

A MISSION MINDED CHILDREN'S TALE

THE
FOOLISH FISHERMAN

BY ANN DUNAGAN

ADAPTED FROM THE MISSION CLASSIC,
"THE FISHLESS FISHERMAN" BY JOHN M. DRESCHER

Once upon a time in a quaint little village
lived a funny old man
in a simple seaside cottage
who called himself:
the Fisherman.

Every morning, the Fisherman awoke
to the sound of seagulls circling outside
over the sandy shore.

Opening his shutters,
he breathed the misty salty air
and admired the glorious sun
glistening on the gulf
of the horizon.

“Ah, yes!” he pleasantly sighed,
“What a lovely day it looks like it shall be
to faithfully fish for my Master.”

Looking into his wardrobe,
the Fisherman
wondered what he should wear.

He paused a moment
and admired the handsomely hand-carved halibut
so creatively chiseled onto the
wardrobe's driftwood drawers.

The funny old man then
selected with care
his fisherman clothes for the day.

He chose:
his favorite fishing shirt
(the one with the rainbow trout upon the pocket),
his rubber fishing pants
(the ones with the orange suspenders),
his warm woolen socks,
and his trusty green galoshes.

He glanced into his fish-shaped mirror and
donned his fisherman's hat.
And then – with perfect pride –
the old man picked up his
Fisherman's Guide.

Standing at attention,
with head forward and galoshes together,
the Fisherman held the precious book to his chest.

And then – with a perfect pledge –
(and he was quite proud of himself to be able to
say the whole verse without looking)
the Fisherman faithfully quoted the words of the
Fishin' Commission:

*“Like Fisherman-fathers before me, and
Grand-fisher grandfathers 'fore them,
I will carry on our fishin' tradition.
I'll live as a fisher of men.”*

And it was all very good.

Then, straightening his bow-tie
(because as everyone knows, all true fishermen must *always* wear a tie!),
the funny old man gathered-up his things,
locked-up his cottage, and began to
walk up the road.

He enjoyed the “slosh-slosh” sound-of-his-galoshes
as he trudged through the puddles of the village.
He enjoyed the “swish-swish” sound-of-his-rubber-pants
as he strolled along the sandy seaside coast.

He passed abandoned fishing boats
and long-neglected nets.
He passed a beach, a lake, and a stream.
He passed a forgotten creek.

He looked across the waters and
imagined the distant sands.
He gazed across the horizon and
dreamed of far-away lands.

He thought about fish, and
he prayed about fish;
and today, he was nearly certain that
he even saw
a fish,
jumping in the sea!

The Fisherman could hardly wait
to share his exciting report!

For today was Sunday,
and as was his weekly custom,
he was headed to the Clubhouse
for a meeting.

And oh, how the old man enjoyed these times, as he
gathered with all the fishermen and
all the fisherwomen, and
all the fisher-youth, and
all the fisher-children
of the village.

Every week,
they sang about fishing,
and they learned about fishing,
and they talked about great fishing tips
from their timeless
Fishing Guide.

And every week,
at the climax of the meeting as the Club would conclude,
they stood together
(side-by-side and arm-in-arm).
And then – with perfect precision –
they quoted their
Fishin’ Commission:

*“Like Fisherman-fathers before us, and
Grand-fisher grandfathers ‘fore them,
We will carry on our fishin’ tradition.
We’ll live as fishers of men.”*

And again, it was all very good.

But there was something quite strange,
and in-fact, rather odd.

For not one of these faithful fishermen,
or fisherwomen, or fisher-youth, or fisher-children
had ever tried to
fish.

* * *

Except for one time,
(and I think it was very long ago).

* * *

A famous fish-story has often been told of
one fervent fisherwoman
(who was so tremendously challenged by the urgent need to fish)
she did something that shocked
her whole Club:

She actually decided
to fish.

She went down to the water and
sat down on the dock.
And then – with perfect pursuit –
she put her fishing line down
into the water.

And, lo-and-behold, this
fervent fisherwoman caught
two fish!

When she shared her report at the next Club meeting,
everyone was amazed.

In fact,
they were all so amazed,
and so impressed,
they knew she was “called”
to help others.

So they sent her
to other Clubhouses, and
to Fishing Conferences, and even
to a Great College of Fishology
(where she was introduced as a remarkable fisherwoman
with considerable experience).

And for quite some time she was kept rather busy,
with big responsibilities, and
very important things
to do.

But she became so busy, and
so great,
that she never again could
find the time to
fish.

* * *

Slosh, slosh, slosh, slosh.

Swish, swish, swish.

The Fisherman trudged towards town.

With a pole in his hand and a hat on his head,
he looked towards the beach and the waves.

And then all of a sudden,
he stopped . . .

. . . as a very strange thought filled his mind.

He put down his pole,
and his net,
and his hat,
and he knelt by the ocean shore.

Could it be?

Was it right?

How could it be true?

Yet somehow, the strange thought did make sense.

For deep in his heart,
the Fisherman felt the Master Himself
asking a simple – but serious –
question:

*“Are you really a fisherman
if you’ve never tried to
fish?”*

* * *

With his head bowed low and his
hands clenched tight
the Fisherman’s eyes filled
with tears.

For he knew he had been foolish,
and he knew he had
to change.

Then he lifted his face and he
turned towards the sea,
as he saw something coming
towards shore:

It was a very simple man (with a boy and a girl)
in a very simple boat . . .

. . . FILLED WITH
FISH!

This man was not wearing the proper attire
for properly catching fish.
He did not have gollashes, or socks, or suspenders, and
did not even wear a bow-tie!

But the smile on his face beamed with radiant joy
unlike anything seen before.

And his children laughed as they unloaded fish
and they shined as they sang of
their Master.

“We greet you dear sir!” said the simple young man
to the Fisherman there on the beach.

“My children and I have just come from afar.
We’ve been fishing in foreign seas.”

For a while, we enjoyed fishing right near our home, and
we *did* have fun catching a few.

But the Master Himself came and called us to GO and
‘Launch into the deep . . . ’

“So we did.”

“And oh, you should see the far-waters out there!

We’ve seen beautiful untouched seas!

There are oceans so-blue and so-crystal-clear
and deep pools so-teeming with fish!

We’ve seen fish of all colors and of every size, and
oh, the fish are hungry!”

“But the fishermen there are few.”

And the children added,
“...and the fishing there is fun!”

The old man stared with his eyes opened wide
and his jaw dropped wider in awe.

For the more that he heard, the more he longed
to finally fulfill his dream.

For the Fisherman had *really*
always wanted
to fish.

And then – with a perfect plea –
the Fisherman heard the words:

“Come! Follow Me!”

* * *

So he went.

And the Fisherman was
no longer foolish.

In the Bible Jesus Christ said:
“Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch.” and
“Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”
(From Luke 5:4 and Matthew 4:19 NJKV)

A Note to Christian Parents and Teachers:

Many of us can recall singing the children's chorus "*I will make you fishers of men*" with Sunday school enthusiasm. Perhaps we've taught this chorus to our kids or we've encouraged our children to memorize God's Great Commission from Mark 16:15. But how many of us have really instilled a true passion for world evangelism and a personal responsibility for reaching the lost into the hearts of the next generation?

This classic "Fishless Fisherman" mission parable by John M. Drescher is hard-hitting and challenging. It's a satire, which by definition means, "*sarcasm or ridicule in the exposure of wrongful actions or attitudes.*" The story exaggerates the truth in order to prove a point, which in this case is the vital importance of sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him. Please know that I deeply love and respect the importance of the local church. I also realize God does not call every believer to full-time foreign missionary work. Even so, every one of us (including our children and us!) *are* called to be full-time mission-minded Christians . . . with God's heart for the world!

So let's be fishers of men!

**In His Love & Service,
Ann Dunagan**

The Fishless Fisherman

A Classic Mission Parable

–By John M. Drescher

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.

Year after year these 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. Continually, they searched for new and better definitions of fishing. They sponsored costly nationwide and worldwide congresses to discuss fishing and promote fishing and hear about all the ways of fishing.

These fishermen built large, beautiful building 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.

They organized a board to send out fishermen to other places where there were many fish. 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 far away streams and lakes where many other fish of different colors lived. 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.

Expensive training centers were built to teach fishermen how to fish. Those who taught had doctorates in Fishology, but the teachers did not fish. They only taught fishing. Year after year, graduates were sent to do full-time fishing, some to distant waters filled with fish.

Further, the fishermen built large printing houses to publish fishing guides. A speaker's bureau was also provided to schedule special speakers on the subject of fishing. Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded, and were sent to fish. But like the fishermen back home, they never fished.

Some also said they wanted to be a 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.

After one stirring meeting on "The Necessity for Fishing," a 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 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 bored 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?

*Drescher, John M., "The Fishless Fishermen,"
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