

## In + the Bible:

John 3:16

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

Romans 10:9

If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

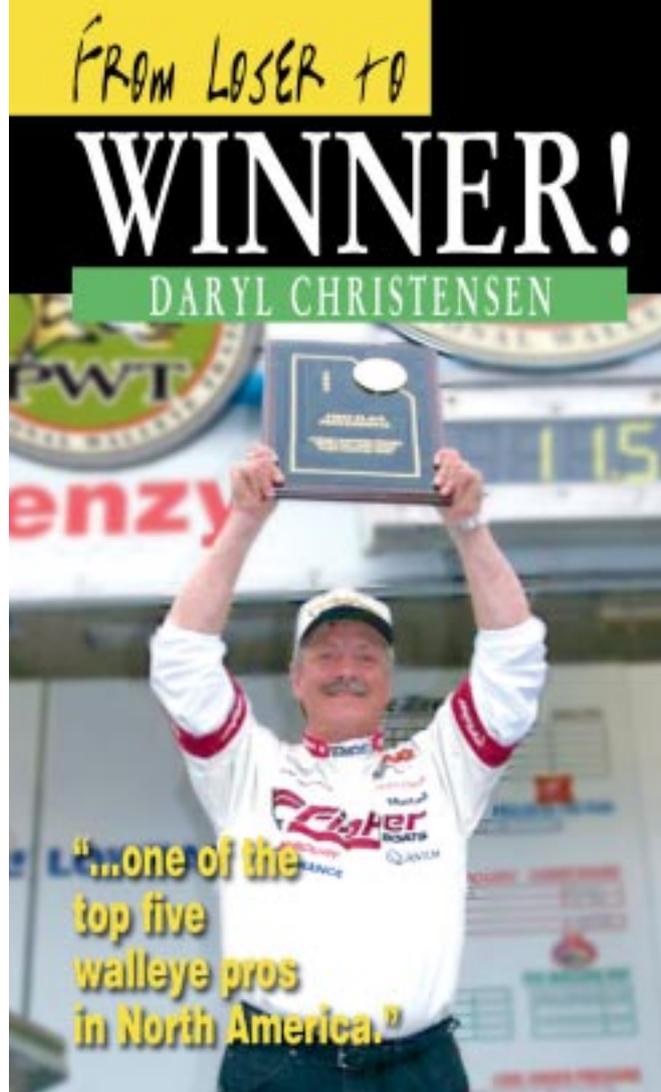
Romans 5:6-8

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

John 10:9-11

[Jesus speaking] "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

\*Mark Dorn heads the RCL Walleye Tour for FLW Outdoors and is the former director of the In-Fisherman Professional Walleye Trail.



When it comes to tournament angling, Daryl Christensen probably ranks as one of the top five walleye pros in North America. His versatility as an angler allows him to consistently place well on a variety of waters while his on-water ethics and character have earned Daryl the respect of his fellow pros.

—Mark Dorn\*

(former director of In-Fisherman Walleye Trail)

## Daryl's Story:

It seems like only yesterday when I caught my first walleye. In fact it was almost 50 years ago, yet I remember every detail of it. I was five years old.

Born and raised in an old Midwestern river town, it was only natural that I fish with my dad, a fly fisherman, that day. As my father drifted a streamer fly in the current of the main river channel, catching walleyes, I bobber-fished for pan fish in a calm, backwater slough. Although I was catching fish, I wanted to get out by Dad and catch some of those big walleyes. The problem was that in order to get out there, I would have to wade across the gravel bar and that was forbidden.

I soon lost interest in the pan fish and began turning over rocks, trying to catch crayfish, but mostly I just got wet, muddy and stinky from the river's mucky bottom. I remember crying out to my dad to let me come out by him. He finally relented and picked up his muddy little boy and sat me on a big granite rock next to him by the river's edge.

He handed me his pole and within minutes I caught my first walleye.

## Fairy Tales and Goblins

Today I am a professional fisherman, author and speaker. I am also one of the top money-winners on the In-Fisherman Professional Walleye Trail and a Walleye Super Pro Champion. One could say that my life has a fairy-tale ending from a fairy-tale beginning, and it would be hard to argue. Yet, like most fairy tales that start out peaceful and end up perfect, the middle is filled with villains, goblins and evil. That would pretty much describe my life.

Like most guys growing up in a small, rural town, I spent most of my early years hunting, fishing and trapping. After a two-year stint in the Army in the late 1960's, I returned to my roots, got married, bought a house and settled into the routine of working, fishing and hunting, but not necessarily in that order. I had ten jobs in ten years, mainly because I didn't like working for anyone. Socializing meant heading to the tavern after work and staying there until it closed at 2 a.m.

Bass tournaments were starting up at the time and I dreamed of one day becoming a professional fisherman. But it was expensive and I had a wife and five kids, couldn't keep a job and spent too much money "socializing." I knew I had the talent to catch fish, but the villains of alcohol and poverty left me with low self-esteem and little hope for the future.

Against my family's protests, I bought a fishing boat and began guiding, fishing in tournaments and doing some outdoor writing.

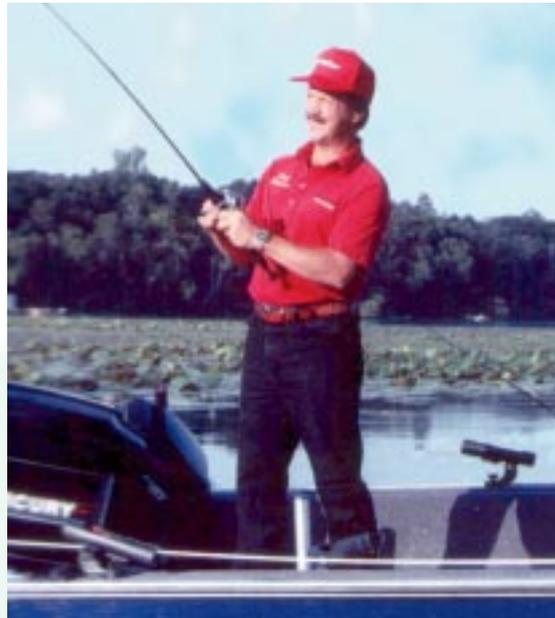
After six years I had built a successful guide business, won several bass tournaments and published more than 500 articles on hunting and fishing. The following season, against most people's good judgment, I quit it all to become a full-time professional walleye tournament angler. Little did I know how much my life would change by making that decision.

The year was 1988 and I was 39 years old. I won two tournaments that year, made more money than I had ever made before, made commercials on national television, wrote a book on fishing, secured sponsorships for the following year and was flying high. Yet when autumn came and the season was over, the goblins of discouragement and depression came knocking at my door. I was drinking more than ever and I had a hole in my heart that you could steer a bass boat through. I couldn't understand why.

## A NEW FRIEND

During the tournament season, I met Mark Dorn who worked for *In-Fisherman* and was the previous year's *Angler of the Year*. I had a lot of respect for Mark even though he frequently asked me to come to the *Fellowship of Christian Anglers Society* meetings that were held at each tournament. Believe me, I wanted nothing to do with religion. I considered most religious people to be hypocrites. Besides, the lake was my church and I loved and worshipped nature as my god. I felt no need to be ruled by a God who was just waiting for me to mess up (which I did constantly) so He could send me to hell.

But Mark was persistent and invited me to a retreat which would be attended by Al and Ron Lindner, who were fishing heroes of mine. Thinking it would be good for my career, I accepted. The first thing I learned from the speaker that night was that God was not waiting to send me to hell, but that He loved me so much that He sent His only Son to die for my mistakes (John 3:16). The second thing I learned was that all I had to do to get right with God was to accept in my heart what the Son had done for me and I would have eternal life (Romans 10:9).



The only question I had was how a holy God could accept a dirty sinner like me. I had spent most of my life denying His existence, living my life as I wanted, worshipping the creation instead of the Creator and breaking His commandments at every turn. But I then heard that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:6-8). There were more than 100 men there that night but when the speaker asked those who wanted to receive God's free gift of salvation to stand up, I was the first out of my seat.

Just like my earthly dad picked up his grubby, dirty son and sat him on the rock by the river so many years ago, God picked me up out of the dirt and grime of a sinful, hopeless life, cleaned me up and set me on the Rock of Christ. He took away the drinking, the depression, the despair and gave me a new attitude, and a new life. Jesus said that He came to give us abundant life (John 10:9-11) and that is what I have in Him today.

## A REAL WINNER

I went from a hopeless sinner to a victorious winner—not because I win tournaments—but because today I have the hope and promise of eternal life through a relationship with Jesus Christ.

You can too, by praying a simple prayer like I did many years ago: *Jesus, I am a sinner, and I am sorry for the sins in my life. I ask You to forgive me and to come into my heart and into my life.*



*Thank You for Your free gift of salvation that was paid for me by Your death on the cross and the promise of eternal life through Your resurrection. Today, I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Amen.*

—Daryl Christensen

“In the early years of walleye tournament fishing, a small group of Christian Anglers, after hearing about similar meetings occurring on the B.A.S.S. circuit, began to meet and pray for a move of God. During

one of these early meetings held on a chilly May evening in Saginaw, Michigan we witnessed an answer to prayer. Daryl Christensen (considered one of the least likely candidates to attend one of these meetings) came strolling across the hotel courtyard, sat down as a fellow angler and shared his testimony. The seeds sown that chilly evening bore fruit later that year as Daryl committed his life to Jesus Christ at a Fishers of Men retreat. Daryl now helps to spread the same life changing message he heard that evening as Christian Angler meetings continue on all the major fishing circuits.”

—Mark Dorn

*This true story was adapted from an interview aired on the radio program, God's Great Outdoors. To learn more about GGO, call 1-877-TALKGGO (1-877-825-5446) or listen "online" anytime at: [www.ggoutdoors.org](http://www.ggoutdoors.org).*