

Fishing With Artificial Bait

INTRODUCTION:

- 1. Most of you know that I like to fish, and that I fish mainly for Crappie.
 - A. What you may not know is that I fish exclusively using artificial bait—a jig.
 - B. I like to fish with artificial bait because...
 - i. It provides me with many colors, shapes, and sizes to match the color of the water and the type of fish I am hoping to catch.
 - ii. For me it is usually as successful in enticing fish to bite as is live bait, sometime more so, and much cheaper and easier to use.
 - iii. It gives me lots of control over my fishing, allowing me to cast the bait with accuracy, regulate its depth, and reel it in at different speeds and angles.
 - iv. And, you do not have to hide the hook because fish do not know what a hook is. They just see the color/shape/movement of the bait and react.
 - C. Despite the control jig fishing gives me, there are still many things that can derail my hopes of catching a fish.
 - i. I can throw the perfect color jig with accuracy and retrieve it with precision, but if the smallest piece of trash gets on the bait (grass, bark, leaf, bloom), or the jig slides down on a fish will not touch it.
 - ii. It is up to the fish to bite. And sometimes they are not going to bite because of the direction of the wind, the temperature of the air or water or both, the barometric pressure, time of day, etc., are not right or conducive.
 - D. Despite the various factors and challenges, many people, and sometimes even I, catch a lot of fish using artificial bait.
- 2. So, you might be wondering what the point of all this is. Well, it is simple.
 - A. Satan is an avid fisherman. **And he is fishing for you and me.**
 - B. And he is using **artificial bait** to allure, or **tempt**, you and me to bite.
 - C. And **how he uses temptation** is very similar to how I use artificial bait to catch a fish.
 - D. So, since we as Christians must live our lives in holy, righteous fashion, resisting the temptations of Satan, I thought it might help to examine and apply this analogy to our Christian life.
 - E. Thus, this is a study of temptation.

BODY:

- **I. Satan always fishes...with artificial bait.**
 - A. Satan is always fishing (1 Pet. 5:8 – “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”).
 - 1. I know this compares the devil to a prowling lion, but that is what a good fisherman does—he prowls around the waters to find unsuspecting fish—prey if you will.
 - 2. And, like most Crappie fishermen (and lions), the devil’s intent is to devour!
 - 3. That is why continual sobriety and vigilance are required and why it is a hard, and heartbreaking, road to travel at times.
 - a. We do well, maybe even for a long time, only to let down our guard and fall prey.
 - b. For, there is no time to let up!
 - B. Satan is fishing with artificial bait.
 - 1. In other words, he is tempting us with *deception*, what **it is not real** and will not provide what it promises.
 - 2. Artificial bait looks good to a fish, like what they need, but **it isn’t**.
 - a. It provides no nourishment, no lasting value. It’s just designed to **look** like it would.

- b. So, despite my crappie bait being **soft plastic**, and the fact that there are **obvious clues** that my bait is not the real thing, and there being an **abundance of minnows** in the water around them that God has provided, . . .
 - i. If I can put that jig in the right place, where with little effort that crappie can get it, it will hit. It's like a Christmas present delivered that does not swim away in fear!
 - ii. Though, sometimes a crappie will put a lot of effort into getting my artificial bait.
 - iii. If a crappie does hit, it is likely done, going into the livewell and home with me!
 - 3. Satan uses temptation in the same way.
 - a. Like any knowledgeable fisherman . . .
 - i. Satan seeks to make temptation as **appealing, accessible, and easy** for us "fish" as possible (and we are nothing more to him than fish), hoping for us to bite.
 - ii. He has been wildly successful at this. It is on your phone, iPad, computer. He confronts you with it at work and at play. Temptation is basically everywhere.
 - iii. He seeks to make sin **look good**, like what we need/crave—fulfillment, happiness, meaning, etc.—but like that crappie jig, **it is a lie** (Heb. 3:12-13 – "**Beware**, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; ¹³ but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be **hardened** through the **deceitfulness of sin**."").
 - 1) It may be exciting, seemingly joyful and fulfilling for a time, but it will not last.
 - 2) It cannot last because it is not what we need!
 - b. Everything Satan does is deceitful and destructive because that is who he is and what he does, as Jesus pointed out in rebuking certain Jews (Jn. 8:44 – "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a **murderer** from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is **no truth in him**. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from **his own nature**, for **he is a liar** and the **father of lies**."").
- C. Since we are not fish driven by instinct, we should learn that all temptation comes with a **hook**.
 - 1. It **promises** great things, but gives slavery and death. For, note how Peter describes those who tempt us and the end of temptation (2 Pet. 2:17-20 – "These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they **entice** by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, ¹⁹ **promising them freedom** while they themselves are **slaves of corruption**; for by what a man is **overcome**, by this he is **enslaved**. ²⁰ For if, after they have **escaped the defilements** of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are **again entangled** in them and are overcome, the **last state has become worse for them than the first**."").
 - 2. So, despite all the excitement and pleasure we believe we see in sin, we need to listen to God who warns us that it is artificial, lies, deception, and will produce only slavery and death, like a fish hooked to a fishing line whose end is the **livewell**—which in my boat means **death**.
- II. **Satan controls temptation for maximum effect.**
 - A. A good fisherman learns all he can about the fish he wants to catch and the lake he is fishing to maximize his effectiveness.
 - 1. He analyzes the data on the weather, the lake, where people are catching fish, what the fish are hitting, when they are most active, and, therefore, what makes fish most vulnerable.
 - 2. He knows the layout, as best he can, of the areas he fishes (i.e., how a tree lays in the water, how deep, where the limbs are, etc.)
 - 3. The reason a fisherman can learn many of these things is because fish present this data by their **actions**, by what **instinct drives them to do**.

4. So, if I want to catch Crappie, I am going to go on certain day, to certain spots, and use certain hooks, and specific color jigs because the fish have shown these to be effective.
 - B. Like an expert fisherman, Satan analyzes you, what you reveal, to present the right color, shape, etc., of temptation to entice you to bite—to strike without thought—like a fish at artificial bait!
 - 1. Fish have no real choice. Whether they hit my artificial bait is not a moral decision.
 - a. As much as PETA might like, they cannot teach fish in the lake to avoid my jig!
 - b. But, we are not fish, creatures designed by God to be driven without thought by instinct, but are made in His image and capable of controlling ourselves and determining not to “bite” at temptation (1 Thess. 4:3-8 – “For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you **should abstain** from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you **should know** how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; ⁶ that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. ⁷ For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in **holiness**. ⁸ Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, who has also given us His Holy Spirit.”).
 - c. Note the moral nature of our call—that holiness and sexual purity is what we **should** do!
 - 2. And something to ponder is that a fish, especially a crappie, will not bite a jig that does not look right.
 - a. If the rubber jig slides down on the hook a bit, or if there is grass, algae, a leaf, etc., on it, it means a crappie will not bite it!
 - i. I guess that is because minnows, etc., do not swim around with their head detached from their body, or with grass/leaves attached to them!
 - ii. So, though they do not have a book of instructions to warn them, they get that right.
 - b. But here is the thing. If I fix the jig or clean the trash off it and throw it back to the same place, that same fish that passed it up before will often bite and be caught.
 - 3. Because of Satan’s deceptiveness, God has warned us and showed us how to spot the fake, the artificial bait!
 - a. God has shown us the process (Jas. 1:14-15 – “But each one is tempted when he is **drawn away by his own desires and enticed**. ¹⁵ Then, when **desire has conceived**, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, **brings forth death**.”).
 - i. We know what is going on with our desires when we are being drawn away.
 - b. He has told us what sin is and its end so we can know temptation when we are faced with it (Gal. 5:19-21 – “Now the deeds of the **flesh** are **evident**, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, ²⁰ idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, ²¹ envying, drunkenness, carousing, **and things like these**, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”).
 - c. He has shown the way Satan works in deception, such as with Eve (Gen. 3) and David concerning Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11), for us to study and be prepared.
 - d. He has given us a **conscience** to warn us, which people can and sometimes do ignore, even to our own eternal detriment (1 Tim. 4:1-2).
 4. Since we are not fish driven by instinct, and **we do have an instruction book** where God explains sin and temptation and warns us time and again, and we have Jesus to look to for strength, we have what we need to resist!
- C. So, when the Devil sets that next temptation in front of us, we need to remember that even a *fish* will let messed up, trashy bait pass by! And we are much smarter than a fish, especially since we have been enlightened by God’s grace in Christ! So, let it pass!

- **III. Despite all that Satan does to allure and deceive, YOU determine if you take the bait!**
 - A. Fish are guided by instinct, not reason.
 1. They do not decide to be active, or passive based on the weather, whether they want to eat based on their weight, etc.
 2. They act without thought—they *react* to stimuli in the way God has designed them to.
 - a. You don't even have to hide the hook.
 - b. The glitz—the color, shape, size, and motion of the bait—is what triggers a fish.
 - B. But, again, we are *not* fish. Sheep, maybe, in need of guidance, but not fish!
 - 1. God in Christ has **set us free** from the **slavery of sin**, from being ruled by our fleshly desires (Rom. 6:17-18, 22 – “But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed,¹⁸ and **having been freed from sin**, you became **slaves of righteousness**...²² But now having been **freed from sin** and **enslaved to God**, you derive your **benefit**, resulting in **sanctification**, and the **outcome, eternal life**.”).
 - 2. By God's work in Christ, you and I can and should choose righteousness.
 - a. You can **choose to ignore** God's work and enslave yourself again to the flesh, which is death (Rom. 8:5-8 – “For those who live according to the **flesh** set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit.⁶ For **to be carnally minded is death**, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.⁷ Because the carnal mind is **enmity against God**; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be.⁸ So then, **those who are in the flesh cannot please God**.”).
 - b. Or, you can embrace God's grace and as a child of God choose to follow the Spirit, follow righteousness, which is life (Rom. 8:12-14 – “Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh.¹³ For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but **if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live**.¹⁴ For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are **sons of God**.”).

CONCLUSION:

1. So, never forget that:
 - A. Satan is fishing for you with artificial, false, bait that is not real and only produces death. So, beware! There is a lot of artificial bait out there. And every one of them has a hook!
 - B. Christ draws you with love, grace, and eternal life, and through Him there is freedom to overcome Satan “because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world” (1 Jn. 4:4).
2. Paul summed it up well (Rom. 6:23 – “For the **wages of sin is death**, but the **free gift of God is eternal life** in Christ Jesus our Lord.”).
3. Of course, God knows that though I/you hear His warnings, that we know the clues to see temptation's flaws, and that it truly has only death to offer, yet sometimes we still choose to bite, to sin, and often more than once.
4. So, in God's wonderful grace forgiveness and life is found.
 - A. It is offered to the Christian who humbles him/herself, changes their mind about sin (repents), and seeks God's grace through prayer.
 - B. It is offered to the sinner outside of Christ who will choose Christ today in F-R-C-Bp.
 - C. Will you choose Christ today?