

FISH

FOR WITNESSING CHRISTIANS

Frank Hamrick

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written by Frank Hamrick

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And He saith unto them, Follow Me,
and I will make you fishers of men.

—Matthew 4:19

It is significant that Christ chose fishermen for His disciples. Their profession portrayed what every true disciple is to be—a fisher for the souls of the lost.

Fish are God's parallel to mankind in the New Testament, just as sheep can represent people in the Old Testament. The fishers are Christians, the sea is the world, the fish are the lost, the bait is the Word of God, and it is God who works through it all. John 21 gives us a beautiful picture of the disciples fishing without the Lord. They fished all night and caught nothing. When they followed the Lord's directions the next morning, however, they could hardly pull in the net, the fish were so heavy.

Only through the Lord's blessing can we expect a great harvest of fish. Like the disciples that dark night, we have neither the vision nor the wisdom to reach souls on our own. The purpose of this book is to present biblical principles for witnessing. Our prayer is that the Lord will work through your love, faithfulness, and prayer to bring others to Him.

As you begin this study, pause and ask the Lord to break and burden your heart for the lost and to use this book to equip you to be an effective and fervent fisher for lost souls. But remember, learning to fish is not enough—to catch fish, you must cast the bait. Happy fishing!

1

THE NECESSITY OF WITNESSING

Jesus told His disciples to follow Him, and He would make them fishers of men (Matt. 4:19).

Fishers of men? What does that mean?

- To whom was Christ talking in Matthew 4:19? _____

- What was their occupation? _____

Being fishers, these men knew that Christ was talking about catching people instead of fish. Later, they came to fully understand what He meant. Just as the Old Testament speaks of the souls of people as being like lost sheep, the New Testament refers to mankind as being like fish. The responsibility that Christ gives believers is to help lead these lost souls to Christ.

Oh, I get it. You're talking about witnessing.

Right. The Bible compares winning the lost for Christ with fishing. It says we must witness.

What does it mean to witness? Why did Christ use that term?

A witness is one who tells others about something he has experienced. For example, if you saw a car wreck, you might be called in as a witness to tell what you saw. Likewise, a Christian witness is one who tells others what he has experienced in Christ.

But can't I show people what I've experienced with just my behavior?

Certainly, but showing isn't the same as witnessing. When you see an accident occur and appear before the judge as a witness, you don't just sit in the witness chair and say nothing. Your face and attitude might reveal that you've seen something important, but the court requires details. So a witness speaks up and describes

what he saw. We should try to reflect Christ by our behavior, but we must also share Him with our words.

- Romans 10:17 says that people must _____
_____ in order to have faith in Christ. Simply living your witness gives a person something to see, but nothing to hear.

*But why do I need to tell others?
Isn't Christianity something personal?
I don't believe in bugging people about religion.*

- Turn to Acts 1:8. What does Christ command every disciple to do? _____

Then one reason we should witness—or fish for souls—is that Christ commanded us to do so. That ought to be enough. But let's also note a few other reasons for witnessing.

OUR CONDITION DEMANDS IT

- Read the following verses and state the awful inner condition of mankind.
 1. Job 25:1–6 _____

 2. Isaiah 1:5–6 _____

 3. Isaiah 64:6 _____

 4. Jeremiah 17:9 _____

 5. Ezekiel 18:4 _____

6. John 3:18 _____

7. Romans 3:10–12 _____

8. Ephesians 2:12 _____

- According to Romans 3:23, how many people are in this condition? _____

*I understand that every person is a sinner.
What does that have to do with witnessing?*

THE GOSPEL'S POWER REQUIRES IT

- Read Acts 4:10–12. According to these verses, what is the only way a person can be saved? _____

We can see why we must witness. There is no other name under heaven that can save a soul.

- Read Romans 10:9–17. Before people can trust, or call on, the name of Christ for salvation, what must they do?

- Before they can believe, however, what must they do?

- Before they can do that, what must happen?

- Before a preacher can preach, what must take place?

- A person's salvation therefore follows an orderly procession of events. State the correct order by placing the following in their logical sequence:
 - Hear—the gospel
 - Send—a preacher
 - Trust—in the name of Jesus
 - Preach—the gospel, the Word of salvation
 - Believe—the message
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
- According to Romans 10:17, what is required before a person can be saved? _____

God could have reached out to unbelievers any way He wanted, but we can see that He has chosen to use us to share His gospel with the world.

THE LOVE OF CHRIST COMPELS IT

- Read 2 Corinthians 5:14. Why was Paul constrained, or compelled, to witness? _____

This might be one of two loves—our love for Christ, or His love for souls. Either could apply to this verse. As Christ grows His love in us, we cannot help but reflect His love to others.

The more you love the Lord, the more you will long to see people saved.

THE REALITY OF HELL DEMANDS IT

- Read Luke 16:19–28. From this passage we understand that people in hell are physically and mentally aware of their pain and anguish. Name the parts of the body—stated or implied—that the rich man had in hell.
 - v. 23 _____
 - v. 24 _____
 - v. 24 (he suffered) _____
 - v. 25 (he remembered) _____
 - v. 25 (he heard Abraham) _____

*But I don't think that was a true story.
Isn't that just a parable?*

Unlike Christ's other stories and illustrations, this was not a fictional parable. First, it features real, named characters and real, named places—things that Christ did not include in His parables elsewhere. Second, Jesus always clearly introduced parables as parables, but He did not in this case. He presented this story as an account of something that actually happened.

The Bible provides us at least seven other facts about hell, any of which should stir our hearts to reach the lost before they go there.

1. The Darkness of Hell

How do the following verses describe the darkness in hell?

- Matthew 8:12 _____
- 2 Peter 2:4 _____

Here is a darkness kept from all glimmer or possibility or even hope of light.

2. The Fire of Hell

- What kind of fire does Matthew 3:12 speak of? _____

This verse implies not only that the fire will never be extinguished, but also that those suffering in the flame will not be consumed. The pain simply will not stop.

3. The Death of Hell

- Revelation 9:1, 2, and 11 describes hell as being like what?

- What comes out of it? _____

4. The Loneliness of Hell

- Luke 16:24 describes the rich man calling out to whom?

There was no one in hell with whom he could talk. Hell is a place of total isolation—there will be no relationships or community.

Most importantly, people in hell will be separated from God forever (2 Thess. 1:9).

5. The Sounds of Hell

- According to the verses below, what will people hear in hell?
 1. Matthew 8:12 _____
 2. Matthew 13:50 _____

6. The Thirst of Hell

Luke 16:24 describes the rich man's thirst. As with everything else in hell, this thirst is eternal, unending, unquenchable.

7. The Endlessness of Hell

- According to 2 Thessalonians 1:9, what kind of punishment shall be brought upon the lost? _____

Hell must be terrible. No one in their right mind would want to go there.

And that is one of the greatest reasons we should witness. The lost simply don't think about hell. They either don't think it's a real place, or they don't want to consider if it could be. But hell exists, and we, like Christ, must confront people with its reality. Therefore, we must get men and women to think about hell.

Complete This Section Without Looking Back at the Lesson

1. How does the New Testament picture lost souls?

2. What is a witness? _____

3. Besides the fact that God commands believers to witness, what four reasons compel us to tell others of Christ?

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

4. According to Acts 4, what is the only way a person can be saved? _____

5. What four things must happen before a person can trust, or call on, Christ for salvation?

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

6. How do we know that the story of the rich man and Lazarus is not a parable? List two reasons.

- _____

- _____

7. Name the seven facts about hell that were presented in this chapter.

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

- _____

Verses to Memorize

- Matthew 4:19
- Acts 1:8
- Romans 10:17

2

MAKING CONTACT AND STIRRING INTEREST

Now that we have seen why we should witness, we will study how to witness effectively.

Isn't witnessing easy? All you have to do is talk about God.

Witnessing is more involved than some people imagine. Even though the message of the gospel is simple, witnessing is far more than just saying the words, “You’re a sinner, Christ died for you, and if you trust Him now, you will be saved.” Before a person accepts Christ, much groundwork must be laid. This book presents five general stages of witnessing, two of which are studied in this chapter.

An analogy may be drawn from fishing. Before the fish can be caught, someone must know where the fish are, take the time to go there, know how to bait the hook, and be patient enough to wait for the fish to bite. He then must be skilled in setting the hook and landing the fish.

Here we’ll learn some of the preliminary activities in sharing the gospel.

MAKING PERSONAL CONTACT

- Read John 4:6–18. Of what ethnic group was the woman at the well? _____

Samaritans shared a mixture of Jewish and Gentile ancestry, and therefore were despised by both groups. Most Jews would not even travel through Samaria—which lay at the very center of their country—but instead traveled miles out of the way to bypass it.

- What does the last sentence in verse 9 say? _____

- Did the woman expect Christ to shun her? _____
- Did He? _____

He deliberately went to Samaria to reach her.

*I thought Christians shouldn't
fellowship with unbelievers.*

There is a big difference between being best friends with the ungodly and trying to lead them to Christ. While we should not become partners in ministry with unbelievers, or be open to ungodly influence, we must be a friend and a help to them.

- What does 1 Corinthians 5:9 say about this?

- But to avoid any misunderstanding, Paul clarifies his statement in verse 10. What does he say? _____

So even though we are not to partner with the lost, we are to show them love with the ultimate goal of winning them to Christ. After all, there's no greater love we can share with them than the love found in a relationship with God.

PERSONAL CONTACT WITHOUT PARTNERSHIP

How does this biblical principle apply to areas such as dating, marriage, or business partnerships?

*Does that mean I can form partnerships with unbelievers
if my goal is to see them accept Christ?*

First, let's examine the issue. If winning them to Christ is the purpose, a partnership is not necessary. You can befriend a person and show him you are interested in his soul without compromising your principles.

- What does the Scripture say about this in 2 Corinthians 6:14–17? List the things that cannot have a true relationship.
 - _____ and _____
 - _____ and _____
 - _____ and _____
 - _____ and _____
 - _____ and _____

Without fellowship or agreement or spiritual accord, what kind of partnership do you think you would have? Not much of one. Therefore, do not expect an unbelieving friend to be able to understand your struggles as a Christian or offer you advice with the help of the Word and the Holy Spirit. Show them love, but if you depend on them for friendship, trouble will follow.

STIRRING THEIR INTEREST

After we’ve built a relationship with an unbeliever, showing them that we genuinely love and care for them, we can begin to kindle their interest in spiritual things—in particular, Christ.

But how is this done?

- Note John 4. How did Christ stir this woman’s interest in spiritual things? _____

- What did He offer her that was especially interesting and unusual? _____

- Christ turned a conversation about ordinary things into a discussion of what He had to offer. He made an offer that made her aware of her own need. In what way did the woman express her need? _____

- What questions did the woman ask Christ? _____

If by God’s grace you can encourage a person to begin questioning his own needs, he will ask you the questions.

But what can I say that will stir people’s interest?

Many illustrations could be given, but we will offer one: A guy approaches you, and he is really down on himself. His girlfriend just broke up with him, and he blew the basketball game the night before. He says, “Man, this just isn’t my day. Nothing goes right with me anymore.” What can you say?

I get it. I can say, “I used to be like that, but now everything that happens is for my good.”

You’re getting the idea. Something like this could get your friend’s attention and spur him to ask questions. Get excited about what God has done for you, and you will share it naturally. Relate your discussions to His character and His work.

To encourage you to find ways to bring up spiritual topics, we’ve listed a few hypothetical situations below. Write down a response that might turn the discussion toward your faith and beliefs.

- Situation: John tells you about a science fiction adventure movie he saw. _____

- Situation: Mary complains about all her problems.

- Situation: Bill asks, “How are you doing?” _____

Complete This Section Without Looking Back at the Lesson

1. Name the two stages in witnessing included in this chapter
 - _____

 - _____

2. For what five reasons would a Christian who was really in fellowship with the Lord not join in a partnership with a lost person?
 - _____

 - _____

 - _____

 - _____

 - _____

3. What is the primary reason we should seek the friendship of the lost? How can we share the greatest love with them? _____

Verses to Memorize

- 1 Corinthians 2:1-2