



# *Thoughts on the Journey...*

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When I was a child, during the first two weeks of August, every year, my parents would take all of us on vacation. We would go to our family cottage, that my grandmother

owned, on Herrington Lake just outside of Harrodsburg, Kentucky. That is where my fishing history began. Each day, my Dad would pack us up in the car in our bathing suits and beach towels in tow and drive down to the Chimney Rock boat dock down the road where swimming, climbing on the rocks, and fishing provided a full day of fun for all of us. My first experience with fishing was when I was just a toddler. Dad would give us little Mickey Mouse fishing poles with fishing line attached, but no hooks! He would then crush stale bread and spread it on the top of the water that reflected the green of the surrounding trees. It wasn't long before little blue gills and sunfish would come and nibble the crumbs at the surface: what a thrill to see all of those fish. It gave us a sense that we were fishing without the mess of baiting and taking a fish off the hook. As we got older and were ready for a bigger challenge. Dad would place half a worm on a hook and my brothers and sisters would catch small fish and pull them in one after another. The thought of dealing with a flapping fish on the end of a hook did not appeal to me, so I just teased the fish with my bait. I still loved to see the fish, but worked very hard at avoiding a catch. In my adolescents, I was being outdone by my younger brothers and sisters in the competition to catch nice big fish that we could actually eat and decided it was time to pull one in for the team! After an hour of complete frustration at not catching anything other than slimy moss, I asked my Dad to help me. He said, "In order to catch a good size fish, you have to drop your line deep into the water, be patient, and quit being so afraid to catch the fish. Sit quietly, and soon as you feel a tug on the line, reel it in." It took some time, but eventually, through perseverance, I got the hang of it. There was still the issue of getting the fish off the hook, but eventually I mastered the whole process from baiting my hook to, catching some rather HUGE fish (spoken like a true fisherman) to getting them off the hook, and even cleaning them for the meal.

My faith journey has been a lot like my fishing history. It began as sitting on the sidelines, and watching the surface. At some point, I was willing to dabble

but not commit. But, eventually I wanted more. When I was ready to receive more, I had to commit to fully participating in my faith, by going deep into the dark waters within and coming to terms with the very things that were keeping me from a deeper relationship with God.

In the Gospel story from Luke, Jesus was teaching the crowds on the shore of Lake of Gennesaret (Sea of Galilee). Along side the lake, there were two fishing boats. The fisherman were washing their nets after having been fishing. Jesus, approaches one of the fishermen named, Simon, then

**“...he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, “Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.”**

After Simon expressed his frustration at having fished all night with no results, he decided to do as Jesus instructed. His obedience served him well because they caught enough fish to fill two boats. When Simon saw this he fell at the knees of Jesus and asked Jesus to leave him because he was a sinful man. Then Jesus said to Simon,

**“Do not be afraid”**

How much are we like Simon, afraid to cast our net into deep waters? Fearful of making the changes that will contribute to the further conversion of our hearts and souls? How willing are we to look at the depth of our shortcomings and sinfulness - the dark places of our lives? How committed are we to invest more in our relationship with Christ who can bring light to the dim places of our thinking? Change is always risky business because it takes us from the comfort of the status quo and brings us into the realm of the unknown. But Jesus tells Simon as he tells us, too, “do not be afraid”.

It's always a good time to honestly question whether we're just going through the motions of religion or if we're truly committed to becoming the people that God created us to be. Like Simon Peter, we are all called to be fishers of men. The best place to begin casting our nets is within ourselves.