

Let's Go Fishing

July 30, 2006

Matthew 4:18-22 (NLT)

One day as Jesus was walking along the shore beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—fishing with a net, for they were commercial fishermen. [19] Jesus called out to them, "Come, be my disciples, and I will show you how to fish for people!" [20] And they left their nets at once and went with him.

[21] A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, mending their nets. And he called them to come, too. [22] They immediately followed him, leaving the boat and their father behind.

Jesus said to His disciples, "Come, be my disciples, and I will show you how to fish for people!"

The NKJV puts it this way.....

Matthew 4:19 (NKJV)

Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

That verse reveals the passion of Christ the lost. The reason Jesus Christ came to this earth and was willing to die a horrible, agonizing death on the cross was to save the lost. He said....

Luke 19:10 (NLT)

And I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost."

If you are a follower of Christ, you must also have a passion for the lost.

Jesus said....

John 3:16-17 (NLT)

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. [17] God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it.

Jesus came to save the lost. That was His mission. And involved in that mission was His plan for evangelizing the world.

While he was here in the flesh He went everywhere telling people what they had to do to be saved and to receive eternal life. Then He commissioned those who accepted Him as their savior to go and tell others about how to be saved.

Mark 16:15 (NLT)

And then he told them, "Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone, everywhere.

His plan has never changed! The Great Commission was not given only to pastors and evangelists and missionaries and TV preachers. The great commission was given to everyone who is a believer in Jesus Christ.

Everyone of us has been commissioned to be a soul-winner.

John 4:34-36 (NLT)

Then Jesus explained: "My nourishment comes from doing the will of God, who sent me, and from finishing his work. [35] Do you think the work of harvesting will not begin until the summer ends four months from now? Look around you! Vast fields are ripening all around us and are ready now for the harvest. [36] The harvesters are paid good wages, and the fruit they harvest is people brought to eternal life. What joy awaits both the planter and the harvester alike!

Can you sense the urgency in those words? Jesus is saying, "You don't have a lot of time. Don't say you've got several months or years to get the job done. You must do it now!"

If you have friends or neighbors or family members who are lost, you must witness to them now!

Several years ago, **George Barna** wrote a book entitled, "**Grow Your Church from the Outside In**". In the book, he gives some very interesting statistics about churches in America. The book was published in 2002 so the data is pretty much up to date.

According to Barna, there are 324,000 Protestant and 20,000 Roman Catholic congregations in our nation and yet about one out of three people do not attend a Christian Church of any kind.

Another 90 million or so who attend a Christian church of some kind at least once in a while do not claim to be born-again or to have an ongoing, personal relationship with Christ.

That means that there are about 180 to 190 million people in America who are not born-again Christians. That's almost two out of three people in America who do not claim to be born-again Christians.

Would you agree with me that the harvest is great, but the workers are few.

We have a big job to do right here in America; right here in Houston; right here in Pasadena.

We must become "fishers of men."

Today, I want to talk about some things that are essential if you want to become a successful "fisher of men".

1. You must get a burden for lost souls!

You will never be a successful witness for Christ until you understand in your spirit that there is a heaven and there is a hell and there is only one way for anyone to go to heaven and that is by believing in Jesus Christ and receiving Him as person Savior. That's it! Period!

That Bible is very clear about it.

Jesus said.....

John 14:6 (NLT)

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.

Peter said....

Acts 4:12 (NLT)

There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them."

There is no other way to go to heaven than by receiving and serving Christ. And if you are not going to heaven, then you are going to hell. There is no other alternative.

If you are truly convinced of that, you will become passionate about winning the lost. And the place to start is in your own family.

Acts 1:8 (NLT)

But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Jerusalem is where they were. In other words Jesus said, "Become a witness right here where you are. Start fishing where you are.

Is there someone in your own family who desperately needs to be saved?

Do you have a son or daughter or some other family member who is not saved? Asked the Lord right now to give you a burden for them.

That's being a witness in your "**Jerusalem**". Then think about your neighbors and the people you work with or go to school with. Are they saved? That's your "**Judea**".

Here's what I want you to do and I want you to do it today.

I want you to ask the Lord to give you a burden for five people that are not saved or who are not living for the Lord as they should, and I want you to **write their names down** on the card that I have given to you.

Together, we are going to do everything we can to win them to Christ.

2. Begin to travail in prayer for the five individuals on your list.

Isaiah 66:8 (KJV)for as soon as Zion **travailed**, she brought forth her children.

What is travailing prayer?

It is prayer for the lost! It's sincere, fervent prayer against the forces of evil that have the lost in spiritual blindness.

The Bible says.....

2 Cor. 4:3-4 (NLT)

If the Good News we preach is veiled from anyone, it is a sign that they are perishing. [4] Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them. They don't understand the message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

Have you ever tried to talk to someone about Jesus and you feel like you are talking to the wall. They look at you like they don't have the slightest idea what you're talking about.

It takes travailing prayer to penetrate that blindness. Listen to the words of Paul....

Galatians 4:19 (NLT)

But oh, my dear children! I feel as if I am going through labor pains for you again, and they will continue until Christ is fully developed in your lives.

They were Christians because Paul had travailed in prayer for them.

In the natural we call travail labor. That's exactly what it is. It's labor. It's hard work. Travailing prayer is hard work. It is the labor pains of the spiritual birth process. Not many people "travail" in prayer because **it's hard work.**

If I were to announce that **T.D Jakes** or **Jesse Duplantes** or **Rod Parsley** or some other Christian celebrity was coming to Elim, there wouldn't be enough room to seat the people.

But if I were to announce that we're going to have a prayer meeting to travail in prayer for the lost, There would be plenty of room.

Folks, it's time we get serious about winning the lost. Jesus said, "Pray for laborers". Will you be one of the laborers who will help me travail in prayer for the lost?

I asked you to write five names on that card. I want you to commit to travail in prayer for those five people for the next six weeks. I want you to also make another copy of that list and turn it in. We are going to agree with you in prayer for those five people in our prayer meetings for the next six weeks.

3. You've got to start fishing.

There is no way to catch fish unless you go fishing.

I love to fish. When I was younger and bought my first boat, I went fishing almost every week. I figured out ways to go fishing. Others things had to wait. Now days, I'm lucky if I get to go fishing two or three times a year. I have become so busy doing other things that I'm not fishing very much anymore.

The same thing often happens when we are "fishing for men".

When we first get saved, we pray for others and invite them to church. But as the years go by we become preoccupied with other things and stop fishing.

Programs are fine, but we must not let them take the place of fishing. The different activities of the church are fine, but we must not let them take the place of fishing.

As a matter of fact, the primary purpose of any program of the church must be to catch fish.

That brings me to point number 4.

4. If you are going to catch fish you are going to have to use the right bait.

I have been fishing many times and I have thrown my line right next to someone else's line. The other person was catching fish and I was not. What was the problem? I didn't have the right kind of bait.

Some old fishing habits die hard. I'm a saltwater fisherman and through the years I've had more success using live shrimp for bait than anything else.

I read a sign at a bait camp one time that read, "Our shrimp are guaranteed to catch fish or die trying". I like to use bait that is committed.

But about twenty years ago I discovered a new way to fish. I was getting my alternator fixed and I noticed that there was a nice boat parked out in front of the shop.

I asked the man who was working on my car if that was his boat. That started a conversation about fishing.

I had been fishing a couple of times that month and hadn't caught any fish. He told me that he and his dad had gone fishing the night before and had caught over 200 fish. My eyes lit up. My ears sprang to attention and I said, "Tell me how you caught so many fish!"

He told me that he used a generator to power a bright light and he fished under the light. He said that he used spec-rigs for bait. I couldn't wait to get a generator and go fishing. I just knew if he caught 200 fish using spec-rigs for bait I could catch twice that many using live shrimp. However, I put a couple of spec-rigs in my tackle box just in case.

When I got to the fishin' spot he had told me about, I cranked up the generator, turn on the light and put a live shrimp on my line and started fishing. I think that I might have caught one fish in thirty minutes.

So reluctantly, I put the spec-rig on my line and before long I was catching two fish at a time. Those fish were biting spec-rigs, they weren't biting shrimp.

I said all of that to say this. Every week I fish for souls here at Elim. I preach the word and I give an altar call and usually one or two or three or four people will respond.

Don't get me wrong, I am delighted when anyone gets saved. But it is more wonderful when, rather than two or three, there are a hundred or more who get saved.

You say, "When does that ever happen?"

It happens when:

1. Get a burden for lost souls.
2. We travail in prayer for them
3. We start fishing.
4. And we use a different kind of bait.

That's what "The Glory and the Fire" is all about. It's different kind of bait.

If you have ever been to a "Glory and the Fire" presentation, you know how effective it can be.

It is the most effective tool I have ever seen to make people aware that they are going to spend eternity in one of two places.

One is the most wonderful place that you could ever imagine. It's called heaven. There is only one way to go there. That is by receiving the gift of eternal life that Jesus wants to give to you.

The other is the most terrible place that you could ever imagine. It's called hell. You will go there if you refuse to accept the offer of eternal life that Jesus came to earth to purchase for you.

The number of people who get saved will depend on the number of people you can persuade to come. As great a tool as "The Glory and the Fire is" it is only effective if there are lost people here to see it. You must get them here!

The Institute For American Church Growth asked over 10,000 people this question: "**What was responsible for your coming to Christ and this church?**" Their replies were:

- I had a special need - 3%
- I just walked in - 3%

- I liked the minister - 6%
- I visited there - 1%
- I liked the Bible classes - 5%
- I attended a gospel meeting - 0.5%
- I liked the programs - 3%
- **A friend or relative invited me - 79%**

Please join me in being a fisher of men. Become a passionate soul winner. The time is short. Jesus is coming soon. If you are going to witness to your family and friends, now is the time to do it!

By the way, If you are successful, you will receive an eternal reward.

John 4:35-36 (NKJV)

Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!

[36] And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may **rejoice together**.

There is nothing like the joy that comes when you catch fish for Jesus.

1. There is joy in heaven over one soul that comes to Christ.
2. There is joy in the heart of the person who receives Christ.
3. And there is joy in the church. A happy, healthy church is a soul winning church.

Think of the joy that you will have throughout eternity knowing that you had a part in winning souls for Christ. What unspeakable joy that will be!

Let's go fishing!

Give invitation!