

“Go: Together”

GO: You Have What It Takes- Part 8

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Introduction:

The Parable of the Fishless Fishermen

Pastor John 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.

Week after week, month after month, and 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. They carefully defined what fishing means, defended fishing as an occupation, and declared that fishing was always to be the primary task of fishermen.

They were continuously searching for new and better methods of fishing. They sponsored costly nationwide and worldwide congresses to discuss fishing and to promote fishing and hear about all the ways of fishing.

These fishermen built large, beautiful buildings called “Fishing Fellowships”. The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish. **One thing they didn't have time to do, however; they did not fish.**

They organized a board to send out fishermen to where there were many fish. The board was formed by those who had great vision and courage to speak about 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 only taught fishing, they did not fish.

Year after year, graduates were sent to do full-time fishing, some to distant waters filled with fish. Many who felt “the call” to be fishermen responded. They were commissioned and sent to fish. But like the fishermen back home they engaged in all kinds of other occupations, building power plants to pump water for the fish, using tractors to plow new waterways, and while all their work was very good, they did not fish.

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.

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 letting the fish know they were nice, land-loving neighbors and how loving and kind they were was enough, so they did not fish.

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 an outstanding fish. He was told that he had a special "gift of fishing." He was honored for his excellent catch and scheduled to visit all the big meetings possible to tell how he did it. He was also placed on the Fishermen's General Board as a person having considerable experience. **So in order to have time to tell about his experience to all the other fishermen, he quit fishing.**

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?" (Matthew 4:19)

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? Is one following if he isn't fishing?

Matthew 4:18-20

¹⁸ One day as Jesus was walking along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers—Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew—throwing a net into the water, for they fished for a living. ¹⁹ Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!" ²⁰ And they left their nets at once and followed him.

Believers all around America love to talk about evangelism and reaching out to those that do not yet know Jesus, but we have to do more than just talk about it. **Current statistics tell us that 95% of people who call themselves Christians have never led one other person to Christ.** You can do the math...this means that only 5% of those who claim to be Christ-followers have personally led someone else to follow Christ in their lifetime.

Interpret this statistic a little bit with me. *This means 95% of believers go to church regularly, read their Bibles, serve in the church, get prayed for, get inner healing, get outer healing, get counseled, get loved, get shepherded, get encouraged—and yet all of this is consumed...taken in for themselves and never gets translated into someone else being saved.*

Here are two questions we should ponder this morning: 1) **Is one following if he isn't fishing?** (*Can we be a follower of Christ and not be a fisherman?*) and 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? What would happen if 100% of Gods people started fishing for lost souls? What if every Christ-follower took a step of faith and simply impacted ONE other person with the Gospel? **There would not be buildings big enough to house the church growth.***

If Jesus were to return to earth today and walk among us like He did Peter and Andrew, and He were to call to us with the same call: *“Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!” ... **how would we respond?***

*Would He find us willing to learn and go fishing, in obedience to Him, or would we ask Him for time to continually organize, talk about winning souls, and make plans to try and be the best Church we can be? I know what Jesus would hope to find...because **Jesus was about one thing.** In Luke 19:10, Jesus defined His focus...His objective. He said: *“For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.”* The big question is, are we doing the same? Are we working to find and save those who are lost? ***Are we fishing...or just talking about fishing?****

Our text for today can help us step into, enjoy and be successful fishermen:
2 Corinthians 5:11, 14-21

¹¹ ***Because we understand*** our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others... ¹⁴ Either way, ***Christ's love controls us.*** Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. ¹⁵ He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, ***they will live for Christ,*** who died and was raised for them.

¹⁶ So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! ¹⁷ This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. ***And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him.*** ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. ***And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.*** ²⁰ So we are ***Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ*** when we plead, *“Come back to God!”* ²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

From this passage, we see several lessons on how to be on mission together.

- **Mission is a call to the church...not an individual.** I count 26 plural pronouns in this passage. Paul was making the point that “we” are called to share our faith. He was saying that being ambassadors is “our” role together. Christ’s love controls “us”.

We are fishermen together. We go together. We pray together. We help each other. We resource each other. We encourage each other.

Each one of us have our own mission field...there are people around me that you don’t know and people around you that you have opportunities with that I will never meet. But, here’s what this looks like:

- We pray together regularly for each others’ contacts.
- We check-in- *Hey- how is it going with Joe? Have you had an opportunity to share Jesus with him yet?*
- We swap stories about fishing for people... *Hey- here is what God did...!*
- We help each other—maybe I have an Easy-Up tent and you want to throw a block party for your neighbors to connect more deeply. So, I come over some Saturday evening, bring my tent and do your grilling so you can talk with guests at your party.
- To be an authentic church...like is pictured in the New Testament...there must be a missional culture when we gather...and when we connect outside of Sunday mornings. We must help each other fish!

Be encouraged- we are in this together!

- **Mission flows from the responsibility received when we accept God’s gift.**
¹⁸ And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ.

Notice that Paul says (vs.11), *“Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard...”*

The first thing I do when I get a gift is I open it and look at it. I understand it. I treasure it. And, if I’m truly excited about it- I tell others!

What is God’s gift? Do you know it? Can you share it/explain it to others?

What should we share? What is God’s gift? (You can memorize these verses to be ready to share!)

1. We have a sin problem.

Romans 3:23-25

23 *For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard*

2. Jesus is the solution to our sin problem.

Acts 4:12

12 There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved."

Romans 5:8-9

8 But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.9 And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation.

Romans 6:23

23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. Salvation is a free gift accessible by faith.

Ephesians 2:8-9

8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

4. One who acknowledges Jesus as Forgiver must also follow Him as Leader (our actions must mirror our beliefs).

1 Peter 1:22

22 You were cleansed from your sins when you obeyed the truth, so now you must show sincere love to each other as brothers and sisters. Love each other deeply with all your heart.

James 2:14-17

14 What good is it, dear brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but don't show it by your actions? Can that kind of faith save anyone?15 Suppose you see a brother or sister who has no food or clothing,

16 and you say, "Good-bye and have a good day; stay warm and eat well"—but then you don't give that person any food or clothing. What good does that do?

17 So you see, faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless.

So...following Christ is a response to these truths. A seeker must acknowledge their need for Jesus...and then commit their lives to follow Him.

What are the best verses to memorize that give key elements of the Gospel?

Titus 3:3-7

3 Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other.

4 But—“When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love,5 he saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.6 He generously poured out the Spirit upon us through Jesus Christ our Savior.7 Because of his grace he declared us righteous and gave us confidence that we will inherit eternal life.”

Romans 3:23-25

23 For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.24 Yet God, with undeserved kindness, declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.25 For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood.

- **Mission flows from being controlled by Christ’s love.**

¹⁴ *Either way, **Christ’s love controls us.***

What controls you? Do you ever think about that?

I know what controls me many times-- *I want to look good in other peoples’ eyes. I want my kids to behave. I want to have enough money to live a comfortable life.*

But, because of this new life that I’ve been given... now Christ’s love should control me. That means that when I get up in the morning, I am motivated to go throughout my day because I get to *experience* Christ’s love personally **and** I get to *give it away* to others.

When I’m controlled by Christ’s love, that means that what matters to Jesus matters to me. What Jesus loves, I love. What Jesus purposed...I make my purpose. Luke 19:10 tells us what Jesus was about: ¹⁰ *For the Son of Man^{al} came to seek and save those who are lost.”*

If I’m controlled by Jesus’ love... I will live my life to know and experience Jesus’ love and give it to others. I’ll tell others about it...because I won’t be able to help myself.

- **Mission flows from living for Christ and not myself.**
Vs. 14-15: *Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. ¹⁵ He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, **they will live for Christ**, who died and was raised for them.*

I'm living for myself when I'm too busy to talk to my neighbor. I'm living for myself when I feel afraid to talk to someone about Jesus—so in order to protect myself from feeling awkward or to protect myself from my friend's potential negative response—I shrink back and do not verbalize my faith. I'm living for myself when everything else- my family, my job, my clothes, my yard, my car, my bills, my health...*when improving or maintaining these things is my focus rather than Jesus' agenda of finding and reaching people.*

I must change my mindset...I must turn away from my natural inclinations and reset my motivations to Jesus'. I must move from self to selfless. I must move from the here and now to what is eternal. I must live for Christ—no longer for myself—since I have received this new life.

Illustration:

Bus garage—it is always easier to go to my bus and read... or hide in the coffee shop and work... *but I must engage other drivers.*

- **Mission flows from a commitment to team with God to change lives.**
Mission is the incredible privilege of working with God to draw lost people to Himself. These are people that God loves, that Jesus has died for, that need to HEAR the message of Jesus' love and forgiveness.

And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. ¹⁹ For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.

Imagine being able to play basketball with Michael Jordan or your favorite sport with your favorite player... *What would it be like to team up with your hero?*

We have the opportunity and privilege and responsibility to team up daily with Creator, One-True-Living-Eternal God in the most important work ever- the work of eternal reconciliation of sinners with a forgiving God.

- **Mission flows from accepting the most important role we were saved to fill: ambassador.**

Vision of a church that is "connected for mission": "A Vision Of Mission"

What does a family on mission together look like? Well, imagine a place where:

- It has to start in the life of each individual. Remember Ephesians 4:16? ¹⁶ *(Christ) makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As **each part** does its own **special work**, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*
- Each person that attends ClearView has 3 or 4 people they are praying for, serving, and looking for opportunities to share Jesus with.
- Each person at ClearView feels that they understand the Gospel and they know how to share it with those around them.
- Each person at ClearView has a personal plan for mission. *Who am I going to reach? How am I going to do this? When am I going to plant Truth in my friends' heart?*
- Each person at ClearView understands that part of their role in the family is to help other family members succeed in mission.
- Church isn't just a place you come to on Sunday morning...**church is a strategy session for how to reach your friends for Jesus.**
- Our church has an inviting culture. We are inviting people to attend church, read the Bible or another good book, go to a special event...all with the purpose of building and furthering conversations around Jesus and God's Truth.
- As you talk with people on Sundays, one of the topics that come up is how it is going in sharing Jesus with one of your friends or loved ones. A friend here at ClearView asks you, *"So, how is it going with _____? Have you been able to share about Jesus with _____? I've been praying for you and that you'd have a chance to connect with _____."*
- You are participating in a small group. One of the things your small group does from time-to-time is sharing together about the people that each of you are trying to reach. The group then prays together, by name, for each of these people- and for your ministry to them.

Closing Illustration:

Bus on N. Hamilton—"Not In Service"

Seeds... they are no good unless they are planted!

There are some things deep inside you that when unlocked can open up a door to a life of fulfillment, purpose, and adventure. Tapping into this area of your heart is a life essential...it is where real, meaningful, impactful life is found. If you miss this...life is just an every-day grind. You'll be bored, you'll be unsatisfied, you'll be restless, because your life lacks the meaning and the power Jesus meant for you to have.

Being an ambassador for Christ is what you were made for. It's what you were saved for. Acting in this role is a key to fulfillment. It is something you were made for. If you can get this—life takes on a new level of meaning, a new sense of purpose, and might even be the adventure you're longing for.