

Be a Berean!

The Bereans...received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day (Acts 17:11). "Be a Berean" will regularly cover topics that arise during Lockport Alliance Bible classes. Contact Franklyn Pfeil—pfeilmail@yahoo.com—with questions or comments.

"twinkle all the way"

I might be theologically wrong on John 21:11, but I don't care to be right all the time. Being right has tired me out.

Sometimes, boys just want to have fun.

We have an aluminum fishing boat. It was just a utility boat, light gray color, until we rigged it up and called it a bass boat. Then we named our killer bass boat "153 Fish." On the back, to the left of the motor, we attached the big black numbers--"153"--with a fish symbol. To the right of the motor, we attached "John 21:11," where we found 153 fish in the first place:

*So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, **full of large fish, 153 of them.** And although there were so many, the net was not torn.*

Actually, the part about John 21:11 that I love the best is the word "big"--they caught 153 big fish! Because any fisherperson will tell you that you can have the 152 if you'll just let me keep the big one!

When I tow the boat to this lake or that creek, not many people beep their horns or wave or do anything to acknowledge the whacko with the Bible verse on the back of his boat. Not even the people with fish on their cars beep or wave. Christians can be a humorless lot.

The guys on motorcycles are about the only ones who note my Spirit-baptized boat. They often beep, and raise a clenched fist in solidarity; or flash the old "One Way--Jesus" sign with an index finger. Christian bikers just want to have fun.

I got a fish for my little truck, too. The reason I put a fish there is to cure me of road rage. Because it's pretty unsightly, with a fish on the back of your truck, to give some other motorist (after he's cut you off) another variation of the one-finger salute. Not once have I exhibited road rage since the day I first put the fish there about five years ago. I highly recommend one for you if you are prone to indiscreet sign language.

I've also found, because of my Bible-boat, that there are a lot of Bible whackos out there. One guy I met at a boat launch contended that he always has better luck off the right side of his boat, "Because the Bible says 'Cast to the right.'" (1) At first I thought he was kidding. But as I continued to listen to him, it became clear that this yahoo was serious.

I constantly tell my Bible classes to take the Bible absolutely literally--unless the passage shouts out "Symbol!" or "Figure of Speech!" or "Literary Device!" But in this instance I was compelled by the demands of logic to say to him, "Casting to the right was just for that day. On another day, Jesus might have said, 'Cast the net on the left.'"

"Jesus might have, but He didn't. He said, "Cast to the right."

Oh boy. You start to see what we Bible teachers are up against out there.

Another guy I ran into fancied himself a Bible teacher. He was at the campsite next to ours in a state park. Seeing the verse on my boat, he ambles over and starts to exegete and explicate John 21:11 for me. Finally, he gets to his point: "The number 153 is, at any given time, the number of nations there are in the world."

Oh boy.

He continued: "So this is a specific quantification of the promise to Peter that Jesus would make them 'fishers of men.' There are 153 nations to be 'caught.'"

"How do you know there are, at any given time, 153 nations?"

"It's obvious from the context."

"Perhaps," I said noncommittally. It was getting chilly. So, making up an excuse, I told him I was going to go grab a sweatshirt.

As I walked toward my tent, I heard this flaming nut job say to his wife, "You see what we Bible teachers are up against. There's a perfect example of a person who just refuses to see the light!"

When all the while, I'd just thought John 21:11 meant that, even with the cross behind him, Jesus was still on the job--still providing for his own; still leading, feeding, guiding, guarding, teaching, caring, watching out, and watching over.

And I thought the "153 fish" was a humorous touch; that either Peter was anal-retentive or obsessive-compulsive enough to actually count each fish; or--which is even funnier-- that the Holy Spirit was showing off the uses of omniscience, with a bit of a wink and a little dab of derring-do!

My pastor this week was teaching about Christmas. He spoke eloquently about its spiritual impact. But then, bless his heart, he lowered his sights for just a second and he spoke about the sheer delight and wonder and anticipation it holds. Do whatever you must, he told us, to maintain a sense of the wonder of it all.

In that spirit, towards that end, a modest proposal: Let's not get so super-spiritual that we forget to beep at the brother with the Bible verses on his boat as we pass his sorry rig on the Thruway.

Let's not forget that God made some Bible verses which are almost incomprehensible--until we imagine them spoken by a Man with a twinkle in his eye.

Let's not forget that He who made the cosmos and every star therein was He who sent out a single one of them--with orders to twinkle, all the way from Babylon to Bethlehem. (2)

(1) John 21:6; (2) Matthew 2:1-2, 8-10

It is our fervent hope that you will 'be a Berean' by attending one of these Bible-based classes this week—

"Behold"--Sunday at 9:45

"Having a Mary Spirit"--Sunday at 9:45

"Psalms for Guys"--Sunday at 9:45