

**Matthew 4:18-20... 10 Words that Changed the World:  
"Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men." Matthew 4:19**

When we compare our culture today with where we were just ten years ago we see that things have changed. Same-sex marriage is now the law of the land. And those who object to the redefinition of marriage on religious grounds are considered homophobic, hateful, intolerant, even dangerous. The movement to allow Polygamy is now gaining momentum along with Euthanasia and the legalisation of cannabis. Murders and burglaries continue unabated. Pornography is even more rampant, with virtual-reality headsets the new frontier of this destructive addiction. We are in the grip of a drug epidemic which has resulted in 'The war on P' or methamphetamine. Hedonism is alive and well in our culture- Kiwi's living for their idol of pleasure along nearly half the population not believing in God or a god. Now it would be easy to think that our culture is sliding into a moral abyss from which there is no return and for which there is no hope. But it is too early to give up on God.

Do you know the world of Jesus' day was grossly immoral? From pagan idolatry to emperor worship to mystery cults, sexual immorality including bestiality, sinfulness abounded. Then Jesus began the mightiest spiritual movement in human history. And what our Lord did then, he is able to do today. So, don't be discouraged by the direction of our culture. The good news is that... the good news is still good news. Jesus can still change any heart that is given to him. His Spirit can still transform marriages, families, communities, and even society itself. All that God has ever done, he can still do! And the key to culture-changing Christianity is simple and yet profound. It is captured in ten words, an invitation Jesus extended to Galilean fishermen twenty centuries ago and to you and me today. If we understand and accept his invitation, he will change our lives forever. And changed people... change people! Let's hear Jesus' call across time and eternity to our hearts and culture today...

The words that changed the world happened as a result of this encounter: "While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen" v. 18. Jesus "saw" the two brothers.

The Greek word means to perceive, to take note of. He didn't happen to see them, he saw them on purpose, for a purpose.

They were fishing because "they were fishermen."

This was not a hobby but a profession and livelihood.

Fishing was a very significant business in their day.

Now come the ten words that changed the world: "And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men'" v.19.

"Follow me" is literally, "Come here after me!" It is present-tense meant as an ongoing command. "After me" shows that they are to be behind Jesus, following him wherever he goes. The standard procedure was for disciples to ask a rabbi if they could follow him. In this case, Jesus turns the process on its head calling them to himself. He did the same when he called you to salvation and service.

"I will make you" means "I will transform you into" or literally, "I will manufacture you." Here we see that we cannot make ourselves into fishers of men. Jesus chooses to use us in his transformational ministry on earth. But he must transform and make us into instruments he can use for his purposes.

If these fishermen would become Jesus' disciples, he would use them to make more disciples who would make... more disciples. The movement they began encircled the globe, making it all the way to Drury, changing along the way humanity forever.

**So, Why fish for men?** Jesus' call to these men became his charge to his entire church across all time. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19) was his Great Commission. "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8) were his last words before his Ascension. Spiritual fishing, helping people follow Jesus, was and is his purpose for every single believer.

You are not really a businessman or woman, a homemaker or lawyer or teacher or student or retiree. You are a spiritual fisherman. Your school, or home, or business or community is simply the lake where God has put you so you can catch the spiritual fish who swim there. So you can pray for people there, be a spiritual example to them, encourage them, help them with their problems, invite them to worship, even lead them to faith.

Every member of Christ's Body is given this task because every Christian is called to the work of the Kingdom; you are saved to serve as the priesthood of believers. So spiritual fishing is God's plan and purpose for every Christian life, yours and mine included.

Separating this call from the individual Christians life is perhaps one of Satan's greatest strategies. Imagine a sports team where only the coaches touched the ball, a business where only the CEO saw customers, or a hospital where only the administration and management staff treated patients. Satan knows that when he can convince you that spiritual fishing is your pastor's or ministry leaders job and not yours, he hurts both you and those leaders and workers. I cannot do this work alone, and you cannot be fulfilled until you do.

Helping people follow Jesus is the highest purpose of life and God's "good, pleasing and perfect will" for your life (Romans 12:2). When we are in God's will, he meets all our needs according to his riches in glory through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). His peace that passes all understanding will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7). And we can do all things through Christ who sustains and strengthens us (Phil 4:13). There is no better or safer place in all the world than in the will of God knowing that...

### **God's purpose will give your life its greatest purpose.**

Next year, 2017, we celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Protestant Reformation lead by Martin Luther who was an anonymous medieval priest before he started spiritual fishing. By his death he had sparked a Reformation that changed the world, translated the entire Bible, published more than 400 pamphlets and books, written thirty-seven hymns, and printed 2,300 sermons. God's purpose gave his life purpose.

Billy Graham was an unknown farmer's son before he started spiritual fishing. And he has shared Christ with more than any person in Christian history. God can do more with your life than you can. Make his purpose yours, and I can testify personally that you'll always be grateful you did.

### **How do we fish for men?**

"Fishers of men" was a common phrase in Jesus' day. Greek and

Roman philosophers used it to describe those who sought to "catch" others by their persuasion. But Jesus made it a powerful metaphor for our ministry as his witnesses. What does this call require of us? Let's consider together these seven principles.

**1. Spiritual fishing requires *commitment*.**

In ancient Galilee, some people were fishing investors. They bought and sold licenses and gave financial support to fishing. Others were fishing employers. They owned the boats and hired the fishermen. And some were fishing practitioners. They actually caught the fish. Jesus has enough spiritual investors and employers. He's looking for practitioner-labourers. Spiritual fishing is 24/7, a lifestyle commitment. Not just at church but at work, at school, at home and in the community. Spiritual fishing takes commitment.

**2. Spiritual fishing requires *strategy*.**

Successful fishermen would go to the fish, where they were, using methods designed to catch the fish they sought. It is the same with spiritual fishermen—we must take the gospel to those who will not come to us, meeting felt needs to meet spiritual needs. Which is what we intend to do on Dec 11<sup>th</sup> at our Christmas community outreach.

**3. Spiritual fishing requires *courage*.**

Sudden squalls threatened fishermen without warning. Jesus said we would have tribulation in this world (John 16:33). Sharing your faith, touching others' spiritual needs, standing for God requires courage.

**4. Spiritual fishing requires *faith*.**

A fisherman must wait for the fish to come, with faith that he will catch fish he cannot see. It is the same with spiritual fishing—we cannot see souls and often cannot measure the future impact of our present witness and ministry by word and deed. In faith we must trust that heaven will reveal all in God's time.

**5. Spiritual fishing requires *training*.**

Fishermen had to know how to catch fish. In the same way, we must be trained to fish for men. The same Spirit who saved us will equip us. He gives us spiritual gifts to do all God asks of us. You must know and use your spiritual gifts to be a spiritual fisherman.

**6. Spiritual fishing requires *humility*.** The fisherman must be invisible to the fish or they'll not go near his boat. What counts is not the size of his boat or the beauty of his equipment, but the fish he catches. This is the only measure of success.

**7. Spiritual fishing requires *passion*.** It's easy to abandon this work if we do not see the result we want. But we must remember that God is using us to save eternal souls. As fishermen drew fish from the depths of the lake into the light, so these men would draw souls from the depths of sin into the sunlight of God's transforming love. There is no greater privilege! So then, just how do you measure success?

### **We must follow Jesus before we can fish for men**

Now remember the priority of Jesus' call: these men could fish for men only after they chose to follow Jesus. He would "make" them into the spiritual fishermen God intended them to be. Only then could they make the impact on their culture God wanted them to have.

I wonder if one of the main reasons the church is not impacting our culture more effectively is that we are not following Jesus more fully. To follow him means to go where he goes and do what he says, every moment of every day. You cannot follow Jesus and follow sin at the same time. You cannot follow Jesus and follow people at the same time. You can follow Jesus only if you solely follow Jesus. And how do we practically measure this? Not by attendance at religious events and programs. Jesus measures success in this way. If we follow him as he intends, he will *always* make us fishers of men, without exception!

**To Summarise:** When we follow Jesus, we will fish for men. But, we can fish for men effectively 'only' if we are following Jesus fully. If we are catching men, we are following Jesus.

**To Conclude:** Your loving Lord is right here, right now, ready to redeem your past, empower your present, and reward your future. He is ready to make you a spiritual fisherman whose life touches every life you know. You cannot imagine what the all-powerful King of the universe can do with a single life fully dedicated to him... or can we? Jesus' invitation to two fishermen twenty centuries ago is his invitation to you and me this very moment... Will you accept?