

Fishing: Theory versus Practice

by Brent Hunter

Jesus to you and me:

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

Now it came to pass that a group existed that called themselves fishermen and there were many fish in the waters about them. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes and the fish were hungry. Week after week and month after month and year after year the group that called themselves “fishermen” met in meetings and talked about those called to fish, the abundance of fish, and how we might go about fishing. Year after year they carefully defined what fishing meant, defended fishing as an occupation, and declared that fishing be the primary talk of fishermen. These fishermen built large beautiful buildings for local fishing headquarters and their plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and that everyone should fish. However, the one thing they did not do, they did not fish!

In addition to meeting regularly these men determined to send out fishermen to places where there were many fish. This sending committee was headed by those who had great vision and had courage to speak: about fishing and to promote the idea of fishing in far away streams and lakes held meetings to define fishing, to defend fishing, and to decide what new streams should be thought about. But the one thing the staff and the committee members did not do, they did not fish!

Large, elaborate 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 the fish, the nature of the fish, how to find fish, and the psychological effects of fishing. Those who taught had doctorates in “Fisheology”! But the teachers did not fish! They only taught about fishing.

Further, the fishermen built large printing houses to publish fishing guides. Presses were kept busy day and night to produce material solely devoted to fishing methods. A speakers' bureau was also organized to schedule special speakers on fishing. After one stirring meeting entitled “The Necessity Of Fishing,” two young men left the meeting and actually went fishing and one of them actually caught two fish! He was honored for his great catch and was scheduled to appear at all the big meetings to tell how he did it. So he quit fishing in order to have time to tell his experiences to the other fishermen!

Now it is true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. Some lived near the water and had to put up with the smell of dead fish. Some had to endure the ridicule of some who made fun of these fishermen's clubs because they claimed to be fishermen but they did not fish.

And they wondered about those who thought it was of little use to attend meetings and talk about fishing. I mean, after all, were they not following the Master who said, “Come and I will make you fishers of men”? Imagine their chagrin when someone actually suggested that they were not really “fishermen.” Yet it did make sense. Can we rightfully call a person a fisherman if year after year he never catches a fish?

Can a person really be following Jesus if he is not fishing?

EDITOR'S NOTE: I appreciate this parable on fishing that reminds us of the importance of trying to convert others in the world. Of course, there is great emphasis placed in the Bible on both congregational and personal edification (1 Cor. 12-14). But without a doubt we need to work harder at evangelizing those here and abroad.

The importance of making initial contacts and setting up Bible studies cannot be over emphasized. Brethren, if you will find a willing soul who will study with me upon your recommendation, then I will gladly teach him. You will find such interested people among your family, friends, co-workers, and recreational associates. God bless us as we strive to be fishers of men!

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