

## “Missing the Target”

I, like many preachers, typically take Mondays off; as time to step away from studying and preparing and teaching lessons and spend it instead running errands with the wife/family, mowing the lawn and/or catching up on that “around-to-it” list, or just tending to other necessary matters that got pushed aside for “work” the previous week. For me and aside from the things previously mentioned, that means some FISHING, or at least tinkering with or shopping for (and usually purchasing) more tackle! So, after a very busy and mentally exhausting several days, I went to bed early Sunday evening and awoke early Monday morning.... eager and ready to fish! Though I hadn’t been on the water hardly at all several days, the last few times I did had been abysmal failures. But for the fisherman, “hope springs eternal” that the next time that new bait (or three!) will be just the ticket, or that perhaps the weather conditions will all coalesce perfectly to yield a kayak/boat full of success. But back to the specifics of this particular Monday’s efforts...

Even in the Eastern Time Zone of Indiana, it’s still dark at 4:30 AM. No worries though, they might actually bite better before dawn’s early light, and being the experienced angler that I am, fishing in the dark, though more challenging, is “no hill for a stepper!” So I slid my bark into the water as silently as possible, stepped in and sat down also as quietly as possible, and paddle away. The first few casts were not only non-productive, they weren’t, as best as I could tell, exactly where I intended (I’m usually very accurate in such matters). But, I chalked it up to not having been on the water for several days, and perhaps the pre-dawn breeze was contributing also, and pressed on.

However, after three consecutive casts missed the mark sufficiently to snag three separate docks/decks- and each subsequently produced line/hooks/rod snafus, I was begging to get frustrated. Either my skills had drastically diminished, or something was wrong. So I flicked on the small light attached to the bill of my cap and began investigating, which wasn’t easy even with the light since the rod and reel I was currently using were both almost black, and the line was black! But after a few minutes, the potential “issue” was spotted. When I re-spoiled this particular reel several days ago, rather than threading the fine and limp new line through the last “eye” on the rod-tip, I had managed to run it through the gap between the “eye” and the braces by which it was attached to the rod. So I quickly cut off the lure, rethreaded the line THROUGH the eye, and retied. Viola! The accuracy of my casts instantly returned. Though I didn’t catch a single fish, I also didn’t get “hung-up” by a single errant cast the rest of the morning either.

It was a tiny mistake of only a few millimeters. One that I had failed to notice, and until the conditions got more challenging and demanding, one that hadn’t caused any significant problems. But having to detangle the mess from three straight errant casts WAS a problem. The original mistake WASN’T hard or costly to correct, and yielded immediate resolution, but still yet had to be done. From these things, a few **spiritual lessons** can be gleaned:

1. Even small mistakes can create BIG problems, cf. Gal.2:12. Peter ate with some Gentiles, and then later wouldn’t or at least didn’t. He, obviously, didn’t think much on or of it at the time. But his *hypocrisy* led to apostasy for several who should have

known and done better, Gal.2:13. A few people being offended or getting their feelings hurt by eating or not eating with them is much different from the apostasy of “*men of high reputation*” who were regarded as “*pillars*” of the church (not that the original “problem” wasn’t sinful or significant, just that additionally caused much larger issues).

2. Failing to correctly identify the real problem usually leads to false assumptions about its true cause, and therefore potential “solutions” are doomed to failure for the simple reason that they don’t address the real problem. In the (true) story from which the lessons emerge, I kept trying to adjust my casts for windage, and was about to also change lures, but neither of those solutions would have addressed let alone solved the real problem. As per Peter’s hypocrisy in Gal.2:12-13, a even bigger “mess” that did occur would have resulted **IF** Paul had **NOT**: 1) known/correctly identified the real issue (apparently by/through the Holy Spirit’s “*revelation*,” cf. Gal.2:2), realized its already limited destructive effect, and perceived its even greater potential to become a much larger catastrophe; and, 2) dealt with the situation directly and immediately with both *sound logic*, Gal.2:14b-15 and *sound doctrine*, Gal.2:16.
3. Most problems- small or large, are easier to *solve* than it is to *resolve* the messes they create. In my fishing situation, the problem of the misguided line was simple enough to correct: cut off the lure, re-guide the line properly through the last eye of the rod, and retie the lure to it. Easy. But this easy-to-correct problem (once correctly identified) produced three “messes” from errant casts involving several minutes of paddling over to “unhang” snagged lures- which are surprisingly hard to even find and free in the dark, the frustration of untangling black line on black rod/reel from black treble hooks on a black lure in the dark, and all the confusion, frustration, and “work” (as opposed to “fishing”) that went with it. As to Peter in Gal.2, fortunately Paul correctly identified and addressed the “problem” and Peter, Barnabas, and the others involved *resolved* the “messes” they had made by repentance and changed behavior (as there is no further mention of this issue, and Peter later wrote of Paul as “*our beloved brother*,” cf. 2Pet.3:15).

See? You can learn a lot from just fishing- it’s no wonder the Lord chose at least four of them to be part of His twelve disciples! But seriously, “Missing the Target” usually has a *cause* that needs to be correctly identified and appropriately dealt with in a timely manner to prevent it from producing even greater damage. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at [southportcofc.org](http://southportcofc.org))