

What Does It Mean To Be Witnesses and Fishers of People?

Matthew 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. ¹⁹And He *said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. ²¹Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. ²²Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

Matthew 28:18-20

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Acts 1:6-8

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; ⁸but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Luke 18:9-14

And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt: ¹⁰"Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Matthew 9:9-13

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He *said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. ¹⁰Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining *at the table* in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw *this*, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" ¹²But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, "*It is* not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

A Good Illustration:

Mr. Spurgeon once illustrated his discourse on soul-winning, or being “fishers of men,” by an incident related by Washington Irving. Some three gentlemen, who had read in Izaak Walton a good deal about the delights of fishing, resolved to make a success of it themselves. They went into New York, and bought the best rods and lines that could be purchased, and also such flies as were suited to every particular day of the season, expecting the fish to bite at once, and their basket soon to be filled with fish that might think it an honour to be caught by such fishers and such tackle. They went to a lake in the countryside, and there they fished, and fished, and fished the live-long day, but their basket was still empty. They were discouraged and almost disgusted with a sport that was fruitless.

Presently there came down from the hills a ragged boy, without either shoes or stockings. He had a bit of a bough pulled off a tree, a piece of string, and a bent pinhook. He put a fat worm on the pinhook, threw it in, and out came a fish directly, as if by magic, or as a needle is drawn to a magnet. In again went the line, and out came another fish, and he repeated the process until his basket was quite full. His success quite humiliated them. They asked him how he did it. “Ah,” he said, “*I cannot tell you that, but it is easy enough when you have the bait that they want to eat!*”

“*Much the same is it in fishing for men,*” says Mr. Spurgeon. “*Some preachers who have silk lines and fine rods preach very eloquently, and exceeding gracefully, but they never win souls. Souls need the truth of the Gospel and it is the only way to hook their hearts and change their lives.*”

Pastor Larry Simmons, from C.H. Spurgeon’s Anecdotes

We all need to decide: do we want to be Pharisees or Fishers of Men. We can be certain that we are right and prove it by passing judgment upon others. Or we can be certain that we are right and then attempt to reach others and bring them into a right relationship with God through faith and a surrender of their life to Jesus and Lord and Savior, trusting that He can then fix and change whatever He desires in their lives after they have become His disciples. Those are two very different answers that will result in two very different lifestyles and also two very different approaches to being witnesses. One will bring glory to ourselves but fail to build the Kingdom of God. The other will build the Kingdom of God and bring glory to God but fail to make us seem as important.

Which will You choose?