

Fishing with Live Bait

Introduction

We have spoken about the lure that is our lives. The experiences we have were allowed by God to shape us and position us to help others. We share the things that make us uniquely qualified to engage in someone else's mess. We should all have our story ready to share when asked why we have the hope that we have.

But there is something even more important that we need to consider today.

Our witness will fall on deaf ears...our impact in the lives of others will be minimal. We could actually do more harm than good....the truth that we need to realize today is that nothing catches fish...or in our case people...more than live bait. Lures are great and they work but they are not the same as live bait.

So people are always looking at us to see if we are authentic. People are constantly examining us to see if we are alive in Christ. Do we manifest the fruit of the Spirit that is within us. Are we modeling love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness and self control? Lures look like fish, but they don't have life....too many Christians look ok but have no visible life in them.

Are we authentically following Jesus? Remember Jesus said that we must follow Him to become fishers of men. If we truly trustwe become alive Spiritually....and if we follow Him that life can't help but flow through us.

Do we have compassion for those who are lost? Are we sharing judgment... or love with those who do not know Jesus? Do people feel welcomed around us.... or ridiculed? There is a very real truth that we must embrace. A truth that inspires us fish for others with live bait.

People are not drawn to us...they are drawn to Christ in us.

So how do we make sure that we are reliable witness for Christ? What do you and I need to do in our lives to make sure that Jesus is glorified? When Christ is in us and we glorify Him through our lives we become live bait...and nothing catches fish better than live bait.

When Christ is lifted up in our lives we become irresistible...because He is. They see our servants heart...our sacrificial love....the depth of peace in our soul....simply irresistible.

So our two questions today...1)How do I make sure that I am a reliable witness for Christ? 2) What do I need to do in my life to make sure Jesus is glorified?

The answer is found in a memory that we all likely have. That time with our parent or someone older...encouraged us to jump into the pool....promising that we would love it and promising to catch us and keep us safe....

Have you ever wondered what made you jump? What made you finally trust enough to take the leap? Do you remember standing on the side of the pool....looking at the deep water....looking back at the trusting eyes of the adult urging you to jump....weighing the options...totally full of fear...but eager to experience the depths....

Some never experience the true depths because they are more in control in the shallows....What makes you jump? Your trust in the one inviting you into the deep waters.

Fortunately, in my experience, my Dad did catch me....He did protect me but He led me to deeper waters. He knew I would love the deeper waters. At some point my desire to experience more prompted me to leave the shallow waters...I had to push past my fears and my lack of control and take a leap.

My Dad was Authentic....I was truly blessed...When he promised something...He delivered it...I learned to trust him....

I can't stand it when I find out something or someone is fake. When something promised is not delivered....When deception is the goal rather than truth. When Something advertised doesn't measure up. My earliest recollection of advertising fraud actually involved fishing

Tell Fishing Tackle Story

I am guessing that I am not alone. We have at one time or another all been ripped off with a fake promise of authenticity.

Parents who always said they would stay together....Spouses who committed and later bolted....Friends who told you drugs or alcohol would make you feel great....Guys who said that they loved you...We have all been deceived....and so we have all become skeptical.

We keep our guard up. We doubt promises...We demand proof...we want guarantees...We want to trust people but our experiences tell us not to.

Skepticism guards our heart...it is so much easier to doubt than to trust. We examine everything with a very critical eye. No one is going to play us for a fool.

We tend to get less trusting as we get older and we take less risk as we get older.

This is particularly true when it comes to matters of the heart and even more so when it comes to spiritual matters.

Some of our greatest battle would of doubt and skepticism come from our experiences at a church. When it comes to matters of the Heart and the Promises of God....we desperately want to believe.

But it doesn't take long for churches to let you down....friends who profess to follow Jesus let you down....A pastor or church leader who disappointed you....and It hurts even more with the disappointment involves your soul.

No where are we more skeptical than when it comes to the promises of God....they are actually too good to seem true. We have a hard time believing because promises that were good enough to be true weren't and now we are asked to trust what our mind knows is too good to be true.

Fortunately God has a lot to say about authenticity. He knew that we would be skeptical. He knew His promise was something we don't deserve...something too good for us...something that we cannot earn...something hard to believe...and God knew that we would demand proof.

So He came here...He walked with us...loved with us...cried with us...laughed with us....struggled with us...and then died and resurrected for us.

He encouraged us to examine Him...to examine the Spirit that is in Him...to look at his life....to study Him...to look at the way He loves...the way He prays...the way He teaches...His joy....His peace...His kindness...His self control...look at all of it He says...Why? Not so we would see Jesus the perfect human...but rather we would see the Spirit of God that is in Him...

John 14:9 (ESV) Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?

Then Jesus told those who believed that they would be empowered by The Holy Spirit and they would become witnesses to the world. Not only that, but the Holy Spirit will bear witness to Jesus and His authenticity.

John 15:26–27 (ESV) 26 "But when the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness about me. 27 And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.

When the Holy Spirit came, we would experience Him...understand Him...be sealed by Him...and He would lead us to all truth...He will give us power and reveal to us all truth. That way we would know that they only things that are truly authentic come from the Holy Spirit.

Just like Jesus...when we fish with Live Bait...the Life that is in us Spiritually....we invite people to examine our lives...to look at everything we do...not because we are a perfect human, but because of the Spirit of God in us. Jesus said if you have seen me you have seen the Father....we are to live in a manner that says if you have seen us....you have seen some evidence of the Spirit of God...the Holy Spirit in us. He flows through us.

Holy Spirit

Throughout the Bible, the Holy Spirit is portrayed as flowing water.

The pouring out of water has symbolized God pouring out His Spirit on the people. Rabbis on the last day of the Feast of Pentecost...Poured out a huge vat of water on the Temple steps...The water would flow down the steps toward the people. Jesus was the greatest visual teacher ever...Jesus used that moment to teach a visual lesson

John 7:37–39 (ESV) 37 On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. 38 Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ ” 39 Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Jesus promised this living water to the Samaritan woman at the well.

John 4:13–14 (ESV) 13 Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”

Then in Revelation Jesus speaks of it again.

Revelation 21:6 (ESV) 6 And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment.

Jesus offers us living water....and it is free....it is always flowing...never stagnant...it flows from the heart...it is pure...it is unlimited...always fresh...always flowing...and the only thing that truly quenches Spiritual Thirst.

That living water...comes from the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives...It pours out of those who trust in Jesus. It drenches all who are around us. The only thing of God that people see in us...is the presence and expression of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

It is this living water that makes us authentic witnesses for Christ....They see the Spirit flowing through us and are drawn to it. They are looking for live bait. Even the prophets spoke of it.

Zechariah 14:8–9 (ESV) 8 On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter. 9 And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.

Joel 3:18 (ESV) 18 “And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the Lord and water the Valley of Shittim.

The Holy Spirit is God....He always glorifies Jesus but they are equally God...the Holy Spirit is a person...Every encounter that you have had with God has been manifested by the Spirit. He reached out to you...He showed you truth...He convicted you of your sins...He gave you faith to believe...He sealed you with His presence when you surrendered...and He lives in you and teaches you all things as a follower of Christ.

The more we surrender to Him, the more of Him people see and the less of us they see. Our witness becomes effective when people see the Spirit in us...fully manifested...flowing through us.

The more our lives glorify Him the more people see His glory. The glory of God is called Shekinah...it is the presence of God with His people...

Those in the Bible experienced it....in a burning bush..in a cloud by day and fire by night....they had glimpses of the presence of God in their midst.

Exodus 40:34–35 (ESV) 34 Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. 35 And Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle.

Then that Glory was found in Jesus Christ.

Hebrews 1:3 (ESV) 3 He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

Then the craziest thing happened...That glory...that same Shekinah Glory that filled the temple...filled Jesus....now fills us.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (ESV) 18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

1 Peter 4:13–14 (ESV) 13 But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 14 If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.

The Shekinah of God would shine through those carried along by His Spirit...The deeper and closer they get to God the greater His glory shines through them. His followers became His Temple. His glory would be seen in them and because of that, they would become Fishers of Men...they couldn't help it

Our bodies are temples that house the Holy Spirit...His glory shines there...people come to the temple to find God there. In the same way, people are drawn to us to seek the things of God. Everything that you and I have ever seen of God came to us through the Holy Spirit...He is the part of the Trinity that we have actually experienced

Fishers of Men

Why did Jesus say He would make us fishers of men if we followed Him....because if we truly follow Him...the Shekinah Glory of God radiates through us and around us to others.

We are the temple of God... The very place where His glory rests.

1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (ESV) 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

When God's glory radiates through us...we can't help but become live bait.... and live bait is irresistible to those seeking Christ. You don't make your witness authentic...God does..As you tell your story..the Spirit of God radiates through you...a supernatural connection occurs.

So how do we make sure that we are allowing God to radiate fully through us? It turns out that we are only capable of partially revealing God's glory at the moment...but that will change.

Ezekiel 47:1–2 (ESV) 1 Then he brought me back to the door of the temple, and behold, water was issuing from below the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. 2 Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate that faces toward the east; and behold, the water was trickling out on the south side.

Notice that water flowed from the Sanctuary. A slow steady trickle toward the east. This flow however begins as a trickle but builds momentum.

Ezekiel 47:3–6 (ESV) 3 Going on eastward with a measuring line in his hand, the man measured a thousand cubits, and then led me through the water, and it was ankle-deep. 4 Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water, and it was knee-deep. Again he measured a thousand, and led me through the water, and it was waist-deep. 5 Again he measured a thousand, and it was a river that I could not pass through, for the water had risen. It was deep enough to swim in, a river that could not be passed through. 6 And he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river.

You can't enter this river on your own. Notice that Ezekiel had to be led through the water...He couldn't enter the water on his own and we can't enter the water on our own either.....Our first step off of the shore is our faith step...God led Ezekiel to the water and He leads us too...God is always prompting us to deeper waters Spiritually....we have to be led, but we must also be willing to follow.

In the same way...our walk with God begins at the throne...in the sanctuary..the quiet place with Him...The Spirit in us begins as a trickle but builds momentum...as we follow Christ...as we surrender more...those spiritual waters of life begin to build in us. The deeper we are willing to go....the more we are drenched in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit...the living water...makes us alive and nothing catches like live bait.

Ntoe that Ezekiel was first let to leave the shore and enter water that was ankle deep

We start out ankle deep...just in a bit. Our belief and trust in Jesus gets us into the water....Our first step begins the experience.

It is a good start, but often we are in...but in on our terms...Yes we have taken a faith step..but it is just as easy to step back. God doesn't let us stay here very long...no growth happens in this part of the river.

Ankle deep believers never see the supernatural of God and never experience revival because God never intended for us to stay here very long. We weren't to take a faith step and then stop.

Many get stuck here. They want to maintain control...they want to be in charge...I am in..but I am in on my terms. I can just as easily exit the waters if things become too hard or too uncertain.

The problem is that Jesus always leads us to deeper waters....Near the shore the temptation of our sins are still present....It is as if we can see our old lives up on the boardwalk...They followed Jesus into the water but they stopped and He did not.

These ankle deep believers don't really hear the voice of God....it comes in deeper waters...but they can still hear the voices of their past...the call of their sin from the shallows. Those voices encourage us to stay in the shallows...to say where the water is murky...where things remain stirred up.

Too many people get stuck in the shallows....they like it there...just enough of God to seem wet...to seem like a true participant...but not enough to really have to change or risk anything. They see God leading them and others to deeper waters, but they try to get other believers to stay in the safe shallows with them. They get comfortable with a very superficial relationship with God and His people.

The Ezekiel is led again to go a bit deeper...Ezekiel willing follows to Knee Depth

They have obediently followed Jesus to this point. Jesus has no intention to leave anyone here very long. He is taking us to the deep waters of faith where the Spirit moves. A bit harder but we still can control our destination...Takes a bit more faith but still feels safe

Can easily move back to ankle deep if uncomfortable. Folks who get stuck here never see revival in their lives..They feel the tug of the stronger movements of the Holy Spirit....When God really amps up the flow, they feel pulled by the river....But they still control their steps

They are deep enough to see where the river goes...May even get a glimpse of the vision God has for them....But they haven't gone deep enough to trust the river...Many Christ followers get stuck in knee deep water...They are in the river enough to experience it...They are usually very comfortable

Benefits with little risk....Look like they are swimming but they are not....People stuck here act like consumers in the church

Again Ezekiel is prompted to go deeper...to trust the one leading him and to go Waist Deep

Now more in tune with the river...A great deal more trust because they have walked with Jesus. They trust His leadership....They experience the excitement of the Spirit...Easier to go deeper than to move toward shore...Less desire to return to the shore

Further away from the things on shore they left behind.... Drawn to where the river flows....Those who are waist deep begin to move with God....The river begins to move them...They no longer stand on their own

They can feel the security of the bottom...But frequently find themselves bouncing in faith as the river moves..Eventually the river pulls them deeper

Eventually the river pulls them deeper....They feel the rush and are called to trust....Begin to see where the river will take you....Many get stuck here. They are one step away from letting the Spirit sweep them away....They still want to control the destiny....Building up enough faith to swim

They look good on the outside but their relationship with Jesus has stagnated....God is begging them to let go, trust Him and swim

Finally Ezekiel is led to the deepest waters....where He must fully trust and become a Swimmer

Then there are those who swim....Those who dive into the depths of a deep relationship with Christ. No security of the bottom...Have gone beyond their own ability....They fully commit to go wherever the River takes them...They trust the Holy Spirit to take them wherever He leads

They trust that God will not let them drown....That His destination and journey is better than theirs....Christ followers were meant to ride the rapids...Exhilarating....Exciting... Joyful Scary at times...Trusting at all times....Never with a thought for the shore...Safe and being led to a destination

Not in control and fully trusting their guide and the river. ...The river that started at the throne....The river that always constantly beckons us to go deep....The River, The Holy Spirit, who takes us to our destination

So many never feel the rush. They don't go deep enough....They don't trust enough....They never experience the life God had for them....They never fully manifest God's glory to others

Live Baits love to swim

Some people walk with God for a long time and never swim...Our authenticity. The thing that makes us Live Bait. ...The most important part of Fishing For Men Is based on how deeply we swim in the River that is the Holy Spirit...The deeper the river gets....The less flesh you can see...The less control that you have...The stronger the influence of the river

The farther from shore you get the harder it is to get back to where you started...The less you are influenced by your past....The more you have been soaked by the Spirit....So the question asked to Ezekiel is also for us.

Ezekiel 47:6 (ESV) 6 And he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river.

I would ask...people of Remnant have you experienced this?

Ezekiel 47:6–8 (ESV) 6 And he said to me, "Son of man, have you seen this?" Then he led me back to the bank of the river. 7 As I went back, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other. 8 And he said to me, "This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, and enters the sea; when the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh.

Note that he was led to the bank...Water brings trees to life.... Very specific path.....Turns the Dead Sea to Fresh Water

Ezekiel 47:9–10 (ESV) 9 And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish. For this water goes there, that the waters of the sea may become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. 10 Fishermen will stand beside the sea. From Engedi to Eneglaim it will be a place for the spreading of nets. Its fish will be of very many kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea.

Everything will live where the river goes....Everything the water touches becomes fresh.....The Dead Sea will come alive....The water flows from the Sanctuary of God and brings lifeFishermen will cast nets and catch all kinds of fish in a sea that was Dead.

So where are you in the water that is the Holy Spirit?

Has the water touched you? God's Spirit has it brought you to life? Jesus gave us life. The Holy Spirit lives in those who believe. Christ followers follow Him into the deep end....They get caught up in the flow of His Spirit... They are carried by the Spirit to bring life to othersTheir lives reflect God's glory as they allow the Spirit to flow through them... We have to make the choice to take another step into the river....to go deeper..to become even more livelier bait.

Imagine what it would be like if the Glory of God shone through all of us together...If all of us without abandon jumped into the Deep End of the River that flows from God's Sanctuary...If we allowed the flow of the river that is God's Spirit to take us where God desires...To experience that everything we come in contact with comes to life...To experience fish of all kinds fill our nets....To see a harvest of fish come from the flow of God's Spirit in us....To see a Dead Sea, that is our community and world come to life

So our two questions today...1)How do I make sure that I am a reliable witness for Christ? 2) What do I need to do in my life to make sure Jesus is glorified?

Dive deeply into the flow of God's Spirit...Trust God and jump....Let the Holy Spirit guide you...Allow the Shekinah of God to shine through every aspect of your being

As you walk with Christ...As you yield to the Holy Spirit....As you follow Jesus into the depths of His Spirit....Regardless of what motivated you to step into the water.....The Holy Spirit flows through your life...The Shekinah of God is present in your life

God's Spirit is fully manifested....God's glory is fully expressed....God's purpose is fulfilled....Your witness is authentic.....Because people see the Spirit, God's Glory in you. It is hard to tell someone has been swimming who only went in ankle deep.....but those who dove in....are saturated in water....saturated in the Spirit....living in the water....swimming as live bait.

Let me close with this truth...

At the very beginning...In Genesis....The Spirit of God was hovering over the waters....God was bringing life to His creation.....we rebelled from God's plan...but the Spirit...at times a trickle...builds to an incredible end. The River of Life...flows with God's glory...just as the Prophets and Jesus promised.

Revelation 22:1–5 (ESV) 1 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. 5 And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Nothing catches fish like live bait. Yes your story and your experiences are your lure...the get you invited into the conversation....but they work because, when skeptics examine you....like I examine fishing ads, they see that there is life in you...Spiritual Life...A type of life that they don't have but desperately need...You are live bait...the Spirit flows through you...From God's throne...through Jesus...through you....to those desperately trying to find it.

Many never experience the incredible wonders of God. We never know what it is like to ride the Spiritual rapids with Him. We never know what it like to truly trust Him with our lives.... because we have never really left the shallows and actually the shore.

You and I are constantly being examined....skeptics who have been burned by others..are examining our lives to see if we are really swimming in the deep Spiritual waters available to us. They are attracted by our stories and experiences...but they are convinced by the evidence of the Holy Spirit in us. You will never be a fisher of men if you stay in the shallow water Spiritually with God.

All of us are spiritually being invited to jump into deeper waters. To experience all that God has prepared and planned for us. Like Spiritual children standing on the edge of the deep....looking into our Father's eyes....Him pleading us to trust Him enough to leave the security of the shore and dive deep into all that He has planned for you. God is constantly inviting us to surrender more so that the Spirit can do more. He said...if you

follow me....I will make you fishers of men. If you truly follow Jesus you are going to the deep waters and you will be soaked in the Spirit.

Those who catch fish...are live bait....bait that is developed in the deeper waters.
Nothing catches people like those who have been soaked in the deeper living waters of Christ...Let's Pray.