

Why Target Sportsmen?

Hunting and fishing are pursuits of men throughout their lifetime. Many sports are relegated to young men with most from middle age on only becoming spectators. However, hunting and fishing is done from the youngest to the elderly in our society. It gives a strong common bond to reach men.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service reported a total of 14,974,534 paid license holders for 2009 (last year available). Almost without exception this number rises every year. This is a huge demographic segment of our society and gives us a great opportunity to use the outdoors to reach men.

How do you start a sportsman's Bible study? Allow me to give you 10 things that I think are critical.

1- Have a Passion to Reach Men with the Gospel.

Anything eternal accomplished in reaching men must begin with a heart and passion for reaching them with the gospel. Men must realize that their hunting or fishing partner needs Jesus. This means realizing that even the most successful sportsmen have this need.

Having a passion to reach men is nothing more than fleshing out the Great Commission in our lives. Also, keep in mind that the Apostle Paul said *"...I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. 23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel..." 1 Corinthians 9:22-23 NASB*

2- Have a Passion for the Outdoors.

The reason this is important is because men can spot a pretender a

mile away. If you have this passion then you can use it to reach other men who have the same interest. Men who are passionate about hunting and fishing have a great opportunity to reach others.

3- Surround Yourself with Christian Men of Like Passions.

Find a group of Christian men who have both a passion for souls and an interest in the outdoors and surround yourself with them. Bring up the subject of reaching others by the outdoors. Expect enthusiasm! Find a core group of from 2-5 men to begin to pray about starting a sportsman's Bible study.

4- Intentionally and Unapologetically Target Men.

Some studies say if we reach the men in the family we will reach the whole family 95% of the time. So do not be afraid to be intentional about targeting men and do not apologize. As a part of this you must realize that men are not an easy group to reach.

By intentionally targeting men we will have positive impacts on their wife and children as they come to faith and grow in Christ.

5- Commit As A Core Group to Begin a Bible Study.

Having a passion and never acting on it is often a source of frustration. Making a rock solid commitment to beginning this study is a critical step. Nothing has ever been finished that was not begun. It takes work, time and energy to get on task and maintain the focus of a class. Once you have made the commitment, do not allow distractions to sidetrack you.

6- Set the Time and Day You Will Meet.

While I would suggest using this as a part of Sunday Morning Sunday School, I realize that other times are also viable. Do not be afraid to think outside the box about when you will have your class. The great advantage of Sunday morning is that they will probably stay for worship with their families. I also think, if at all possible, it should be a part of the church's overall outreach effort. Also, it is a good idea to meet at the church if possible because that is ultimately where you want the men to join you.

7- Decide on the Curriculum you will use.

The question that you need to ask concerning this is, *"What will it look like in 3, 6 or 9 months or a year?"* There are a lot of short term Bible studies out there. However, most are not specifically for outdoorsmen. There are a lot of 5-8 week video sessions that do target outdoorsmen. But what will you do after a few weeks?

When I asked this question I kept coming back to is the class sustainable from the curriculum standpoint. The answer kept coming up no. That is why we wrote *The Sportsman's Seasons*. This material allows you to sustain your Sportsman Bible study for the long haul. (www.thesportsmansseasons.com)

8- Do Not Make it Just Another Class.

Outdoorsmen are comfortable in camo and casual attire. Give them permission to wear it and feel good about it. Educate the church concerning this as well. Let the outdoorsman know this is not church

in the normal way but especially for them.

They also are comfortable when the classroom has an outdoor theme. Make sure that it is inviting for them. You may want to have coffee brewing.

During the course of the class realize that you are going to chase the proverbial rabbit, duck, deer, turkey, and that bass that got away will be brought up. The main point is that these men realize they can be Christians, have fun, and enjoy the outdoors as well. Encourage the men to build friendships among the group.

9- Getting Ready to Launch.

The core group, along with others who need to be involved, should set a target date to start the new class. It is important that you have enough time to find prospects, make the contacts needed, promote the event and make it a successful launch. There is a balance between having time and letting the initial excitement fade. Build the energy and then pull the trigger for the launch, but do not allow too much time.

There are several elements to the launch. You have already set the time and date of the launch. Now you need to get a list of prospects for the class. Ask the men to give names, addresses and phone number of other outdoorsmen who are not in church. Build this list constantly and consciously. Involve men that you might otherwise overlook to help and the wives of non-church men as well. Many have husbands, whose wives would love to have them in church with them, that fit this profile.

Develop material you need to promote the launch and make it available.

10- Getting the Word Out.

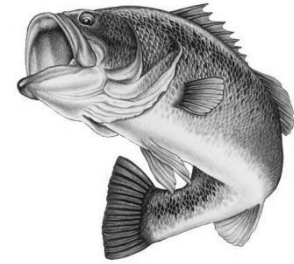
By getting the word out, I actually mean two things. First, get busy contacting the prospects. Set up a team to call, visit and invite the men to the launch. Visit the local sporting goods stores and ask to post a flyer. Promote, promote, promote! Build the excitement. This will also be something that needs to be sustained after the launch. Keep putting the sportsman's Bible study before church guest and friends in the work place, hunting clubs, etc. Encourage the men to bring their friends to the class and to help promote.

The second meaning is the fact we need to get the Word of God out. If all you do is meet and talk about fishing or hunting you have not succeeded. The Word of God being taught consistently is critical. This will be what changes the hearts of these men and helps them realize their need of a Savior.

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How to Start a Sportsman's Bible Study Outreach



By Edgar Pierce