2) Miracles may have drawn the crowd, but what Jesus was most passionate about was not fixing their temporary bodies, but the destiny of their eternal souls! Once he had their attention, He would preach the Good News everywhere the people were: on the street, in houses, on the beach, ...

3) All along the way, he trained his disciples to do what He did, so the work could continue, even when He was physically gone.

So, when we go out on mission trips, we try to follow the pattern we see in the life of Jesus. My team and I go to more remote areas where our Field Directors, who serve as our fishing guides, have already searched out good fishing holes and have prepared for us to chum the waters. How? They build relationships, listen to the people, learn the physical needs of the community, and then determine how we can possibly help meet some of these physical needs in some small way.

You might have heard this simple truth in quote-form like “People don’t care what you know, until they know that you care”. An African proverb says it this way, “Empty stomachs don’t have ears”. This strategy of “chumming the waters” has proved to be a very effective way of gaining attention to bring the “fish” in closer.

Using fishing terms, the CrossWay Strategies might sound like this:
1) Chum the waters (Open Hearts for the Gospel)
2) Use our nets in the water (Share the Gospel)
3) Take folks with us and teach them to fish (Train Others to Share the Gospel).
This past January 2017, the Lord gave us a net-breaking load of fish in Kenya. The total of those who trusted in Christ alone for their salvation on this trip was beyond our expectations. Our core team members besides myself were: Ken Gatithi (Field Director), Moses Gatura (interpreter) and Pius Nato (a pastor from First Baptist in Ruiru, Kenya). Altogether, we calculated that over 1300 fish were caught in our nets. Praise God!

During this mission trip, I spoke and shared the Gospel of Grace at 6 events (fishing holes). The first one was at the Kenton Community in the Rift Valley area. To chum the waters, we had provided a water project in this village, which opened the door for me to visit and speak at their school. I spoke to the 290 students (13 to 16 year-olds) and their teachers. The response to the Gospel was strong with a large percentage of both students and teachers indicating they had never heard the message of grace before.

After that, I spoke at 3 other communities (Mbugwa, Karundu and Gathitu). In each of these communities we had already chummed the waters, or did so when we arrived. Some of this chumming was inexpensive, such as school supplies and candy.

One of these communities, Karundu, was larger and had even a greater response, with 3/4 of them indicating they had never heard of the gospel of grace before, and who then trusted in Christ. At this one, the community leader asked an older teenage girl, Royce, to close our time together in prayer. Her prayer was amazing as she thanked God for the free gift of eternal life that could never be earned ..., basically repeating my invitation to trust in Christ alone for their salvation with great clarity. So the Lord gave us another net full of fish from these three communities.

I was also allowed to preach at the Kingongo Prison in Nyeri. These men are hard-core criminals, with many serving life sentences in prison. We had bought $200 worth of soap to “chum the waters”. (Unlike prisons in the USA, soap is not provided to prisoners.) All 500 men were very engaged and I could tell they were tracking closely to what I was saying. And about 80 percent of them responded to the Gospel of Grace.

At this point, I thought the fishing might be over, but on the last day, preaching at the First Baptist Church in Zimmerman, the Lord gave us another 19 fish!
This past January 2017, in addition to my trip to Kenya, I (Dean) also made a second mission trip, this time to Nicaragua. I spoke at a rehab center, the police station, the park, and even led 10 of the 11 men who were putting up fencing on the property of our Training Center to the Lord. We are also starting to implement some of the strategies that have been successful in Kenya. For example, we are starting up our milk goat ministry for destitute widows. This adds to other ways we have already been engaged in “chumming the waters” including water projects and providing handcuffs and batons for police officers, just to mention a few. Each community or group of people we hope to reach with the Gospel has their own unique felt-need, so we try to carefully choose the right type of “chum” to use.

In addition, Gary Jones, our International Training Director, just returned from his own fishing trip in Nicaragua this February. He taught a successful conference for 19 youth church workers with 3/4 of them coming to faith in Christ. Most had never heard the Gospel of Grace, and are thrilled and energized to return to their own fishing holes to catch more fish (2 Tim. 2:2).

Gary, Francisco (our Field Director), and Kevin (our Assistant Field Director) also visited a public school. During recess he was able to present the Gospel using the Paper-folding Illustration. (Visit gocrossway.org/paper to learn to use this tool yourself!) He was also able to give them soccer balls (“chum”), which they really appreciated. A parent-teacher meeting was about to start, with about 50 parents waiting outside the school. So he presented the Gospel to them, also.

They also visited a prison, where they shared sandwiches and the Gospel. Then they took sandwiches and drinks to a nearby sports facility, where they again shared the Gospel with some boys who were playing soccer and had a positive response from 10 of them.

Your prayers and partnership play a vital role. Not everyone can go out on these fishing trips, but these trips simply wouldn’t be possible without your support. Besides making the fishing trips possible, your gifts also allow us to illustrate the grace of God in a really tangible way and draw in the fish by “chumming the waters”. And finally, without your prayers and the moving of God’s Spirit, all of the effort would be pointless. After all, Jesus is the only one who can truly save. All we do is bring the fish to Him.
only ½ of one percent considered themselves evangelical Christians – the very place where the Reformation took place centuries ago. The fish are full and content, with a whole variety of substitutes to try to deal with that deep hunger in their hearts.

As many of you know, the ministry of CrossWay International has mostly focused on the nations where the poverty is more extensive. It’s a simple fact that the fishing is far greater in such waters, so we spend most of our time where the fish are biting!

Should we forget about Europe and the US? Of course not! Even though fishing in the USA is much more difficult, our friends and neighbors need Jesus too. Jesus calls us first to reach out in our own “Jerusalem” (Acts 1:8). We never know when or where we might catch a “fish”. After all, as a good friend once told me, “the greatest ability we have is our availability”. Are we making ourselves available so that God might work in and through us?

Thanks again for all your prayers and support as we work together, sharing the good news about Jesus everywhere!

Happy Fishing!

Local Fishing Report: Why is fishing so hard in the USA?

With these kinds of results from short trips to Nicaragua and Kenya, it begs the question: Why are the fish not biting as much in the USA when compared to other parts of the world. Are we doing something wrong?

There are probably lots of reasons, but let’s look to Matthew 19:23, 24 for what could be part of the answer: “I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

The simple fact of the matter is that most of us here in America live like kings, compared to the developing world and most of humanity throughout history. Running water, electricity, toilets, plenty of food, clothing, education, trained doctors, safe hospitals, etc. The fact that it’s tempting for many of us to take these basic things for granted in the USA can cause an arrogance and a sense of self-sufficiency. We simply aren’t as aware of our physical needs, let alone our spiritual needs.

This same atmosphere made the fishing in Europe very difficult and it remains the same today. When we lived there, only ½ of one percent considered themselves evangelical Christians – the very place where the Reformation took place centuries ago. The fish are full and content, with a whole variety of substitutes to try to deal with that deep hunger in their hearts.

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