

Go Fish

The Lure of Love

September 12, 2021

Today we're tackling our call and commission to go fishin' for souls!



But first: **Do you hate, tolerate, like, or love people?**



People. In general. Because in case you haven't noticed, *people in general* are quite *unlovable*. They're lovable *in theory*. But *practically* speaking ... have you *met* them? **It takes fierce determination, which takes powerful motivation**, which comes from our *Commander* the night before the cross.



A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By *this* all [who know you] will know that you are My disciples, if you have love [like Mine for you] for one another." [Get it? Got it? Good! In fact ...] – John 13:34-35 NKJ



If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a *liar*; for he who does not love his brother [as I loved you] whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this *commandment* we have from Him: whoever loves God *must also* love his brother. – 1 John 4:20-21 ESV



[Because] By *this* the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not *practice righteousness* is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother. [Because that's the #1 way we practice it!] ... Do not be surprised, brethren, if the world hates you. ... He who does not love abides in death. – 1 John 3:10-14 NAS

Question is: **are they luring you in, or are you luring them out?** And the follow-up being: **how hard are you trying to love the generally unlovable?** Assuming you're trying. Because this eternal life and death *inner-battle* and *outer-struggle* has been going on since *day one* ... almost *literally*.

For *this* is the message which you *have* heard from the *beginning*, that we should love one another; not as *Cain*, who was of the *evil* one – 1 John 3:11-12 NAS

Dear friends, [writes John] I am *not* writing you a *new* command but an *old* one, which you *have had* since the *beginning*. This *old* command is the message you *have* heard. Yet I *am* writing you a *new* command; [because the *new* part that Christ *commanded* on the eve of the cross, was to love "as I have loved you", because] *its truth is seen in Him and you*, because the darkness *is* passing and the *true* light is *already* shining. [Therefore] *Anyone* who *claims* to be *in* the light but *hates* his brother is *still* in the *darkness*. [Deceiving himself; but] *Whoever loves his brother [as Jesus loves us] lives in the light*, and there is nothing *in* him to *make* him *stumble*. But whoever *hates* his brother is *in* the *darkness* and walks around *in* the *darkness*; he does not know *where* he is going, [because he's not heading for righteousness] because the darkness [inside of him] has *blinded* him. – 1 John 2:7-11 NIV



Last week, I told the lady at the paint store that I *love* her. It was on *accident*. Ever do that? I often say “love ya,” to friends and family – like, “Love ya, bye,” or “See ya; love ya.” Well, I bought some paint, and she said “Thank you,” and I said, “Thank *YOU*, love ya, see ya later.” And I turned away and took a step and realized that I’d just told her that I loved her. So I spun back around, embarrassed, and said “I’m so used to saying ‘love ya’ to my ... that I ... I guess I *love* you!” To which she threw out her arms laughing, and said, “I love you *too*, Bruce!” And it was *funny* and *heartwarming*. And as I left, I don’t know about *her*, but I thought to myself: I *do* care about *you*. That slip of the tongue was a *true, brotherly, platonic, Freudian* slip.

So **why don’t people know us more by our love than they do?** Well that’s on *us*, because for the most part, we just *tolerate* ‘em.

Over the past few weeks we’ve been talking about walking the *talk*, and then talking the *walk*, and letting go of what’s holding us back, and dropping what’s dragging us down, and waiting to be deployed. And as we saw:

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, He saw two [very familiar] *brothers*, Simon [whom Jesus had] called Peter [a year earlier (Jn 1:42)] and his brother Andrew [who’d been a believer and part-time follower for a year (Jn 1:40)] casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen [by trade, disciples by choice]. “Come, follow Me,” Jesus said, [Because it was time to declare the Good News! (Mk 1:15)] “and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed Him. [Full time] – Mk 1:16-20; Mt 4:18-19 NIV

Because, as they were working, they were *watching* and *waiting* to be deployed. Are you?

[We are] Christ’s *ambassadors*, as though God were making His *appeal* through *us*. ... I tell you, *now* is the time of God’s favor, *now* is the Day of Salvation. [Therefore] We put no stumbling block in *anyone’s* path, so that our *ministry* will not be *discredited*. Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great *endurance*; in *troubles, hardships* and *distresses*; in *beatings, imprisonments* and *riots*; ... in *purity, understanding, patience* and *kindness*; in the *Holy Spirit* and in *sincere love*; in *truthful speech* and in the *power of God*; with *weapons of righteousness* – 2 Corinthians 5:20-6:7 NIV



So are you actively demonstrating how the light of the love of our Commander and Savior can overcome whatever *shade* this world can throw at us? ‘Cause, **love in the face of our trials is our witness**. And that’s *when* those who know you know you’re a *child of God*, and a *disciple of Christ*. In fact, **our best witness comes in our worst circumstances**. *Trials* and *witnesses* go hand in hand. That’s when courts are *convened* and we are *literally* given the *task of testifying*. And when Jesus said “you’ll be My witnesses,” He used this specific *judicial* term. Plus:

He *commanded us* ... to *testify* that He is the *One* whom God appointed as *Judge* of the living and the dead. [And] All the *prophets testify* about Him [specifically] that *everyone* who believes in Him receives *forgiveness of sins* through His name.” – Acts 10:39-43 NIV



But, a legal *witness* doesn't just take the stand whenever they want. **"Listen up; I'm a witness!"** No. They share what they know when called to take a stand ... I mean, *the* stand. A *good* witness **sits quietly**, and **waits patiently**, and **watches attentively**, and **speaks softly** when taking a stand ... I mean, *the* stand. And you know what else is *just* like that? *Fishing!* Which is probably why I *hated* fishing when I was young.



Did you know Pops was a fishing *guide* on the Skagit? I *loved* taking the boat to the river, launching it, riding it over the waves, eating burgers Pops barbecued *on* the boat, exploring sandbars and riverbanks, and catching *fish*, and reeling 'em in, and netting 'em. I just *hated* the *actual*, **sitting quietly, waiting patiently, watching attentively, and speaking softly, fishing part.** Not how I *roll*, daddy-o. Know what I use to hear a *lot*? **"Don't make so much noise; you'll scare the fish."** Truer words were never spoken. **Disruptive and disorderly witnesses are dismissed and disregarded.** So don't scare the fish. Give 'em *time* to come to *you*.



"But, what if I'm asked something I can't answer?" Not *possible*. Because **"I don't know"** is a *great* answer. Shows *humility*. Earns *credibility*. And also ... it's *true*. So **be prepared to say, "I don't know."** That's *allowed*. It's *what* witnesses are *expected* to say. But we *must* remain *ready* to *respond* when called on. We've been *warned* to:



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* – 1 Peter 3:15 NIV



Or you'll cancel out what they *saw* in you – and were *attracted* to. We're not told to prepare a dissertation on the theological implications of atonement and propitiation. Just **"be prepared"** to give **"the reason"** [lit. *the Word*] for **"the hope"** that **"you have"**. Because, **if your hope is based on hearsay, it won't hold up.** And that verse isn't a *suggestion*; it's an *instruction*. Remember when we read where Paul said:



I consider my *life* worth *nothing* to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the *Lord Jesus* has *given* me — **[Which is?] the task of testifying** to the Gospel of God's grace. – Acts 20:24 NIV

Testifying to the Gospel (i.e. Good News) is *critical* to our created purpose and God-given mission, because we've been *strategically* placed in time and space to be a *guiding light* to others. Because without *Christ*, **guilt is toxic, life is meaningless, true peace is out of reach, and death is absolutely devastating.** That's the "bad news" we *all* share down here.

So if you're shining a **clean conscience**, and an **actual purpose**, and an **inner peace**, and (the *best* Good News of *all*) a **hope beyond the grave**, and your *love* makes you *affably approachable*, they'll *bite*. Because, everyone's groping for answers in the dark down here. Because deep down, **everyone aches to escape the darkness.**

But **no one will settle for a second-hand story**. That's just *hearsay*.

So live out your hope and love, but show us your *evidence* – because *that's faith*.

Faith is the *substance* of things *hoped for*, [it's] the *evidence* – Hebrews 11:1 NKJ

To really *live out* our hope, and *confidently share* our hope, **we gotta own our hope**. Until *then*, trust what you know to be true, and just be honest about what you *don't* know. Remember, witnesses *often* say, **"I don't know."** That's *allowed*. That's *expected*. But you know what they *never* say? **"I'm too shy to speak."** That's *contempt*. **"But I just need more courage."** No you *don't*. Don't *deceive* yourself with *that old ruse*. Because:

There is no *fear* in *love*. But *perfect* [Jesus-style] *love* drives out *fear* – 1 John 4:18 NIV



Let's say you're at a party, among people you barely know, and you see a toddler jumping into a fire pit. You'd spring into action without *any fear* of *personal risk* or *embarrassment*. Because turns out, you *do* love *people* – more than you realize – and **shyness has nothing to do with boldness** when *pure love* is *involved* and a *child's life* is on the *line*.

You don't need more *boldness*. *Boldness* you *have*. You need more *concern*, and *compassion*, and *empathy*, *pity*, and *mercy*. Yeah, **we don't lack courage, we lack love**. And *pure* love, like *Jesus' love*, is the *only* motivation to *power* the *fierce determination* required for the task at hand.

So drop anchor, settle down, and don't have a panic attack. **You're only a witness**. You're not expected to *argue* the case, *push* for a verdict, or *bring* a conviction. Our *Father* does *that*. (Jn 16:8) And plus, **you have a promise of power when deployed**. Our *true* Commander in Chief said:

"You *will* receive *power* when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you *will* be My *witnesses* in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the *ends* of the *earth*." – Acts 1:8 NRS



And *here* we are! We would've been their *inconceivable* definition of the *ends* of the *earth*! So **how's it feel to be stationed at the outermost outpost on the Day of Salvation?** We have no excuse for not *practicing* the *righteous power* we've received, because all you're asked to do, is to **prepare to share what we trust to be true**.

And then to wait patiently, and watch expectantly, and (when deployed) to take a stand.

I mean, *the* stand.

And tell the *truth*, the *whole* truth, and nothing *but* the truth, so help us, *Dad*.

The fish are jumpin' ... right into the fire!

So maybe try throwin' in a "love ya" here and there.