

OPEN BIBLE CHURCH

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SERMON TITLE Fishers of Men

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE Matthew 4:18-19

SYNOPSIS Jesus calls us to be fishers of men. The art of fishing offers some insights into how we can “fish” for men.

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ Fishers of Men

Review previous messages

☞ Matthew 4:18-19

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."

Years ago, when Naomi's dad was still alive, we used to travel to northern Minnesota with her family to spend a week on a nearly private lake. While there, we enjoyed family time, we relaxed and did some fishing, too. Now, I've never been much of a fisherman, but when we went to the lake, I did some fishing. Here's a few thoughts on applying fishing at the lake to fishing for men.

First, Jesus says, "Come, follow me." To be a soul-winner, fishing for men, you have to start by following Jesus. When we went to Minnesota with the Mathew's family, I had no idea where Big Island Lake was, so I had to follow those that knew where they were going. And, then when it was time to go fishing, being an inexperienced fisherman, I just tagged along with the family who knew where to go. They knew the hot spots for catching various kinds of fish. So, I just followed along and basically copied whatever they were doing.

1 Corinthians 11:1

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

☞ **The key to pretty much everything in the Christian faith is to follow Christ closely.** You want to make it to heaven? Follow Christ. You want to overcome sin and temptation? Follow Christ. You want to do the right thing in various situations? Follow Christ. You want to be obedient to the Great Commission, winning souls for the kingdom? Follow Christ!

Sometimes we worry about exactly how we will reach out to people. The Bible has something to say about that, too...

Luke 12:12

...don't worry about ...what you'll say or how you'll say it. The right words will be there. The Holy Spirit will give you the right words when the time comes.

So, start by simply following Christ. He will open doors of opportunity for you, and he will give you the words to say when the time is right.

Here's another aspect of successful fishing. You have to go where the fish are. You don't catch ☞ fish in a barrel. **You have to go to where they are.** We went to the lake. And, even at the lake, we went to specific "hot spots." The same is true for being fishers of men. The good news is that there are people who don't know Jesus all around you. You really don't have to go that far. I can bet you probably have people in your family who don't know Jesus. Do you have a neighbor



who doesn't know Jesus? What about co-workers and other friends? The list can go on and on. These are all people that need to hear the gospel and are all a good place to begin sharing your faith.

My brother-in-law is an expert fisherman. He has some good gear – the right kind of tackle, the right kind of rod and reel, and the right kind of lure. Now, when I went to the lake, I wore a ski jacket, which says something about my primary interest in the lake. I didn't care that much about fishing and would rather be water skiing. Sometimes, our interest in the world around us is too much about our own enjoyment, rather than catching people for Jesus. Yes, we have to go where they are, but remember why you're there. You're on assignment from the Lord to fish for souls.

Now, when we first started going to the lake, we only used the boats that were provided by the camp. Those basic aluminum, hard-seated boats. Not very comfortable. Fishing for souls will likely be outside your comfort zone, especially at first. But if you want to follow Christ and catch some souls, you have to **be willing to endure some discomfort**. But, then, when we were successful on the lake, the catch made it all worthwhile. We forgot all about the discomfort.

Experienced fishermen will tell you there are certain times of the day that are better for fishing than other times. Likewise, the Scripture tells us to **make the most of opportunities** and to be wise in the way we act. (Colossians 4:5-6) One of the things I've often heard from fishermen is that fishing can be really good shortly after a storm. I think the same is true when it comes to fishing for souls.

People are far more open to the gospel right after a crisis in life. A simple way you can reach out to others is to let them know you're praying for them, especially when they are going through a difficult time. They are likely much more receptive in those moments. So, be aware of the times and seasons in people's lives.

Then, this seems like a no-brainer, but to successfully catch fish, you have to bait the hook. And, there are different kinds of bait for different kinds of fish. There are lures as well as live bait. And, there are different methods of using the bait, too. For some fish, you cast and reel. For others, you use a bobber and wait for a nibble. For soul-fishing, we need to **be adaptable** as well.

1 Corinthians 9:22

To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.

One thing I'm certain of is this: **fishing requires patience**. Too often when it comes to sharing the gospel we want to play the short game. We bait the hook, throw it into the water and if they don't bite right away it's time to move on. While I don't know a lot about fishing I do know that you can't rush the process. Most people that I know who go fishing plan on being out there for a few hours, not just a few minutes. Don't just tell those in your circle about the gospel and leave it there. You will not only have to tell them but live it in front of them. This is the long game.



You have to engage with those around you on a regular basis. This daily engagement is the work that it takes to reel in the fish. This is where patience comes into play. People are watching not just your words but your actions, your attitudes, how you interact with other people. Your kindness, your gentleness, your patience, your love. **Your behavior and example are the things that will bait the hook and draw people to you.**

A pastor once said that a person is drawn to you before they are drawn to Christ. What he meant was that who you are is what catches their eye first and it opens the door to share Jesus with them because you make Jesus look attractive to them. This is the long game. We just show the love and light of Jesus and then look for opportunities to share our faith. **Just be ready.**

1 Peter 3:15

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect

Here's something else I know about fish, even though I'm not a great fisherman. Fish are slimy and they often stink. You need to know that **you can't clean a fish before you catch it.** You shouldn't be surprised by how unsaved people act. What do you really expect? You should not be surprised when unsaved people act like unsaved people. We should also never expect people without Christ to live up to the standards that Christ set. You couldn't do it without Jesus and they can't either, so stop expecting them to. When people are controlled by their sinful nature they are going to do what their sinful nature dictates. Isn't that what you did before Christ changed you? Love them through the process but recognize that the change in their life will come when Jesus comes into their heart and not before.

"I catch 'em, God cleans 'em I bait the hook with the love of the Kingdom I've been called to be a fisher of men" "I catch 'em, God cleans 'em Heaven knows He saves every soul that believes Him I reel 'em in and He washes away their sin"

Finally, there's one difference between fishing for fish and fishing for men. When fishing at the lake, my focus was often on how many and how large of fish I could catch. But in fishing for men, the focus is not on the quantity, or even the quality but rather simply on the effort.

Too often, we worry about the results. But, there is **nowhere in the Bible where it says you are responsible for getting people saved. What you are responsible for is sharing the message of the gospel with people.** Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 3 that some will plant, some will water, but it is God who gives the increase. It is God who draws people to himself by the Holy Spirit; he simply uses us as a vehicle to plant and water. Let that be your focus. In fact, God will reward you for simply doing your part.

1 Corinthians 3:7-8

So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.



☞ So, **don't focus on how many get saved. Focus on how often you share your faith.** When it comes to Christians being fishers of men this is what Jesus wants you to focus on.

And lastly, there is one more difference between fishing for fish and fishing for souls. You need to **☞ ask people to make a decision.** The fisherman never asks the fish to jump in the net or get on the hook, they simply hope they will see the bait and grab it. This is not true with the gospel. We need to share it, but we also need to ask people to respond to it.

In Acts 2 after being filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter stood and preached the first gospel sermon. He held the first outdoor crusade. As he got to the end of his message he urged the people to be saved. What he was doing was asking, even begging, the people to make a response to the message of the gospel. You should always remember that whenever you share the gospel with someone it is not complete until you or someone asks the person to make a decision. Remember, you are not responsible for the outcome, but you are responsible for asking the question.

Follow Christ and he will make you a fisher of men.

Go where they are.

Pay attention and make the most of opportunities.

Your behavior can be the lure to attract them to Christ.

Be patient and ready.

When the time is right, share your faith and ask for a response.

Closing

☞ **After dismissal: advance to next slide and music will play**