

“Fishing Lessons”

By Kent Crockett

Read Matt 4:18-22 *Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.*

Today we're going to talk about how to fish for men.

In July 2008, Bob Greene of Hallowell, Maine, was having his morning coffee when he heard someone yelling for help. The cry came from a man drowning in the Kennebec River. Greene grabbed his fishing pole, ran over to the river, cast out a line, and snagged the man's shirt with his hook. Then he carefully reeled him in to the shore. The man was in bad shape, so he called 911 and an ambulance took him to a hospital. Bob Greene went fishing for men.



Bob Greene

In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said, "Follow Me and I will **make** you fishers of men."

Notice that He said if you follow me, I will **MAKE** you. He didn't say, "Follow me and you'll stay the same person." When we come to Him, He wants to make us into someone else. He wants make us into fishers of men ("men" is a literary term meaning "all people").

A Sunday school teacher was teaching her class about how Jesus wanted to make Peter and Andrew fishers of men. They had been catching fish, but now they would be catching men.

Then she asked, "Who catches men today?"

A little girl raised her hand and yelled, "Policemen!"

The teacher said, "Policemen catch men to bring them to a judge. God wants us to catch men to bring them to a Savior."

When Jesus told Andrew and Peter that He was going to make them fishers of men, they probably pictured in their minds what He meant. Instead of pulling fish out of the sea, they saw the sea filled with people who were drowning and needed to be saved.

People without Christ are drowning in sin without hope and they are heading into an eternity separated from God. But you are in the boat of salvation, and they are counting on you to throw out a line and pull them in. Remember, at one time you were drowning until someone threw out a line and pulled you in. Now you have the obligation to do the same for others—to change their eternal destinies.

God can use you to reach lost people. And you'd be surprised how easy it is. Here some fishing tips about how to fish for people.

Fishing Tip #1 Decide to go fishing.

A fisherman can only catch fish by making a decision to go fishing.

A church member where I was pastor called me up one day and said, “Do you want to go fishing with me out in my boat?” I had a decision to make. Either go, or not go. I decided to go. “Fishing for men” starts by making a decision to go catch them.

There’s a story about Joe, who was the greatest fisherman in his town. When everyone else was coming back in the evening without catching any fish, Old Joe always had a boat full of fish. Everyone wondered what his secret was...how could he catch so many fish when nobody else could?

One day the game warden decided to go out fishing with him to find out how he always caught so many fish. He said, “Joe, show me what your secret is.” Joe said, “Okay, I’ll show you.”

Joe pulled out a stick of dynamite, lit it and threw it overboard—KABOOM! All the fish came floating to the top and Joe pulled them into the boat. The game warden was in shock. He said, “Joe, I can't believe you're fishing illegally right in front of me!”

Joe lit another stick and threw it overboard. KABOOM! The game warden said, “Joe, you're going to get into big trouble for this!” Just then Joe lit another stick of dynamite, handed it to the game warden and said, “Are you going to talk, or are you going to fish?”

That's a good question. Are we going to talk about fishing or are we actually going to fish? Many people go to church their entire lives but never talk to a single person about Jesus. How can you call yourself a fisherman if you've never fished before?

Jesus said, “Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.” If you aren't fishing, you aren't following!

The first step in fishing for men is to decide to do it. That decision usually follows an awareness that people need to be saved. You realize that there's a real heaven and a real hell, and the only way people are going to get into heaven is if we explain to them that Jesus is the only way to heaven and they must call out to Him to be saved.

Fishing Tip #2 Choose the right bait

The bait is what attracts the fish. **Different kinds of fish like different kinds of bait.** We need to think like fish. If you are deep sea fishing for huge fish, you don't fish for them using worms. They want a big chunk of bait.

If you're trout fishing in a mountain stream you use a fly on top of the water. Catfish in a lake swim closer to the bottom and they like stink bait. Bluegills swim close to the top and



will bite on worms. What you are trying to catch determines how to fish for them.

And just like fish are different, people are also different. When we go fishing for men, we've got to adapt the way we present the gospel according to what they are able to receive.

Paul said, "To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win the Jews. To the Gentiles I became like a Gentile to win them. To the weak, I became weak, that I might win the weak." (1 Cor. 9:20-22)

Paul never changed his message, but he continually changed his methods for reaching people. He learned to talk to people so they would listen to what he would say. He talked to Jews in one way and he'd talk to Gentiles in a different way.

We should always present the gospel in a friendly way rather than yelling at someone or shoving it down their throats. If you try to force it, they aren't going to want it. More flies are caught with honey than vinegar.

A person won't get saved until they realize they need to be saved. Not everyone is convinced in the same way. People have different needs, which creates an openness to hear the gospel. Here are some reasons people will listen:

Fear of dying and going to hell—we need to tell them how to receive Jesus so they don't have to be afraid of dying and can look forward to heaven.

Lack of purpose—Jesus will give you a reason to live.

Life is in turmoil—God will help you and bring peace into your life.

Confused and need guidance—Jesus wants to guide you and give wisdom.

Emptiness...something in life is missing—God can fill the void.

Once you've determined what they need then....

Fishing Tip #3 Throw out a line-(talk to them)

We throw out a line by talking to them, so we need to learn what to say. We can't fish for men if we don't know what to say. Fishing for men means telling them how to be saved.

Romans 10:13-14 "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved . . . how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them?"

There are people that you know right now who are so close to getting saved and they just need someone to tell them how.

When I was a pastor in Florida, a young couple named Chris and Amy started coming to our church. I went to their house and asked them if they knew for sure they were saved. They both prayed and received Christ as Lord and Savior.

Not long after that, another young couple started attending. Jeff and Paige. They had an usual story. They were both born in Gainesville within a day of each other and were in the newborn babies room in the same hospital at the same time. Years later, someone introduced them and they got married. I went over to their house. They didn't know how to be saved but wanted to be. They got saved together. They were born together and born again together!

Then another married couple came to our church and they got saved. In one year I led five married couples to the Lord. It was EASY. They were ready to get saved, they just didn't know how.

You might be nervous about talking to people, but you can invite them to church, Sunday school, or Bible study. That's fishing too. If you will invite them to church it opens them up to gospel. Barna Research did a survey and discovered that 1 out of 4 unchurched people would willingly attend a church service if a friend would invite them.

Many times people are afraid to go to church because they have wrong ideas about it. When I was in high school, a friend invited me to his Baptist church. I hadn't gone to church very much and had never been to a Baptist church before. I had heard of "holy rollers" so I asked him, "Do people in your church roll around on the floor?" That's what I believed Baptists did! And I was wrong.

He said, "No, it's not like that at all." He picked me up and took me to church—and that's where I got saved. Later I went to seminary, became a pastor, and have written 9 Christian books. And it started by being invited to a church that preached the gospel.

If you invite someone to church, offer to pick them up and sit by them during the service. It will calm their fears so they can hear the gospel.

Here are four things they need to know.

1. Everyone has sinned. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). A sin is a bad thought or deed. I have yet to meet someone who doesn't understand this concept, so you just need to explain it. Let's say the most holy person on earth sins just three times a day. But that's over 1,000 sins per year. If you live 75 years that's over 75,000 sins for the most holy person in the world.

2. Our sins separate us from God. Isa. 59:2 "Your iniquities have separated you from your God." Sin makes us unholy and all it takes is one sin during a lifetime to separate us from God forever. That creates a problem because we can't save ourselves.

3. Jesus paid for our sins on the cross 1 Pet 2:24 "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross." Jesus was God in the flesh. When He died on the cross, He took all of your sins and my sins upon Himself on the cross. In this way, He made salvation available to everyone. But that doesn't mean everyone will be saved. We all have a decision to make.

4. You must receive Jesus as your Lord. John 1:12 "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God." Even though He's paid for your sins, you must receive Him into your life as Lord and Savior.

When you talk to someone about Jesus, they might be ready that day to be saved. But if they aren't, you've planted a seed that might bear fruit later. It might be

years before that person comes around. I've witnessed to many people who have been saved at a later time.

When I was in college I talked to another student about the Lord. He wasn't very open but he would just listen to me and not say anything. Then, many years later he sent me an email. He wrote:

"The main reason I was trying to contact you was to tell you that your efforts in trying to reach me for the Lord were fruitful after all. I have trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. I have received forgiveness for my sins and have peace with God. I wanted to let you know how much I appreciate your part in bringing an unbelieving sinner to the knowledge of the truth."

Fishing Tip #4 Reel in the fish into the boat (fellowship)

When a fish bites on the bait, you've got to reel the fish in. Whenever you lead someone to the Lord, you need to bring that person into the boat. The boat I'm talking about is the church. Bring the person to a worship service, or Bible study, or a small group. Bring the person into fellowship where he or she can make new friends and learn God's Word. They need to be around other believers who can encourage them. The new Christian needs to be in a healthy environment so they won't go back to the things they used to do.

One of the things I've noticed about fishermen is that they like to show off the fish they catch. They get their picture taken with it and then show everybody the picture (like grandparents show off pictures of their grandchildren!)

We need to be excited when someone's destiny changes. You need to be excited and tell others if you have led someone to the Lord—because that will get others excited about fishing for men.

Did you know that Jesus says a party is thrown in heaven every time someone makes a catch on earth? Jesus said, Luke 15:10 "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents." I figure if heaven gets excited, then we need to be excited too!

Someone has said one of the questions people in heaven will ask us when we get there is, "How many people did you bring with you?" When God calls you home, I hope you don't show up with an empty stringer.

Wouldn't it be terrible to live 60 or 70 years on earth and never lead one person to the Lord? Don't go to heaven without bringing some people with you!



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