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Fishing Workshop Message
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JESUS SAID, "I WILL MAKE YOU FISHERS OF MEN"

Matthew 4:19, "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

Before getting in to this message, I want to survey our audience: How many of you have ever gone fishing—I mean for fish in the water, with a rod and hook and worm (or corn)? Please stand. Now, if you have ever caught a fish, then please stay standing. [More than 10?] Ok, now I want to ask a different but similar question. How many of you have ever gone fishing for people—that is, deliberately trying to invite people to Bible study or church or witnessing to others about Christ? Please stand (don't be shy). If you have ever succeeded in leading a person to Christ or bringing someone to Bible study or church, please remain standing. [More than 10? 100?]

Through this message/lecture, I want to think about 2 things: WHY should we go fishing? Is there any biblical basis for it at all? And secondly, HOW does one do effective fishing? Through this message/lecture, may God bless many of you to participate effectively in gospel ministry through fishing for people.

I. Answering the WHY to fishing

Does the Bible say anything about this UBF term we call "fishing"? Well first of all, you all studied the Bible passage from where it comes. Both Matthew and Mark's gospels, have the event in which Jesus called his first disciples. They were 2 sets of brothers. Who were they? Simon (Peter) and Andrew; James and John. And they were 'partners.' Maybe their fishing company was called SAJJ for Simon, Andrew, James and John. As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once they left their nets and followed Jesus. Luke has a similar story with similar words but a distinct event. After a miraculous catch of fish, and Simon's astonishment, Jesus says to Simon Peter, "Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men."

What did Jesus mean and why did he say this to Simon? Of course, Simon was a fisherman. His livelihood, his occupation, his profession, his bread and butter was catching fish. Jesus said, "Follow me and you will catch men." In fact, Jesus said to both Simon and Andrew, "I will make you fishers of men." Jesus also called two others, James and John, who were with their father in a boat, preparing their nets, and they left the boat and their father and followed Jesus. It wasn't just for the afternoon. These men left their jobs to follow Jesus. That is radical! Can you do that? Have you done that? What have you left to follow Jesus? Think specifically now. Michael Mark left tango dancing lessons to follow Jesus. Ok, that's not as radical as quitting one's job, but it's something.

Ok, so we've discovered where we get the UBF term, "fishing." But I'm not a fisherman. So this doesn't apply to me, right? I just started seminary. I need to decipher the Hebrew alphabet and read books. Does this mean Jesus wants me to decipher and read people? I diverge. Let's come back to Jesus' point. What I understand Jesus to be saying is this: Jesus wanted Simon Peter to divert his money-making efforts and worldly dreams to rechannel his efforts, energy and time to helping people to enter God's kingdom. Isn't this what every human being who believes in God should be doing? Yes. Of course, you have heard of Dwight L. Moody, the great evangelist of a century ago, and the one for whom Moody Bible Institute and Moody Church, both in Chicago, are named after. But did you know what he was and wanted before he became a full time evangelist? He was a shoe salesman with the dream to make a million dollars selling shoes. But a pastor took him along witnessing and ministering one day. Moody caught the joy and wonder of leading a person to Christ. Then his worldly dream fell away and gradually he became a great evangelist.

But wait a minute you say: not everyone is called to be a full time minister of the gospel. True, not everyone is called to make their living off the gospel, like St. Paul. But some are. And more importantly, shouldn't every Christian be involved in spreading the good news of Jesus Christ? Or is that just the preacher's and the missionary's task and obligation. William Carey believed it should be every Christian's task. At a Christian meeting, Carey stated they we should obey Jesus' command to "Go"—"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation," "Go—Go and make disciples of all nations." These words are at the end of Mark's and Matthew's gospels. They are the final commands which the Risen Christ gave to his followers. Was this command only for the apostles? Well, thankfully others also obeyed it. Otherwise, there would be no Christianity on earth today if it ended only with those the apostles reached. They reached some. But they couldn't reach the whole world. "Go into all the world" means that those who follow Christ must share this good news with all people everywhere. Of course, it's comfortable to talk about Jesus with people at church. That's what we call "preaching to the choir." The choir doesn't need to hear about Jesus—well most choirs don't. The people "out there", out in the world, outside of church, need to hear the good news of salvation, forgiveness of sins and eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Consider again the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20. The Risen Christ said to his followers, "...go and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." One of Jesus' commands was this very command, "Go and make disciples." So disciples of Jesus must go and make disciples, who in turn go and make disciples, etc. So Jesus gave us all this command, not just the apostles. If Christians were not expected to share their faith, and equipped by God to do so, Christianity would've died out long ago. William Carey was rebuked as a presumptuous young man by an 'older' Christian who said, "Sit down, young man. If God wants to convert the heathen, he'll do it without your help or mine." But William Carey was not daunted. He continued to believe that Jesus' world mission command was for all believers, which included himself. So he went to India and preached the gospel. And the fruitful effect of his gospel work in India is still seen today.

Here's another verse in the New Testament to consider: In Romans 1:5, Paul wrote, "Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith." The "we" in this verse is not for Paul alone for he doesn't say "I" but "we." We received grace and apostleship. For what? Not just for ourselves. To call people from among all the Gentiles—that means, everyone who is not a Jew. Paul is not excluding the Jews. Paul is saying that gospel is for all people on earth, not JUST the Jews.

Consider another Bible verse, by a different author. 1 Peter 3:15 says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. 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..." Peter admonishes every Christian to set apart Christ as Lord. We have to constantly, daily be reminded to let Jesus Christ reign on the thrones of our hearts. That means we have to constantly get off our thrones and let Jesus reign. Peter says that we Christians must always be ready to give an answer. An answer to what—not a quiz show or trivia game. Peter says that when we live the Christian life right, people will notice and begin to ask us to give the reason for the hope that we have. Can you articulate your faith in Christ? Can you explain why you follow Christ and have hope in him? Sadly, many Christians cannot. So we can miss many opportunities to share our faith meaningfully with others.

There are still 3 Bible passages I want to mention on this topic of fishing. You studied about the Philip the evangelist and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40. You've heard the saying, "Don't talk to strangers." Or today, many people say it's not PC (politically correct) to talk about politics and what?—religion). God told Philip to go near a chariot. He heard this Ethiopian official reading the Bible, part of Isaiah. God led Philip to fish this man into God's kingdom by leading him to Christ.

I've been talking a lot about reaching out to strangers. Does the Bible say anything about speaking to people we know, like relatives and friends? Of course, we should share the gospel with everyone, which includes relatives and friends. In fact, we should share the gospel and pray for those we naturally love, like parents and siblings. If we don't, it either shows we don't have much faith in Christ or we don't have much love for them. In John 1:46 we see Philip telling his friend Nathanael about Jesus, whom Philip believed to be the Christ. When Nathanael scoffed, Philip did not get angry or give up. Philip simply said, "Come and see." When Philip simply brought Nathanael to Jesus, Jesus did the rest. Soon, Nathanael confessed that Jesus is the Son of God and King of Israel. Here we can learn that our job is to simply bring others to Jesus, not to argue with them nor to give up on them. When we simply bring them to Jesus through Bible study or church or sharing our testimony with them, the Holy Spirit will do his own work in them if they are spiritually ready.

The final Bible passage I want to mention is Matthew 18:12-14. I'm sorry if this has been a jumble of Bible passages. But I hope you have gotten the idea that leading others to Christ is an important mission of every Christian, whether strangers or family members or friends. Why is this so important? Actually I want to share with you the parallel

passage in Luke 15. Luke 15 is a masterful chapter in the Bible about our Father God's joy of finding the lost, represented through 3 parables of something lost—a lost sheep, a lost coin and a lost son. I only want to read the 1st parable from Luke 15:4-7, "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the 99 in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 righteous persons who do not need to repent." Jesus tells us here that God's heart is to go after his lost sheep. God's joy is finding lost sheep. Do you know any hurting, lost, wandering people? Do you care about them? If not, according to Jesus, you are far from God's heart. Let's not be like elder sons in the 3rd parable who didn't even care about his lost, younger brother. Let's repent of our selfish and cold hearts. Let's sincerely pray for and care for at least one other soul, in Jesus' name.

II. Answering the HOW to fishing

Now that we have considered just some of the biblical basis for WHY we should go fishing for people, the question might still remain: HOW can I be a fruitful fisher of people? What are some practical steps and advice coming from proved successful fishers? I asked 8 people known to be fruitful at bringing newcomers to Bible study and church. Listen carefully to the comments and advice of these 8 people, noticing similarities and differences.

(Fisher #1) Fishing is the practice by UBF members of going to a campus and inviting strangers to Bible study and other ministry activities. Witnessing, as I understand it, is the more general idea of reaching out to non-believers and declaring the kingdom of God in any way possible—through words, deeds, relationships and personal example.

The reason I think this is an important distinction is that some of our younger members (especially the 2nd gens) really don't like UBF style fishing and don't want to do it. They don't feel comfortable doing it and don't want to be told that they must. And they have no conviction from God that they must, because they say that the Bible never explicitly commands us to do it. On the other hand, they have sincere faith and really do want to share it with other people in ways that they find comfortable.

Some people in our ministry like fishing and are good at it. Others hate it and, no matter how hard I push them, they will not incorporate this practice into their lives in any regular fashion, at least not now. Rather than fight this battle, I decided to encourage them to develop a sincere witness by whatever means they can. Witnessing should not be merely an act of obedience to Jesus' command. It should grow out of a sincere desire to worship and honor God.

Early August was a very quiet time at our campus, because the students had not yet returned. But all of our regular members were here. I took that time to write and deliver two topical messages to encourage our younger members. I have attached these

messages, in case you are interested. In the second half of the first message, I address the issue of whether the New Testament actually commands us to go out to the campus, approach strangers and invite them to Bible study. The surprising answer is: not really. We are free to do that, and if we do it as an act of devotion to God, it is a wonderful thing. But the real nature of witnessing, as found in the New Testament, is to repent and believe the kingdom of God, to see and experience the kingdom of God, and to display the kingdom of God to the world in every way possible.

This fall, I made a decision that I would not push our younger members to go fishing if they did not want to. Rather, I encouraged them to renew their worship of God through our study of Leviticus. And I encouraged them to offer sincere sacrifices to God in the name of Jesus as a spiritual act of worship. Surprisingly, some of them started to go fishing anyway. The quality of our worship service greatly improved. Three new students simply walked in to join our Sunday worship service without being invited, and they really liked it and vowed to return. God is working.

(Fisher#2) 1. **Faithfulness** - I try to go fishing regularly and faithfully although it may be just once a week. I think it's good to have your own fishing schedule. I believe that there is a spirit of fishing and when we go irregularly it's not easy to have it.

2. **No time limit** - I usually go fishing for an hour, but don't limit the time. Instead, when I go fishing, I pray to do it until I meet at least one person who actually makes an appointment for the Bible study. People usually go fishing for 30min or 1 hour and come back after the time. I think it's about the attitude and having a clear goal for fishing. When I have a clear goal, it makes me pursue my goal and reach out to students more aggressively. If we stay on campus until we meet one person, we will be able to meet one student.

3. **Make an appointment on the spot** - When students are interested in Bible study, I ask their schedule and try to make an appointment for the Bible study on the spot instead of just receiving their information. It helps students to make a commitment and have desire for 1:1.

4. **Ice Breaker Conversation** - It's not easy to build up real friendship through fishing. But, instead of asking for 1:1 directly, I try to break the ice between students and I. Although it may be a random question sometimes, I talk to students about their school studies, weather, book if they are reading, or accessories for girls and try to make a chance to ask for 1:1. After our conversation, some students nicely reject 1:1 invitation, but I enjoy the conversation. It makes my fishing joyful and less stressful. For the students who make an appointment on the spot, I write down the information about them based on our conversation. It helps me to remember them later. Students like when I remember what they said and it is easier to start a conversation during our 1st Bible study.

5. **Focused prayer** - Usually I go fishing alone. Surely it's good to go with other coworkers. But, when I go fishing alone, I keep praying in my heart with a clear prayer

topic. For example, if I want to meet a freshman girl, I pray specifically to meet one, search the students and only reach out to girls who look like freshman. In that way, I can learn to cowork with the Holy Spirit and it makes my fishing focused. When I go fishing with other coworkers, I ask them whom they want to meet and try to reach students based on their prayer to support them.

(Fisher #3) 1. be genuinely confident. People respond to someone who is sure about what they are saying even if the listener isn't sure about it him/herself. I think their subconscious tells them they might want to find out why this person is so genuine. That is how i was fished, and her confidence and genuineness about her love for the word of God made me stop and give her my number even though I was late for class.

2. Look like one of them. Wear Pumas, a hoodie, a baseball hat, something you are comfortable in. It makes them comfortable too. But don't try too hard either. that can be a turn off if a 50 something year old is trying to act 20. The reason i mention it, as superficial as it is, if the average college student sees a girl or woman dressed in a long khaki skirt wearing clunky gym shoes and a 2 sizes too big button down shirt (as humble as that outfit may be) they automatically assume that if they were to actually commit to something like God, they would have to look and essentially be like this person. They already said "no way" in thier hearts. This is not a humble heart attitude for sure, but it is reality and those superficial barriers have to be over passed by any means in order to get to the good stuff. i am convinced that if we can just get people to bible study, a good percentage of them would stay. College students are very superficial and totally judge books by their cover, but they also have depth behind the walls. it is the culture they live in. the only one they really know.

3. Don't bring your bible and don't quote bible verses directly. it makes it sound like the same boring stuff they grew up with. Rather, if you get a chance to talk to them about Jesus or the bible, break it down to them in a words they connect with and a way they have never heard it before. Talk about Jesus like he is one of us. Someone they can relate to. I think too, if you can do it without your bible, it shows that you have internalized the message and you don't need your bible to reference the truth you have learned. i think our non-denominational stance, and bible based approach is an strong angle we can use to encourage students that the bible will be presented to them in a way it maybe never has been before: as the truth not religion and as a practical life guide that can answer all of their questions, not make life more confusing. The bible and Jesus is not a religion. It is the truth.

4. Ask them questions and let them talk. A lot of times i get, "i am not religious" or even just "no thanks". I usually always at least ask (politely) "do you mind if I ask why?" Usually it is either they have already tried religion and it isn't for them, or they don't have enough time. to the first i ask more about their experience and try to reveal how this is different and they might be surprised what they find out. i always emphasize too that i am not religious either and that we are asking Jesus himself what he says about who he is, not everyone else. Or if they have had a bad experience, i will ask more about it and give them a listening ear. If they give the "no time" excuse, i let them know it is one on

one and custom scheduling so that shouldn't be a problem. If they persist in their rejection, i let them go. I try to keep them as long as they are engaged though.

5. Go by yourself. i prefer this method. i think two and especially more people can be intimidating. Although, i think it is best for Korean missionaries or older shepherds to go with younger shepherds in order to bridge the cultural and age barriers that keep students from responding.

6. Make sure all of your personal barriers are down and accept them just as they are. Don't cough if they are smoking, wish them to have a good time if they are on their way to a party, and if they are wearing something inappropriate, don't let on that you notice. They will learn all that holiness stuff from the holy spirit. they expect you to judge them, so shock them and don't.

(Fisher #4) Well what I have seen is that the secret of successful fishing greatly depends on one thing: having firm **conviction** of the gospel of salvation. When I truly believe that I have something very important to give, then the Holy Spirit moves me to share it with others. Then all my fears of being rejected or feeling awkward go away and I am free and ready to face any circumstances that may occur. I prepare by having flyers of our Bible club and before I fish I **pray to God** that he may allow me to meet at least one person who will accept the invitation. God has always answered my prayer and once I even gained a Bible student through fishing. I know this is nothing new or out of the ordinary but I truly believe it is necessary for successful fishing.

(Fisher #6) Before going, pray a lot until God convicts you that he has someone whom he wants you to meet. Then as you fish, keep a spirit of prayer as you seek God's guidance. Also, God always answer this prayer when I personally make a decision to commit myself to follow through and serve this person with a lifelong commitment. In other words, fishing leads to discipleship and discipleship is like raising spiritual children who need your lifelong prayer and commitment. Of course, not everyone who agrees to Bible study will eventually become a disciple of Jesus - but this is the level of heart and commitment which I believe God honors. This also helps me to have a holy fear of God as you pursue his guidance. At the same time, even if someone comes, it is up to the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts and their own personal choice to respond to the Word of God or not.

(Fisher #7) I don't think I can really give advice since last year I did not go fishing much. I met a student athlete who came to our WS and she expressed her desire to have a GBS on campus which she had in her previous school. I just made friends with her and simply told her I would like to support it in any way. When we began I just brought snacks. Then after 3 or 4 meetings, she asked me to lead. I began leading it. I started meeting her 1 to 1 and then she encouraged everyone in the group to try to meet me for 1 to 1. By the end of the semester, I was meeting 4-5 students 1 to 1. It was a great work of God. This semester I am trying to reconnect with the students. I don't know how God is leading this group but I believe what God has begun He will complete!!! So strangely, I never did any of the fishing but my friend did it for me. I guess the key is to

make friends with them and when you invite them to Bible study try to make some kind of connection. The result ultimately is in God's hands.

(Fisher #8) Ask the question...do I really love this person as Christ wants me too? Do I want to see them in the kingdom of God praising God one day with me. If I don't, I have to repent, and cry out for God's mercy. If I do, as Augustine said, "Love God and do as you will." Usually this is done the first 30 seconds of the conversation.

(Fisher #9) In my experience, 2 things yield fruit in fishing: diligence & grace, and you need them both. For example, once new school year I went 'superfishing' for several hours on several days and got about 100 students' names. Among them, only 2 came to Bible study and quit after 1 or 2 Bible studies. My point is: Diligence or hard work is good but it doesn't yield much fruit if not accompanied by grace, which comes primarily thru humble Bible study & prayer. Some of my secrets over the years: I prefer fishing with another person, rather than by myself, though I have had success in both. I just feel it's less relying on myself and a good chance to cowork, but mainly I wanted to follow the Bible example that Jesus sent his disciples out 2 by 2. I have often kept a record on my wall of newcomers for the year, even setting a yearly goal such as 40 newcomers. This has helped me to keep up regular fishing. Also, I keep my fishing appointments rain or shine, whether I feel like it or not. Often times, I started fishing with very little desire to ask anyone, but always as time went on I gained strength and faith. Often times, I made a decision to invite at least 10 students or until one student took my invitation. And I always pray before and during fishing that God may lead my feet and my mouth to where he wants me to go and to what he wants me to say, even if I begin my introduction almost the same way: Excuse me, we're from a campus Christian Bible study group inviting students. Have you ever studied the Bible? I used to ask, "Would you like to study the Bible? In fact, that is what the person who invited me asked. But I found that it engages students more to ask a leading question, "Have you ever studied the Bible?" I also usually don't press it if they are already involved in a church. I also go fishing with those who aren't as successful at it, to help them to find someone to study with. Above all, be joyful, peaceful and loving, not pushy or fearful or angry if you get rejected. Actually, I find that rejections usually don't discourage me, but encourage me to keep trying and asking and I will find someone open to God and the Bible.

Well, there you have it. Advice from 8 fruitful fishers on how to do it. Did you find some common themes? What were they? Did you find differences? What does that tell you? It tells me that there's no one right way to do fishing. But I do believe that being a fruitful fisher requires a deliberate, faithful effort to talk with people about God and the Bible and giving a clear invitation to friendship or Bible study or church. I have had good God talks with people on planes, trains and busses—the longer the ride, the more time to talk (and they can't run away from me!) Hoping that people will walk in to church or come to Bible study on their own is sort of like sitting under an apple tree hoping for an apple, just waiting for one to fall. To get an apple, it's better to shake the tree and best to climb it. You can just sit there. Or you can hear Jesus' words, "Go...and preach the good news," "Go and make disciples." If you don't go, who will? If you faithfully scatter the seed of God's word, some will land on the path, some on rocks and some thorns.

But some will reach good soil and bear fruit. Jesus wants us to cowork with him in sowing and reaping in the spiritual harvest. Jesus says, "Look at the fields, they are ripe for harvest." "Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field." Will you be one of them. "Come, follow me," Jesus says, "and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus wants us to help bring even one person in to his kingdom. Where is your person? It starts by bringing one person to Jesus.