



The Fisherman's Excuse

Matthew 4:18-22 18 And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. 19 And he saith unto them, **Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.** 20 And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. 21 And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. 22 And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

In Matthew's account we see two sides of the work of fishermen – casting the net and mending the net.

This pictures the dual purpose of the church – **evangelism** and **discipleship**.

- Fish have to be sought to be caught. They don't normally jump in the boat.
- You don't catch a fish by swimming after it – that's stupidity.
- But neither do you catch fish by staying on dry land – you must go to the water.

We tend to emphasize the “discipleship” side of the church because it is more comfortable to deal with those we are comfortable with!

We can mend our nets for ages, but if we never cast them we have wasted our time!

When fishermen return home without a catch, they generally have an excuse!

- **The fish weren't biting!** Study the fish's habits. Know what to use for bait, when the best time of day is to catch it, and how to cast your line.
- **The weather was wrong – it was too hot or too cold to catch anything!** In the church, you create your own spiritual climate with those you touch, regardless of those around you.
- **My hook was dull!** The blunt hook of human wisdom will never convict like the sharp truth of the Word of God. You can win an argument and lose the soul!
- **I was in the wrong spot!** “The fish are really biting on the foreign field.” Fish where God has placed you.
- **The water was too rough!** Fishing can still be successful regardless of the rough waters you are in personally.
- **I ran out of gas!** If you are spiritually drained, just come back to Calvary and ask God to renew your passion.

We will stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and receive rewards based, not on our sins which have already been judged at Calvary, but on the good and bad (eternally profitable and merely wasteful) things done during our lives. What you do in your temporal body will have an impact on eternity!

How will you feel when you reach the “home port” and the Master Fisherman asks, “How many did YOU catch for me?” Will you only have a feeble excuse to give Him?

EXPERTS IN FISHOLOGY

A group existed who called themselves fishermen. And there were many fish in the waters all around. In fact, the whole area was surrounded with streams and lakes filled with fish. And the fish were hungry. Week after week, month after month, year after year these men, 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 meant, defended fishing as an occupation, and declared that fishing is always the primary task of fishermen. They sought better methods, and promoted different ways of fishing, new fishing equipment, and improved types of bait. They sponsored special meetings. These fishermen built large, beautiful buildings. The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman, and every fisherman should fish. They formed a board to promote the idea of fishing in faraway streams and lakes where many other fish of different colors lived. They appointed committees and held many meetings to decide what new streams should be thought about. Large, elaborate, and expensive training centers were built whose primary purpose was to teach fishermen how to fish. Over the years courses were offered on the needs of fish, the nature of fish, the history of fishing, where to find fish, the psychological reactions of fish. But the teachers did not fish. They only taught fishing. Year after year, after tedious training many were graduated and were given fishing licenses. The fishermen built large printing houses to publish fishing guides. Presses were kept busy producing materials devoted to fishing methods, equipment, and programs to arrange and to encourage meetings to talk about fishing. The only thing this group of fishermen didn't do, however, was fish.