

It's possible the aisles of fishing equipment at Bass Pro Shops aren't your favorite hangout. Maybe racks and racks of artificial baits to choose from isn't what you're in to. Jigs, plugs, surface lures, spoon lures, flies, spinners, and swimmers. Colors only limited by your imagination. Endless designs. But the big question is if fishermen can only throw out one at a time which one will work?

Even the person who's never fished before knows no bait equals no fish. Sometimes you have bait on and still get nothing. Say you want someone to work for you. The best way is to offer them a paycheck. If it isn't enough even a paycheck alone won't get them to bite on your offer. What about people following God? That requires some bait too. Sometimes it seems like it's not working. We could follow the fisherman's advice and try different bait. We could add something to what God says or take some controversial teaching away to make things more appealing. We might think we can do whatever it takes, change whatever we need to in order to get the results we want for our catch.

Jesus always used his surroundings for material with which to teach people the truths about God. Today is no different. In the gospel Jesus is standing by a lake with fishermen all around him. That's all he needs to teach them and us that we're...

**Going fishing with the Word of God**  
**We get caught**  
**We do the catching**

An important part of their work was cleaning, stretching, and drying the nets so they would be ready for fishing the following night. Peter was working when Jesus arrived at the shoreline with a huge crowd. He had already been called to faith by Jesus. So it was no problem at all when Jesus stepped into his boat and asked for a floating pulpit to teach the people the Word of God.

After finishing his sermon Jesus requested more from this fisherman. Peter was an expert in all things fishing. Every hot spot on the Sea of Galilee, every log in the water, every shallow area, Peter knew them all and had fished it all. So when Jesus, this carpenter from Nazareth, gave him fishing instructions it seemed backwards. **"Put out into deep water, and let down the nets for a catch."** Less a request, more a command with a promise. Peter could've said, "The deep water, in the middle of the day? There's nothing there Jesus, I know, we've tried." Little did this fisherman know but Jesus was catching him.

There are times when Jesus' requests don't make too much sense to our reason. We've got the problems. Like a child who wanders away from the faith when they get older. They seem to have turned their backs on all the training you gave them and the catechism lessons you went through with them. Then Jesus comes along with the instruction to just keep sharing God's Word with them. "That won't be enough because we've tried that" you say. "We've fished for them using that bait already, the Word doesn't seem powerful enough to bring them back."

If that isn't our problem then it's the simple fact that to believe in Jesus is to believe in something we've never seen. We look foolish when we go to church every Sunday, we sound foolish when we talk about it with our friends. We're asked to live our lives almost the opposite of everybody else. Sometimes I doubt God cares about me, sometimes I wonder if it wouldn't be easier to just live the way the world lives, fish where the world fishes.

Simon Peter thought he was the one going fishing when in fact Jesus was catching him. The Word of God proved powerful and effective. The one who should have been giving Jesus fishing advice said, **"Because you say so, I will let down the nets."** Did you hear why he said that? Do you hear why you can simply follow Jesus? The promise; Jesus promised a catch. He guaranteed there would be results if Peter listened and believed. Throughout history God has used individuals to fish in this world. God went fishing with his Word and you're the catch. **"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the Word of Christ."** The Word of God caught you just like he promised. Someone in your life shared with you the truth that Jesus died for sins, even yours. You heard the Word of God and God brought you to faith. You've been caught by the Word of God.

Your kids don't need the cooler music or PowerPoint presentations to be drawn back. They need to know that nothing in this world compares to being caught by Jesus and his love. We don't need fancy arguments to respond like Peter, **"Because you say so..."** We need the promise of a heavenly home won for us by Christ. The Word of God stretches our faith to trust without seeing results. The Word of God went fishing and you and I are the ones that got caught.

Fishing trips with my father lasted from 6:30 till 9:30 in the AM. Being young I got bored early, about 7:30, especially if the fish weren't biting. To pass the time I would hang my fishing pole over the side with bait on it where I could see it in the water. Sometimes fish would swarm around the hook. It seemed they all watched as the one who bit the hook was hauled out of the water. God's Word is dangling down with his promises on it. We bite because the Lord moves our hearts in faith to bite. But unlike my fishing trips, God's fishing trip doesn't end with you being caught. Jesus turned the fishermen into 'fishers of men'. Now he turns the caught into the ones doing the catching.

If you were traveling in the blinding snowstorm at Christmas or last week, if you did some sliding through intersections narrowly missing other cars, and still made it safely where you were going then you realize just how blessed you are. **“When Simon Peter saw this,”** the huge catch of fish, the sinking boats, the sheer power of Jesus, **“he fell at Jesus’ knees and said, ‘Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!’”** Peter had no doubt that this was the almighty God sitting in his boat. He also knew as a sinner he had no right to be as blessed as he was. But Jesus was there to change Peter. **“Don’t be afraid; from now on you will catch men.”** With divine promise and forgiveness Peter’s last catch of fish was his most impressive. But it was nothing in comparison to the number of human beings Peter would catch for the kingdom of God. Now preaching God’s Word Peter would do the catching.

Every day the Word is taught in our school so member children hear it as well as non-member children. But are we seeing the kind of impressive catch we’re looking for? Would we like visible results like more members in the pews? Would that give us confidence to keep the school open? Should we instruct the teachers to use some other bait? A more appealing program, less teaching of God’s Word, anything that could be more effective.

Let me tell you about the catch we get to participate in. Last week there was an episode where one student said something extremely hurtful to another. The teacher talked it through with each of them. After resuming class a little while later the second student approached the teacher and said she knew she could forgive the first student because of the forgiveness Jesus won for both of them on the cross. That child was caught by the Word of God, and the one who did the fishing was a teacher provided by you. Responses to God’s powerful Word like that happen every day in your school. You are blessed to be a part of the fishing. Your school is only one way to throw out God’s Word and let God provide the catch. Maybe it’s not producing the kind of results we’d like to see, but maybe we’re not looking in the right place.

None of us deserves Christ’s forgiveness. God made us all fishermen and women. We get the only bait we’ll need in the Word of God. Dangle it in front of people and watch them respond. Join with them to study it and read it. Dive in to find out everything God wants us to know about his son Jesus. Be led on the road to heaven by this one and only saving message. Christ came to die for sinners, all sinners, you and me included. And now we get to be the ones catching; catching others for Christ.

It was no regular fishing expedition. Jesus was teaching that God’s Word was working. The power of that Word made Peter respond and let his boat be used as the pulpit. The Word convinced Peter to follow Jesus’ instruction and fish in the deep water. The Word convinced these individuals to follow Jesus. We go along with them seeing the powerful Word in action, trusting that powerful Word will catch us, and using that powerful Word to catch others. It’s time to go fishing with the Word of God.