

## **An important part of first-century fishing was mending the nets**

**By Bob Young**

When Jesus called James and John from their work as fishermen, they were mending their nets (Mark 1:19-20). An important principle can be observed. Mending nets was an important part of being a fisherman.

Paul uses the same word in Eph. 4 when he describes the work of leaders: **perfecting** Christians for the work of ministry. Some translations say **equipping** or **preparing**. In the first century, the word was used of a doctor setting a fracture so it would heal. The word means to make sure that everything is working, ready, and useful.

The contemporary church too often tries to do God's work without adequate preparation, without equipping. Equipping the church, keeping the nets mended, is the work of leaders. Leaders are responsible for making sure the church is equipped and ready for the work of ministry.

One area where many churches fail to "mend the nets" is in evangelism. Most churches are filled with members who are ill-prepared for the ministry of sharing God's Word. Further, most churches and church leaders do not have a clearly developed plan for preparing the saints, for equipping the body of Christ. Why is the harvest not reaped? Why are the nets not filled and overflowing? Perhaps the nets need to be mended and prepared!

Have you heard the saying, "the chain is no stronger than its weakest link"? The same is true of fishing nets. "The net is no stronger than its weakest spot." What good is a net with huge holes in it? The strength of the church for ministry and service, the effectiveness of the church in fishing for people depends on the strength of the net – no weak places, no holes, no gaps.

Identifying problem areas and mending the net are often difficult. Introspection is difficult, but essential. The use of nets in fishing for fish illustrates an important principle for the church that is serious about fishing for people. Often the problem is not what is done, how it is done, who is doing it, where or when. The problem is that the net needs mending.

What kind of net-mending is needed in your church? Where is the fishing net weak? Why is the net ineffective in fishing for people? Jesus sends us forth as fishers. Let us seek to be fishers of people, making sure our nets are ready. Jesus did not give us impossible commands. Everywhere we go, let us make disciples who will make more disciples.

And, if you need to mend your nets, begin now!