellowship were many, the fish were plentiful, but the fishers were few.

Jesus has not called us to study fish, but to actually fish for men and women. To be ready when our number is called. I pray that each of us will get our lines in the water this week. Ask God who, where, and how while we pray...