



# SMALL GROUPS

## FALL MISSIONS WEEK

### Parable of the Fishless Fishermen

By John M. Drescher

#### Matthew 4:18-22 (ESV)

*"While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."*

Now it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen. And lo, there were many fish in the waters all around. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes filled with fish. And the fish were hungry.

Week after week, month after month, and year after year those who called themselves fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to fish, the abundance of fish, and how they might go about fishing. Year after year they carefully defined what fishing means, defended fishing as an occupation, and declared that fishing is always to be a primary task of fishermen.

Continually they searched for new and better methods of fishing and for new and better definitions of fishing. Further they said, "The fishing industry exists by fishing as fire exists by burning." They loved slogans such as "Fishing is the task of every fisherman," and "Every fisherman

is a fisher," and "A fisherman's outpost for every fisherman's club." They sponsored special meetings called "Fishermen's Campaigns" and "The Month for Fishermen to Fish." They sponsored costly nationwide and worldwide congresses to discuss fishing, to promote fishing and hear about all the ways of fishing such as the new fishing equipment, fish calls, and whether any new bait was discovered.

These fishermen built large, beautiful buildings called "Fishing Headquarters." The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish. One thing they didn't do, however—they didn't fish. In addition to meeting regularly, they organized a board to send out fishermen to other places where there were many fish. All the fishermen seemed to agree that what is needed is a board, which could challenge fishermen to be faithful in fishing. The board was formed by those who had the great vision and courage to speak about fishing, to define fishing, and to promote the idea of fishing in faraway streams and lakes where many other fish of different colors lived.

**“...THE BOARD HIRED STAFFS AND APPOINTED COMMITTEES AND HELD MANY MEETINGS TO DEFINE FISHING, TO DEFEND FISHING, AND TO DECIDE WHAT NEW STREAMS SHOULD BE THOUGHT ABOUT. BUT THE STAFF AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS DID NOT FISH.”**

Also the board hired staffs and appointed committees and held many meetings to define fishing, to defend fishing, and to decide what new streams should be thought about. But the staff and committee members did not fish.

Large, elaborate, and expensive training centers were built whose original and primary purpose was to teach fishermen how to fish. Over the years courses were offered on the needs of fish, the nature of fish, where to find fish, the psychological reactions of fish, and how to approach and feed fish. Those who taught had doctorates in fishology. But the teachers did not fish. They only taught fishing. Year after year, after tedious training, many were graduated and given fishing licenses. They were sent to do full-time fishing, some to distant waters that were filled with fish.

Some spent much study and travel to learn the history of fishing and to see faraway places where the founding fathers did great fishing in the centuries past. They lauded the faithful fishermen of years before who handed down the idea of fishing.

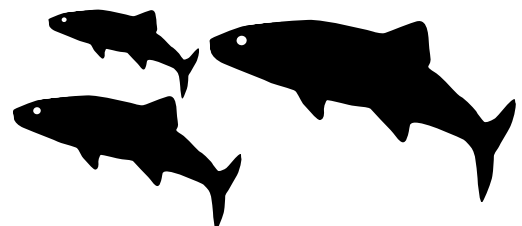
Further, the fishermen built large printing houses to publish fishing guides. Presses were kept busy day and night to produce materials solely devoted to fishing methods, equipment, and programs to arrange and to encourage meetings to talk about fishing. A speakers' bureau was also provided to schedule special speakers on the subject of fishing.

Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded. They were commissioned and sent to fish. But like fishermen back home they never fished. Like the fishermen back home they engaged in all kinds of other occupations. They built power plants to pump water for fish and tractors to plow new waterways. They made all kinds of equipment to travel here and there to look at fish hatcheries. Some also said they wanted to be part of the fishing party, but they felt called to furnish fishing equipment. Others felt their job was to relate to the fish in a good way so the fish would know the difference between good and bad fishermen. Others felt that simply letting the fish know they were nice, land-loving neighbors and how loving and kind they were was enough.

After one stirring meeting on “The Necessity for Fishing,” one young fellow left the meeting and went fishing. The next day he reported he had caught two outstanding fish. He was honored for his excellent catch and scheduled to visit all the big meetings possible to tell how he did it. So he quit his fishing in order to have time to tell about the experience to the other fishermen. He was also placed on the Fishermen's General Board as a person having considerable experience.

Now it's true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. Some lived near the water and bore the smell of dead fish every day. They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen's clubs and the fact that they claimed to be fishermen yet never fished. They wondered about those who felt it was of little use to attend the weekly meetings to talk about fishing. After all, were they not following the Master who said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men?”

Imagine how hurt some were when one day a person suggested that those who didn't catch fish were really not fishermen, no matter how much they claimed to be. Yet it did sound correct. Is a person a fisherman if, year after year, he never catches a fish?





# FISH·ER·MAN

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## Open It.

1. Have you ever felt like you know you should be living out your faith in a more active way, but aren't sure how or what to change? Explain.
  
2. What would happen if we mobilized the body of Christ to Biblical obedience, and every person who is a follower of Jesus obeyed His call to become a fisherman?
  
3. From the list of obstacles below, circle those that might apply to you as you impact others for Christ.
  - I have a fear of rejection.
  - My priorities are on other things right now; "I'm not ready yet."
  - I will pray for those who are good at sharing about Jesus. I am not good at it.
  - There is no big hurry. I'll do it later.
  - I don't enjoy fishing.

# Read It.

## Read Luke 19:10

1. In the text, what was the response of the men who Jesus called to himself?
2. A fisherman uses a net to catch fish. What does the net represent to the Christian?
3. Would you consider yourself to be someone who fishes? If so, how? If not, how might you make some adjustments in order to actively engage in fishing?

**“CHRIST'S MINISTERS ARE CALLED "FISHERS" OF MEN, AND ARE SAID TO "CATCH" MEN, MATTHEW 4:19; WHICH THEY DO BY CASTING AND SPREADING THE NET OF THE GOSPEL; THE GOSPEL IS THE NET; THE WORLD IS THE SEA INTO WHICH IT IS CAST; WHERE NATURAL MEN ARE IN THEIR ELEMENT, AS FISHES IN THE SEA: THE CASTING OF THE NET IS THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL; AND BY MEANS OF THIS SOULS ARE CAUGHT AND GATHERED IN TO CHRIST AND HIS CHURCHES, MATTHEW 13:47.”<sup>1</sup>**

Proverbs 11:30 (ESV) says, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.

4. What fruit might be produced when one lives a righteous life? How might others look to you and be impacted?



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5. As a tree produces nourishment and feeds those who pick from it, how does the fruit of a righteous person impact non-believers?
6. What is the correlation of wisdom to capturing souls?

**“THE WORDS [WHOEVER CAPTURES SOULS] ARE BY SOME RENDERED, ‘HE THAT ALLURES SOULS’ (I); WHICH IS DONE, NOT BY THE TERRORS OF THE LAW, BUT BY THE CHARMING VOICE OF THE GOSPEL; BY WHICH SOULS ARE DRAWN TO GOD AND CHRIST, AND BROUGHT AMONG HIS PEOPLE: AND ONE THAT IS AN INSTRUMENT OF ALL THIS HAD NEED BE “WISE”...HE WHO IS TO BE THE INSTRUMENT OF CONVERTING SINNERS MUST HAVE A MOUTH AND WISDOM TO ADDRESS THEM IN A PROPER MANNER...”<sup>2</sup>**

## Discuss:

1. We love to talk about evangelism and reaching out to the lost, but we must do more than just talk about it. Together as a group, discuss some ways that you can reach out to those around you.
2. Is God more concerned about catching fish or the action of fishing?





**FOOD FOR THOUGHT:** If Christ were to return to Earth today, would He find us (believers in general) fishing, in obedience to Him, or would he find us continually organizing, talking about winning souls, and making plans to be the best Church anywhere?<sup>3</sup>

3. What are some ways that you might develop into a fisher of men?
4. Recall your journey to saving faith in Jesus Christ. Who did the Lord use in your life to spread the net of the Gospel? How did that person do it?

### **MATTHEW 28:18–20 (ESV)**

**AND JESUS CAME AND SAID TO THEM, “ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH HAS BEEN GIVEN TO ME. GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED YOU. AND BEHOLD, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, TO THE END OF THE AGE.”**

#### **Footnotes:**

1 Exposition of the Entire Bible by John Gill [1746-63].

2 Exposition of the Entire Bible by John Gill [1746-63].

3 Heavenquestions.com