

If you don't know me, my name is Alyssa Overcash. I started here at Cook's back in December as the Director of Community Engagement. In February our Church Administrator, Cheryl, retired and my role transitioned to include both positions. I don't really know what my title is anymore but I'm really loving being a part of the community here at Cook's.

A few weeks ago, Bev Weldy called me and asked me for a pastor's number to ask her to preach for Women's Sunday. I guess that pastor said no because the next phone call I got from her was asking me to preach! So, if you were expecting an ordained minister or bible scholar, I apologize. But I'm a believer that God can speak through anyone, so here we go.

“Come, follow me, and I will make you Fishers of Men”

Matthew 4:19

What does that mean.... “Fishers of Men”? I made this cute image with a Woman fly fishing (since its women's Sunday) but like when Jesus says this, he's not actually talking about fishing is he?? Because I'm awful at fishing. My dad used to take my brothers and I and while I enjoy the peacefulness, I never quite got the hang of it. My oldest brother on the other hand is an excellent fisherman, specifically fly fishing. He lived in California for years and would send photos of the most beautiful locations and the fish he caught. And not long ago when we were fishing in Georgia, he was teaching Oakley about fish and letting her touch one. She loved it! She was feeding them with bread and having the time of her life. Good thing her uncle Austin was teaching her because here mama does not like fish. They're slimy and stinky. During that trip we were on the boat and he was fishing off the side. He got a tug on his line and reeled it in. Everyone was so excited and then the fish flopped RIGHT OFF OF THE HOOK into the boat!! I screamed so loud and it scared Oakley so much that she cried....and the rest of the trip she wouldn't get near a fish!

So clearly, I just don't love the whole analogy of fishing. When you're fishing, you're using a lure (usually fake) to pretend that it's a yummy meal for these fish. The lures are bright, shiny, and very attractive so that the fish get deceived and caught.... WELL that doesn't feel like that's what we're called to do. I don't want to be that kind of fisher of men.... But I've been thinking about it. What happens when you use something real as a lure...a real worm, small fish, my dad used to use crickets (ew). But what happens when you use something real, something authentic? You typically catch more fish, right? But the conditions have to be right, the fish have to be biting, you have to meet them where they

are, you have to be patient. THAT...That's the part of fishing in this analogy that makes sense to me.

In the scripture it says "follow me and I will make you fishers of men" I believe this means if we follow him, if we are authentic and patient, if we meet others where we are, then they will see Jesus through us and also want to follow him. We're not called to use hooks and gimmicks and pretend to be something we're not to win people to Christ, we are called to love them and show them who Jesus was through our words and our actions.

I learned about Jesus' love through many different people in my life but specifically I want to tell you about some of the Women that have impacted my life, a few women that I believe are true fishers of men.

My grandmother on my dad's side, we called her Nanny. Betty Ruth was her name and she loved big. She had this big glassed-in porch and welcomed anyone and everyone...except maybe if you weren't a brave's fan.... You would leave her house laughing and probably full from her mac and cheese. There are so many things I loved about her but one thing I admired the most is that she read her bible every night and not only that, she wrote in the margin's names and notes of her family, friends, people she met at the grocery store. She prayed for each of those names in the margins each night. And she didn't leave it there. If you asked her to pray for something she would note it down, pray for it, and follow up. She made sure that your prayers were heard and that you knew you were loved not only by her but by God. She was a fisher of men from her front porch.

And then there's my mom. Now when I was growing up my mom and dad didn't always go to church. When we were very young, we were involved in a local church and they invited their Sunday school class to their house one day. Not a single couple showed up. That really hurt them and they turned away from the church for a while. My mom didn't let that stop her from showing God's love to others. It maybe even fueled her more. We got back involved in church when we were teenagers and after Wednesday night church a lot of us went to a local BBQ joint. She always made sure everyone was invited. Her car was always loaded with our friends, making sure no one got left out. My mom was a fisher of men despite how she was treated.

When I went to college, I maybe strayed a little bit. I'm from the Atlanta area and I went to college 3 hours south in Tifton, Ga. So, I had lots of freedom. The first semester I spent having a little too much fun, my grades dropped, my friendships became shallow, and I just wasn't who I wanted to be. Then steps in in Mrs. Penny Chestnut. She was the leader of our Baptist Collegiate Ministry. The first time I met her, she invited me to a free supper. I was a college student; all you had to do was say free food and I was there. That

night changed my life. We ate really well, I met lifelong friends, and stood in a room full of college students worshipping God. Mrs. Penny has this huge smile that lights up the room and I can't tell you what she said that night, but I went back every week and soon I remembered who I was in Christ. That one night and that first encounter with Mrs. Penny changed the trajectory of my life. Mrs. Penny is a fisher of men on a college campus.

Fast Forward to 2016, I moved to North Carolina for a job at a church. I worked in that church for 8 years. In that time, I met some of my favorite people. Specifically, I met one of my favorite women who has influenced me maybe more than she knows. She was the Children's Ministry director. She's the reason I have such good Children's times, I learned everything I know from her. Kristi McClellan is someone that you want to be around. She's not only a ton of fun but so very kind. She has the best heart and wants everyone to know Jesus. In my time knowing her I've seen her teach so many students about God and his love for them. She has 2 daughters and has raised them to show God's love as well. Having someone that has gone before me and can help guide me in all things work, relationships, and now motherhood is so special. Kristi is a fisher of men to all of those around her.

All of these influential women in my life have some things in common. They show the love of Jesus by being KIND, by being WELCOMING, and by simply TELLING OTHERS ABOUT HIM whether its through their words or actions. They are authentic and they show up for those around them. That is who we're called to be as a church. I truly believe that is the way to bring others to Jesus, to be fishers of men. To simply be welcoming and speak the truth of the gospels. Now of course you can't stop there... you need to build the relationship and begin discipleship, but the very first impact matters so much.

I think Cook's is doing a phenomenal job at this. I can already tell there's going to be many more influential women become a part of my story that are in this church. Each of you, each of us, are called to be fishers of men whether that's In our homes, on our front porch, to our families, in our jobs, or your school campus, and right here in this sanctuary. Let's be welcoming, authentic, and tell everyone about Jesus' love for them.

A former pastor of mine and good friend used to end each sermon with this "Jesus loves you and there's nothing you can do about it, but you get to leave here and do something with it"...So I'm asking you what are you going to do with Jesus' Love for you?