

**Sermon Study Guide Based on  
Pastor Weber's Message of June 14, 2009  
"Sharing God's Love and Life"**

**[Today's message will review our theme for the year, to help us focus clearly on it for the remaining 6 months of 2009.]**

**[Topics: Sharing God's love and life; missionaries; All Things to All Men]**

**Excerpt:** Today's message is called "Sharing God's Love and Life" which is our theme for this year. About a week after we chose our theme, our denomination chose the same theme. Hopefully, it's the Holy Spirit responsible for all of this.

Let's talk about fishing. First of all, you've got to know what you are trying to catch. Pastor Glen remembers going fishing years ago at a lake in Saskatchewan trying to catch the "big one" of two different kinds of fish. One type was the northern pike, which was about 16-18 inches in length, which is a pretty good size. Then they changed lures trying to catch perch in the very same spot. But a big perch is only about 8 inches, which is what they wanted to cook for breakfast while on the fishing trip.

Well, Jesus is fishing in our culture today. He's fishing for human beings. Not only that, but he's sent us fishing. This morning when pastor Glen was talking with the seniors over at Regency on Fair Oaks, he talked about how much times have changed when they were young people compared with today.

One of the problems we are having today in America is keeping our young people in church. It doesn't matter what kind of church you choose. It's extremely difficult to keep teenagers connected to the church once they transition out of high school.

These elderly, when they were young, sat around the radio for their entertainment. They also said they danced and played cards for their recreation. Our kids, today, don't do hardly any of those things. They are all tied up in video games and texting and cell phones, etc. It's a whole different culture, isn't it?

Sadly the churches are using the same lure today that they used to catch those 70 or 80 year olds. And we wonder why we don't catch teenagers today. And so it now becomes a challenge. How do accomplish that purpose of sharing God's love and God's life with others?

40 years ago, while visiting here in Pasadena, I was invited out for deep-sea fishing near Catalina Island on the cabin cruiser our denomination used to own. After we shut the boat down and threw our lines in the water, the very first thing we caught was a shark. It was a 3-4 foot big old ugly shark.

Now, the hard part is getting the shark off the hook. Once you catch a shark, you have to kill it to get it off the hook. What they did was to pull out a rifle and shot it. Now what ends up in the water when you shoot a shark? Blood. And when there's blood in the water, guess what else shows up? More sharks showed up. Our boat was literally

surrounded by fins. That of course ended our fishing trip. Sometimes catching fish takes some thought – what are we going to do and how are we going to accomplish this?

Pastor Glen then asked the members in church: Have any of you been missionaries to other countries? What does it take to be a missionary in a foreign country? What do you have to think about? These are the answers from our members. “You think about the culture you are going into. You think about can you speak their language and how are you going to communicate with them.”

“Even if you don’t know the language of the land, love helps.” “You can’t think about yourself. You have to think about others and what you can do for them.” “You have to find out what their needs are so you can help them.”

The point is to be a missionary you have to think about them, you have to understand their culture. What’s it like to be in their situation? Now if you go waving your flag all the time and exhibit your Americanisms that will irritate people. So you have to adapt to who they are. You have to begin to think like them.

And so it’s a process. And good missionaries have had to learn the culture. In fact, many churches realize that they have to quit exporting American citizens and raise up indigenous people, who are already part of the culture, to reach others there. It’s much more natural to do that.

So how do we share the love and life of God in our community? How do reach out to others? In **1 Cor. 9:12**, Paul is talking, in context here, about how he had the right to ask the congregation for money. And that you shouldn’t muzzle the ox that treads the corn.

**1 Cor. 9:12, "If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right."** Paul says that even though he has that right, he’s not going to take it. Perhaps the Corinthian church wanted to control Paul in a certain way and that’s why he didn’t take any support from them.

**12) "On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ."** So Paul’s first priority was not to hinder the preaching of the gospel. He felt if he took their money that it would. He defended his right to refuse them even though those who served at the temple got compensated.

**16) "Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!"** So Paul had this inward drive to preach the Gospel and connect with others and to make sure people knew about Christ.

Pastor Glen hopes that this verse eventually applies to all of us – that we have an inward compulsion to reach others. All of us here have the head knowledge that we should reach people and connect with them. It’s more difficult to actually go out and do it.

**17) "If I preach voluntarily, I have a reward; if not voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. 18) What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching**

it." So Paul is saying again that he was doing all his ministry work for free so that they knew he wasn't doing it just for the money. He was accomplishing what God set before him. Then Paul talks about how he actually does this work.

**19) "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible."** We already talked about what it takes to become a missionary in another culture. You've got to be willing to sacrifice a little bit. You've got to be willing to connect with them, live where they live and do what they do. A missionary is able to connect with others through their culture.

Now Alex is going to go to the Bahamas in the next few weeks and he will need to learn to think how those people think, which isn't easy. Even though they speak English, their culture is different. The same words may have different meaning there in the Bahamas.

**20) "To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews."** Since Paul was a Jew that was easy for him to act like a Jew. But he was careful not to flaunt his freedom in Christ in front of them.

**"To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law."** We, too, need to be sensitive when talking to or having a meal with those who believe that they are under the law.

**21) "To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law."**

Paul is saying that when he's around Gentiles, he acts like a Gentile. Paul is free to respond to them in a certain way, so that he can connect with them. When Paul went to Rome, he acted like a Roman. When he went to Greece, he acted like a Greek – as much as he could in order to win them to Christ.

Our theme this year about sharing God's love and life is all about us being missionaries in our community. How well are we doing this as we share God's love and life? You can express God's love and life in any language. And you don't even have to talk to them. You can love on them and let the life of God shine out of your eyes and communicate with them even on a limited scale. It's obviously better if we can do more and interact with their language and culture.

**22) "To the weak I became weak, to win the weak."** That's probably the hardest for us is to see people who are in a weak situation or who are in a broken situation and become kind of broken like they are, to connect with them on that level.

**"I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some."** Notice the word "all" is used many times here. Paul did this to connect with people.

**23) "I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."** Paul is saying that he is able "to change who he was" in situations in order to connect. He's telling us how he was able to be so successful in planting churches in Roman territorial cities, in Greek cities, and even Jewish cities. How did he do that? He went out and connected with people and made disciples and then raised up churches.

New Hope's game plan is to birth a baby church within the next three years. The key is raise a group of disciples in a specific neighborhood and then it will become obvious that we need to plant a church there, because of the response. And we are also praying that God will raise up a leader.

Pastor Glen then asked the our members in church, "What does it take to reach our culture? What do we need to do to connect with the people of our culture?" Here are some of the answers given. "Go to Best Buy." (That's where the young people go to buy their electronic toys.)

"How about Face Book?" (If you look up New Hope Christian Fellowship on Face Book, we're there. We're inviting people to become a fan of New Hope, where we tell them about upcoming sermons and other things.)

"Learn how to text." "Have credibility in what you are talking to them about." "Meeting people at work and new neighbors moving into your neighborhood." "Meet with people on their level who are in a broken situation." "Deepen your relationships with others and finding out what their needs are."

"I connect with people by giving them flowers from my garden." "Realizing I don't have all the answers and do a lot of listening and praying while I'm listening."

Those are all good answers. We need to be thinking about what it takes to connect with our culture. The apostle Paul said he connected with Jews one way, Gentiles another way, with weak people one way and with strong people another way. Paul analyzed the culture and how he was going to connect with them before reaching out to them.

Well, we need to be looking at our culture around us and ask, "How do I share God's love? How do I share God's life? And what are the specifics I need to be doing? And how do I reach across that barrier to talk to them about it?"

And those of us 50 and older, we need to be thinking how do connect with our children, grand children and great grandchildren when they are in a different culture? And to connect with them is a different ballgame, because they are thinking a completely different set of standards.

You think in terms of right and wrong. They think it's my opinion of what's right and wrong. There's just a different view of the world in the younger generations. We need to analyze each individual person differently.

We need to ask these questions: "Do I consider myself a missionary to my work place? Do I consider myself a missionary to my neighborhood? " Do I consider myself a missionary to my family, if they are non-believers?"

When we are thinking like a missionary, we will be able to effectively share the love and life of God with others. Not one to Africa or South America but one to San Gabriel and one to Duarte and one to Monrovia and one to Pasadena and one to other cities in this area.

When we connect with people and look for opportunities to touch their lives and to make a difference in their lives and to find out where they are, this allows the Holy Spirit greater

freedom to stir in their life. We open the door, in the sense of connecting with them, and then the Holy Spirit takes his stirring to the next level and begins to draw them to God and speak to them.

During these next 6 months, let's go out and share the love and life of God with others, to look for opportunities, to think about our culture, to think about our children and grandchildren, because it's a new world. And God has sent us into that new world and it's as different as if we went to Zimbabwe.

So let's continue to look for opportunities to connect with others as we live out our theme of sharing God's love and life.

**Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 9:12-23.**

**General Group Question:** What are some of the similarities between fishing and being a missionary in our own community?

**Additional questions for the entire group or in groups of two or three of the same gender (15-20 minutes). If appropriate, please pray for each other's needs afterwards.**

1. What should a missionary to another country consider before sharing the gospel? What are some of the reasons for this?
2. What did Paul mean by his statement in 1 Cor. 9:19, "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible"?
3. How was Paul able to reach out with the gospel to so many different kinds of people, Jews, Gentiles, the weak, the strong, etc.?
4. What lessons can we learn from Paul as we reach out to those in our family and neighborhood?
5. Are the younger generations just like the older generation? If not, what are some of the differences?
6. What kinds of strategies could you use to be a better missionary in your own backyard?
7. What can you do to be able to better share the love and life of God with others in the coming months?