

# How To Become Fishers of Men

By C.H. Spurgeon

When Christ calls us by his grace we must not only remember what we are, but we must also think of what He can make us into.

Jesus said, “Follow me, and *I will make you.*” We must repent of what we have been, and rejoice in what we may become. It is not “Follow me, because of what you already are.” It is not “Follow me, because you may make something of yourselves;” but, rather, “Follow me, because of what I will make you.” Truly, I might say of each one of us, as soon as we are converted, “. . . what we will be has not yet been made known...” [1 John 3:2]. It did not seem a likely thing that lowly fishermen would develop into apostles; that men so skillful with the fishing net would be quite as much at home in preaching sermons and instructing converts. One would have said, “How can these things be? You cannot make founders of churches out of peasants of Galilee.” That is exactly what Christ did; and when we are humbled in the sight of God by a sense of our own unworthiness, we can feel encouraged to follow Jesus because of what he can make us into. What said the woman of a sorrowful spirit when she lifted up her song? “He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap; he seats them with princes...” [1 Samuel 2:8]

We cannot know what God may make of us in the new creation. Who could have imagined all the beautiful things that came out from darkness and chaos by that one command, “Let there be light?” And who can tell what lovely displays of everything that is divinely pleasing may yet appear from a person’s formerly dark life, when God’s grace has said to them, “Let there be light?” Oh, you who presently see in yourselves nothing that is desirable, come and follow Christ for the sake of what he can make out of you. Don’t you hear his sweet voice calling to you, and saying, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men?”

**Note, next, that we are not yet made everything that we will be,** nor everything that we should desire to be, when we were first fished for and caught. This is what the grace of God does for us at first; but it is not all. We are like the fishes, making sin to be our element; and the good Lord comes, and with the gospel net he catches us, and he delivers us from the life and love of sin. But he has not done for us all that he can do, nor all that we would wish him to do, when he has done this; for it is another and a greater miracle to make us who were fish to become fishers—to make the saved ones saviors—to make the convert into a converter—the receiver of the gospel into an impartor of that same gospel to other people.

I think I can say to every one of you—If you are already saved, then the work is only half done until you are active in bringing others to Christ. You are as yet only half formed into the image of your Lord. You have not attained to

the full development of the Christ-like life in you unless you have begun in some feeble way to tell to others of the grace of God: and I trust that you will find no rest to the sole of your foot until you have been the means of leading many to that blessed Savior who is your confidence and your hope. His word is—"Follow me," not merely that you may be saved, nor even that you may be sanctified; but, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Be following Christ with that intent and aim; and fear that you are not perfectly following him, unless in some degree he is making use of you to be fishers of men.

The fact is, that every one of us must be about the business of a catching men and women for Christ. If Christ has caught us, we must catch others. If we have been apprehended of him, we must be his sheriffs, to apprehend rebels for him. Let us ask Christ to give us grace to go fishing, and have the ability to cast our nets that we may capture a great multitude of fishes. Oh that the Holy Spirit may raise up from among us some master-fishers, who will sail their boats in many seas, and surround great schools of fish!

**My teaching at this time will be very simple, but I hope it will be highly practical; for my longing is that none of you, that loves the Lord, would be reluctant to fish for him.**

May it be that all the members of this church, and all the Christians that hear or read this sermon are fruitful in winning the lost for Christ! The fact is, the day we live in is very dark. The heavens are lowering with heavy thunderclouds. Men often dream of what storms may soon shake this city, and the whole social fabric of this land, even to a general breaking up of society. The night is becoming so dark that the stars may seem to fall like damaged fruit from the tree. The times are evil. Now, if never before, every glow-worm or firefly must show its spark. You with the tiniest candle must take it out from under the bushel, and set it on a candlestick, where it can be seen.

We need all of you. Lot was a poor creature. He was a very, very wretched kind of believer; but still, he might have been a great blessing to Sodom had he only pleaded for the people there, as he should have done. And the weak Christians of our day, as I fear many are, need to be prayed for, for we need every one of these truly converted souls, in these evil days—Oh, let us pray that each one of them may glorify the Lord. I pray that every righteous man and woman, irritated as they are with the conversations of the wicked, may be more persistent in prayer than they has ever been, and draw near to their God, and get more spiritual life, that they might be a blessing to the people perishing all around them. I address you, therefore, at this time, first of all to dwell on this thought. Oh, that the Spirit of God may make each one of you feel your personal responsibility!

**Here for believers in Christ, in the order of their usefulness, three things from our text:**

1. First, *something for believers to do*—*Follow Jesus*. Jesus said, "Follow me."
2. Secondly, *something to be done by their great Lord and Master*: Jesus said, "...I will make you fishers of men." You will not grow into fishers by yourselves, but this is what Jesus will do for you if you will just follow him.
3. Lastly, we find a *good illustration*, from our great Master; for he often spoke to the people with a parable. He presents us with an illustration of what Christians should be—*fishers of men*. We may get some useful hints out of

it, and I pray the Holy Spirit to bless them to us.

**I. First, I will take it for granted that every believer here wants to be useful to Jesus. If they do not, I would question whether they could be a true believer in Christ. Well, if you want to be really useful, here is SOMETHING FOR YOU TO DO TO THAT END: “*Follow Jesus, and He will make you fishers of men.*”**

A young man asked, “What is the best way to become an effective preacher?” One person answers, “go to seminary.” “But Christ says, “Young man, *follow me, and I will make you a fisher of men.*” How is a person to be useful? “Attend a training-class,” one says. That’s true, but there is a much better answer than that—“Follow Jesus, and he will make you fishers of men.” The great training school for Christian workers has Christ at its teacher; and he is at its head, not only as a tutor, but as a leader: we are not only to learn of him in study, but to follow him in action. “*Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.*” The direction is very distinct and plain, and I believe that it is exclusive, so that no one can become a fisherman by any other process. This process may appear to be very simple; but assuredly it is most effective. The Lord Jesus Christ, who knew all about fishing for men, was himself the Absolute Ruler of the rule, “Follow me, if you want to be fishers of men. If you want to be useful, follow in my steps.”

**1. I understand this, first, in this sense: *be separated unto Christ.***

These men were to leave their pursuits; they were to leave their companions; they were, in fact, to quit the world, that their one business might be, in their Master’s name, to be fishers of men. *We* are not all called to leave our daily business, or to quit our families. That might be rather running away from the fishery than working at it in God’s name. But we are called most distinctly to come out from among the ungodly, and to be separate, and not to touch the unclean thing. We cannot be fishers of men if we remain among men in the same element with them.

Fish will not be fishers. The sinner will not convert the sinner. The ungodly man will not convert the ungodly man; and, what is more to the point, the worldly Christian will not convert the world. If you are of the world, no doubt the world will love you as its own; but you cannot save the world. If you walk in darkness, and belong to the kingdom of darkness, you cannot remove the darkness. If you march with the armies of the wicked one, you cannot defeat them. I believe that one reason why the church of the Living God at this present moment has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church.

Nowadays we hear Nominal and Liberal Christians insisting that they may do this and they may do that—things which their Puritan forefathers would rather have died at the stake than have tolerated. They claim that they can live like the world, and my sad answer to them, when they crave for this liberty, is, “Do it if you dare. It may not do you much more harm, for you are so bad already. Your cravings show how rotten your hearts really are. If you have a hungering after such dog food, go, you dogs, and eat the garbage. Worldly pleasures are fit food for mere pretenders and hypocrites. If you were God’s children you would hate the very thought of the world’s evil pleasures, and your question would not be, ‘How far may we be like the world?’ but your one cry would be, ‘How far can we get away from the world? How much can we come out from it?’” Your desire should be to become very

strict in your separation from sin, in such a time as this, than to ask, "How can I make myself like other men, and act as they do?" Brethren, the use of the church in the world is that it should be like salt in the midst of rotting; but if the salt has lost its savor, what is the good of it? If it were possible for salt itself to go bad, then it could only increase and heighten the over all rotting taking place. The worst day the world ever saw was when the sons of God were joined with the daughters of men. Then came the flood; for the only barrier against a flood of vengeance on this world is the separation of the saint from the sinner. Your duty as a Christian is to stand firm in your own place and stand out for God, hating even the clothing stained by the corrupted flesh, resolving like one of our forefathers said, "Let others do as they will, but as for us and our house, we will serve the Lord."

Come, you children of God, you must stand with your Lord outside the camp. Jesus calls to you today, and says, "Follow me." Was Jesus found at the theater? Did he frequent the sporting events or the racetracks? Do you think that Jesus was seen in any of the places of amusement and entertainment of the elite of his day? No, He was not. He was "holy, innocent, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Yet, in one sense no one mixed with sinners so completely as he did when, like a physician, he went among them healing his patients; but in another sense there was a gulf fixed between the men of the world and the Savior, which he never attempted to cross, and which they could not cross to defile him.

**The first lesson which the church has to learn is this: Follow Jesus into the separated state, and he will make you fishers of men. Unless you take up your cross and protest against an ungodly world, you cannot hope that the holy Jesus will make you fishers of men.**

**2. A second meaning of our text is very obviously this: *live with Christ*, and then you will be made fishers of men.**

These disciples whom Christ called were to come and live with him. They were to be associated with him every day. They were to listen to him publicly teach the eternal gospel, and in addition they were to receive special clarifications, in private, of the Word which he had spoken. They were to be his personal servants and his close friends. They were to watch his miracles and hear his prayers; and, better still, they were to be with him, and become one with him in his holy work. They were allowed to sit at the table with him, and even to have their feet washed by him. Many of them fulfilled that word, "Where you live, I will live:" they were with him in his afflictions and persecutions. They witnessed his secret agonies; they saw his many tears; they noted the passion and the compassion of his soul, and thus, in time, they caught his spirit, and so they learned to be fishers of men.

At Jesus' feet we must learn the art and mystery of soul-winning, to live with Christ is the best education for usefulness. It is a great advantage to any Christian to be associated with a Christian minister whose heart is on fire. The best training for a young man is that which a group of pastors, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, gave, in which each elderly pastor had a young man with him who walked with him whenever he went up the mountainside to preach, and lived in the house with him, and listened to his prayers and observed his daily holiness. This was a fine instruction, was it not? But it will not compare with that of the apostles who lived with Jesus himself, and were his daily companions. Unparalleled was the training of the twelve. No wonder that they became what they were with such a heavenly tutor to saturate them with his own spirit! And now today his bodily presence is not among us; but his

spiritual power is perhaps more fully known to us than it was to those apostles in those two or three years of the Lord's earthly presence. There are some of us to whom he is intimately near. We know more about him than we do about our dearest earthly friends. We have never been quite able to totally understand our dearest friend's heart in all its twists and turns, but we know the heart of the Jesus Christ. We have leaned our head upon his chest, and have enjoyed fellowship with him such as we could not have had with any of our own friends and relatives. This is the surest way of learning how to do good. Live with Jesus, follow Jesus, and he will make you fishers of men.

Watch how he does the work, and therefore learn how to do it yourself. A Christian man should be an apprentice to Jesus to learn the trade of a Savior. We can never save men by offering a redemption, for we have none to present; **but we can learn how to save men and women by warning them to flee from the wrath to come**, and setting before them the one great effective remedy. Watch how Jesus saves, and you will learn how it is done: You cannot learn it any other way. Live in fellowship with Christ, and people will notice that you have a certain demeanor about you, that seems to make you very capable to teach and to win souls.

**3. A third meaning, however, must be given to this "Follow me," and it is this: "Obey me, and then you will know what to do to save men."**

We must not talk about our fellowship with Christ, or our being separated from the world unto him, unless we make him our Master and Lord in everything. Some preachers are not true to all of their convictions, so how can they look for a blessing? A Christian who wants to be useful to the Lord, ought to be very particular as to every point of obedience to his Master. I have no doubt whatever that God blesses our churches even when they are somewhat flawed, for his mercy endures forever. When there is a measure of error in the teaching, and a measure of mistake in the practice, he may still consent to use the ministry, for he is very gracious. But a large measure of blessing must necessarily be withheld from all teaching, which is knowingly or glaringly faulty. God can set his seal upon the truth that is in it, but he cannot set his seal upon the error that is in it. Out of mistakes about Christian ordinances and other things, especially errors in heart and spirit, there may come evils, which we never looked for.

Such evils may even now be influential on the present age, and may work worse damage on future generations. If we desire as fishers of men to be largely used of God we must copy our Lord Jesus in everything, and obey him in every point. Failure in obedience may lead to failure in success. Each one of us, if he would wish to see his child saved, or his Sunday-School class blessed, or his congregation converted, must be careful that, he is a clean instrument of the Lord. Anything we do that grieves the Spirit of God must take away from us some part of our power for good. The Lord is very gracious and compassionate; but yet he is a jealous God. He is sometimes sternly jealous towards his people who are knowingly neglecting obedience to certain of his commands, or are in associations, which are not clean in his sight. He will hinder their work, weaken their strength, and humble them until they finally say, "My Lord, I will follow you after all. I will do what you call me to do, or else you will not accept me."

The Lord said to his disciples, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" [Mark 16:15]. Now, we must get back to apostolic practice and to apostolic teaching; we must lay aside the commandments of men and the impulses of our own brains, and we must do what Christ

tells us, as Christ tells us, and because Christ tells us. Definitely and distinctly, we must take the place of servants; and if we will not do that, we cannot expect our Lord to work with us and through us. Let us be determined that, as true as the compass needle is to the north pole, so true will we be, as far as our light goes, to the command of our Lord and Master.

Jesus says—“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” By this teaching he seems to say—“If you go ahead of me, or fall back behind me, and you cast the net; you will catch nothing. However, when you do as I command you, you will cast your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find a great catch.”

**4. Again, I think that there is a great lesson in my text to those *who preach their own thoughts instead of preaching the thoughts of Christ.***

These disciples were to follow Christ that they might listen to him, hear what he had to say, drink in his teaching, and then *go and teach what he had taught them*. Their Lord says, “What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs” [Matthew 10:27]. If they will be faithful messengers of Christ’s message, he will make them “fishers of men.” But you know the proud method nowadays is this: “I am not going to preach this old, old gospel, this musty Puritan doctrine. I will sit down in my study, and burn the midnight oil, and invent a new theory; then I will come out with my brand new thought, and blaze away with it.”

Many are not following Christ, but following themselves, and of them the Lord may well say, “You will see whose word will stand, mine or theirs.” Others are wickedly discreet, and judge that certain truths, which are clearly God’s word, had better be kept back. They say, “You must not be harsh, but must preach friendly things. To talk about the punishment of sin, to speak of eternal punishment, why, these are unfashionable doctrines. It may be that they are taught in the Word of God, but they do not suit the intellect of this age. We must trim them down.”

Brothers in Christ, I will have no part of their wickedness. Will you? Our enlightened age believed that they have discovered certain things not taught in the Bible. Evolution may be clearly contrary to the teaching of Genesis, but that doesn’t matter to them. They are not going to be believers of Scripture, but original thinkers. This is the arrogant ambition of the age we live in. Note this, in proportion as the modern theology is preached the depravity of this generation will increase. To a great degree I attribute the looseness of our age to the carelessness of the doctrine preached by its teachers. From the pulpit they have taught the people that sin is a small thing. From the pulpit these traitors to God and to his Christ have taught the people that there is no hell to be feared. A little, little hell, perhaps, there may be; but justified punishment for sin is made nothing of. The precious atoning sacrifice of Christ has been derided and misrepresented by those who were pledged to preach it. They have given the people the name of the gospel, but the gospel itself has evaporated in their hands.

From hundreds of pulpits the gospel has disappeared; and still the preachers take the position and name of Christ’s ministers. Well, and what comes of it? Why, their congregations grow thinner and thinner; and so it must be. Jesus says, “Follow *me*, I will make you fishers of men;” but if you go your own way, with your own net, you will make nothing of it, and the Lord promises you no help in it. The Lord’s directions makes himself our leader

and example. It is, “Follow *me*, follow *me*. Preach *my* gospel. Preach what I preached. Teach what I taught, and keep to that.” Do this, and he will make you fishers of men; but if you do not do this, you will fish in vain.

**5. I close this part of my discourse by saying that we will not be fishers of men unless we follow Christ in one other respect; and that is, by endeavoring, in all points, to imitate his holiness.**

Holiness is the greatest real power that can be possessed by men or women. We may preach the truth, but we must also live the truth. God forbid that we should preach anything else; but it will be all in vain, unless there is a life at the back of the testimony. An unholy preacher may even render truth contemptible. In proportion as any of us draw back from a living a zealous sanctification we will draw back from the place of power. Our power lies in this word, “Follow me.” Be like Jesus.

In all things endeavor to think, and speak, and act as Jesus did, and he will make you fishers of men. This will require self-denial. We must daily take up the cross. This may require willingness to give up our reputation—readiness to be thought fools, idiots, and the like, as men are apt to call those who are keeping close to their Master. There must be the cheerful resigning of everything that looks like honor and personal glory, in order that we may be completely Christ’s, and glorify his name. We must live his life and be ready to die his death, if need be. O brothers and sisters, if we do this and follow Jesus, putting our feet into the footprints of his pierced feet, he will make us fishers of men. If it should so please him that we should even die without having gathered many souls to the cross, we will speak from our graves. In some way or other the Lord will make a holy life to be an influential life. It is not possible that a life, which can be described as following Christ, should be an unsuccessful one in the sight of the Most High. “Follow me,” and there is an “I will” such as God can never draw back from: “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

**Thus much on the first point. There is something for us to do: we are graciously called to follow Jesus. Holy Spirit, lead us to do it.**

**II. But secondly, and briefly, there is SOMETHING FOR THE LORD TO DO.**

1. When his dear servants are following him, he says, “I will make you fishers of men;” and **be it never forgotten that *it is he that makes us follow him***; so that if the following of Christ be the step to being made a fisher of men, yet this he gives us. ‘It is all of his Spirit. I have talked about catching his spirit, and abiding in him, and obeying him, and listening to him, and copying him; but none of these things are we capable of apart from his working them all in us. “...your fruitfulness comes from me” [Hosea 14:8], is a text which we must not for a moment forget. So, then, if we do follow him, it is he that makes us follow him; and so he makes us fishers of men.

**2. But, further, if we follow Christ he will make us fishers of men by all our experience.**

I am sure that the man who is really consecrated to bless others will be helped in this by all that he feels, especially by his afflictions. I often feel very grateful to God that I have undergone fearful depression of spirits. I know the

borders of despair, and the horrible brink of that gulf of darkness into which my feet have almost gone; but hundreds of times I have been able to give a helpful grip to brethren and sisters who have come into that same condition, which grip I could never have given if I had not known their deep despondency.

So I believe that the darkest and most dreadful experience of a child of God will help him to be a fisher of men if he will but follow Christ. Keep close to your Lord and he will make every step a blessing to you. If God in providence should make you rich, he will allow you to speak to those ignorant and wicked rich who so much abound in this city, and so often are the cause of its worst sin. And if the Lord is pleased to let you be very poor you can go down and talk to those wicked and ignorant poor people who so often are the cause of sin in this city, and so greatly need the gospel. The winds of providence will move you to where you can fish for men and women. The wheels of providence are full of eyes, and all those eyes will look this way to help us to be winners of souls. You will often be surprised to find how God has been in a house that you visit: before you get there, his hand has been at work in its rooms. When you wish to speak to some particular individual, God's providence has been dealing with that individual to make him ready for just that word which you could say, but which nobody else but you could say.

Oh, be you following Christ, and you will find that he will, by every experience through which you are passing, make you fishers of men.

**3. Further than that, if you will follow him he will make you fishers of men by distinct warnings of impending dangers in your own heart.**

The Holy Spirit warns us of many impending dangers, which are not noticed by Christians when they are in an indifferent condition; but when the heart is right with God and living in communion with God, we feel a sacred sensitivity, so that we do not need the Lord to shout, but his faintest whisper is heard. No, he doesn't even have to whisper, and yet we hear Him.

Oh, how many willful Christians there are who must be controlled tightly with the bit and bridle, and receive a lash of the whip every now and then! But the Christian who follows his Lord will be tenderly guided. I do not say that the Spirit of God will say to you, "Go to that chariot," or that you will hear a word in your ear; but yet in your soul, as distinctly as the Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it" [Acts 8:29], you will hear the Lord's will. As soon as you see an individual, the thought will cross your mind, "Go and speak to that person." Every opportunity of usefulness will be a call to you. If you are ready, the door will open before you, and you will hear a voice behind you saying, "This is the way; walk in it." If you have the grace to run in the right way you will never be long without an inkling as to what the right way is. That right way will lead you to river or sea, where you can cast your net, and be a fisher of men.

**4. Then, too, I believe that the Lord meant by this that he would give his followers the Holy Spirit.**

They were to follow him, and then, when they had seen him ascend into the clouds, to the holy place of the Most High, they were to stay in Jerusalem for a little while, and the Holy Spirit would come upon them and clothe them

with power from on high [Luke 24:49]. This word was spoken to Peter and Andrew; and you know how it was fulfilled to Peter. What a multitude of fish he brought to land the first time he threw his net in the power of the Holy Spirit! [John 21:6]. "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Brothers and sisters, we have no conception of what God could do through this congregation of believers gathered in our Church tonight. If right now, we were to be filled with the Holy Spirit, there are enough of us here, to evangelize our entire city. There are enough here to be the means of the salvation of the world. Let us seek a blessing; and if we seek it let us hear his guiding voice, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

You men and women that sit before me today, you are sitting by the shore of a great sea of human life swarming with the souls of men and women. You live in the midst of millions; but if you will follow Jesus, and be faithful to him, and true to him, and do what he commands you to do, he will make you fishers of men.

Do not say, "Who will save this city?" The weakest will be strong enough. Samson, with a fresh jawbone of a donkey, taken up from the earth where it was lying bleaching in the sun, killed a thousand Philistines [Judges 15:15-16]. Do not fear, nor be dismayed. Let your responsibilities drive you closer to your Master. Let the shock of the prevailing sins of our land make you look into his dear face who long ago wept over Jerusalem, and now weeps over our cities. Take hold of Christ, and never let him go. By the strong and mighty impulses of the divine life within you, quickened and brought to maturity by the Holy Spirit of God, learn this lesson from your Lord's own mouth: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

You are not fit for such a task, but he will make you fit. You cannot do it by yourselves, but he will make you do it. You do not know how to spread the nets and draw schools of fish to shore, but he will teach you. Only follow him, and he will make you fishers of men.

I wish that I could somehow say this as with a voice of thunder, that the whole church of God on earth might hear it. I wish I could write it in stars diagonally across the sky, "Jesus said, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." If you forget the edict, the promise will never be yours. If you follow some other track, or imitate some other leader, you will fish in vain. God grant us to believe fully that Jesus can do great things in us, and then do great things by us for the good of all those around us!

**III. The last point you might study in your private meditations with much benefit. We have here AN ILLUSTRATION FULL OF INSTRUCTION.** I will give you a few thoughts which you can use. "I will make you fishers of men." You have been fishers of fish: if you follow me, I will make you fishers of men.

**1. A fisher is a person who is *very dependent, and needs to have faith.***

He cannot see the fish. One who fishes in the sea must go and throw in the net, as it were, at an uncertain possibility. Fishing is an act of faith. I have often seen in the Mediterranean men go with their boats and enclose acres of sea with vast nets; and yet, when they have drawn the net to shore, they have not had even a whole

handful of fish. A few wretched silvery nothings have made up the whole catch. Yet they have gone again and thrown the great net several times a day, hopefully expecting something to come of it.

Nobody is so dependent upon God as a minister of God. Oh, this fishing from the Church's pulpit! What a work of faith! I cannot tell that a soul will be brought to God by it. I cannot judge whether my sermon will be suitable to the persons who are here, except that I do believe that God will guide me in the throwing of the net. I expect him to work salvation, and I depend upon him for it. I love this complete dependence, and if I could be offered a certain amount of preaching power, by which I could save sinners, which should be entirely at my own disposal, I would beg the Lord not to let me have it, for it is far more delightful to be entirely dependent upon him at all times. It is a blessed thing to be weak if Christ becomes more fully your strength. Go to work, you who would be fishers of men, and yet feel your insufficiency. You that have no strength, attempt this divine work. Your Master's strength will be seen when your own strength is gone. A fisherman is a dependent person, he must look up for success every time he puts the net down; but still he is a person of faith, and therefore he throws in the net joyfully.

## **2. A fisherman who makes his living by fishing is *a diligent and persevering man*.**

The fishers are up at dawn. At daybreak our fishermen are fishing, and they continue fishing till late in the afternoon. As long as hands can work men will fish. May the Lord Jesus make us hard working, persevering, unwearied fishers of men! "Sow your seed in the morning, and at evening time do not let your hands be idle, for you do not know which will succeed, whether this or that..." [Ecclesiastes 11:6].

## **3. The skillful fisherman is *intelligent and watchful*.**

It looks very easy, I dare say, to be a fisherman, but you would find that it was no child's play if you were to take a real part in it. There is an art in it, from the mending of the net right on to the pulling it to shore. How diligent the fisherman must be to prevent the fish from leaping out of the net! I heard a great noise one night in the sea, as if a giant was beating some huge drum; and I looked out, and I saw that the fishermen were beating the water to drive the fish into the net, or to keep them from leaping out of it, while the net was being closed around them. Ah, yes! And you and I will often have to be watching the corners of the gospel net lest sinners who are almost caught should make their escape. They are very crafty, these fish, and they use this craftiness in endeavoring to avoid salvation. We will have to be always at our business, and to exercise all our faculties, and more than our own intellects, if we are to be successful fishers of men.

## **4. The fisherman is *a very hard working person*.**

Being a fisherman is not an easy calling. He does not sit in an armchair and catch fish. He often has to go out in harsh weather. If a farmer worries about the clouds he will never sow, likewise, a fisherman that worries about the clouds will never fish. If we never do any work for Christ except when we feel up to it, then we will not do much. If we feel that we will not pray because we cannot pray, we will never pray, and if we say, "I will not preach today because I do not feel that I could preach," we will never preach any preaching that is worth the preaching. We must be always at it, until we wear ourselves out, throwing our whole soul into the work in all circumstances, for

Christ's sake.

**5. The fisherman is *a daring man*.**

He tempts the boisterous sea. A little brine in his face does not hurt him; he has been wet through a thousand times, it is nothing to him. He never expected when he became a deep-sea fisherman that he was going to sleep in the lap of comfort. So the true minister of Christ who fishes for souls will never mind a little risk. He will be bound to do or say many a thing that is very unpopular; and some Christian people may even judge his words to be too severe. He must do and say that which is for the good of souls. It is not his to entertain a question as to what others will think of his doctrine, or of him; but in the name of the Almighty God he must feel, "If the sea thunders and crashes, still at my Master's command I will let down the net."

**6. Now, in the last place, the man whom Christ makes a fisher of men *is successful*.**

"But," one says, "I have always heard that Christ's ministers are to be faithful, but that they cannot be sure of being successful." Yes, I have heard that saying too, and in one way I know it is true, but in another way I have my doubts about it. He that is faithful is, in God's way and in God's judgment, more or less successful.

For instance, here is a brother who says that he is faithful. Of course, I must believe him, yet I never heard of a sinner being saved under his ministry. Indeed, I would think that the safest place for a person to be in if he did not want to be saved would be under this gentleman's ministry, because he does not preach anything that is likely to arouse, impress, or convince anybody. This brother is "faithful:" so he says.

So likewise, if any person in the world said to you, "I am a fisherman, but I have never caught anything," you would wonder how he could be called a fisherman. A farmer who never grew any wheat, or any other crop—is he a farmer? When Jesus Christ says, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men," he means, that you will, really catch men and women—that you really, will save some; for he that never did catch any fish is not a fisherman. He that never saved a sinner after years of work is not a minister of Christ. If the result of his life work is *nothing*, he made a mistake when he undertook it. Go with the fire of God in your hand and fling it among the straw, and the straw will burn. You can be sure of that. Go and scatter the good seed: it may not all fall in fertile places, but some of it will. You can be sure of that. Go and let your light shine, and someone's eye will see the light. You must, you will succeed. But remember this is the Lord's word—"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Keep close to Jesus, and do as Jesus did, in his spirit, and he will make you fishers of men.

**Conclusion**

**Perhaps I speak to an attentive hearer who is not converted at all.**

Friend, I have the same thing to say to you. You may also follow Christ, and then he can use you, even you. I don't know but that he has brought you to this place that you may be saved, and that in years to come he may make you speak for his name and glory. Remember how he called Saul of Tarsus, and made him the apostle to the Gentiles. Recovered poachers make the best gamekeepers; and saved sinners make the most capable preachers.

Oh, that you would run away from your old master, Satan, tonight, without giving him a minute's notice; for if you give him any notice, he will hold on to you. Rush to Jesus, and say, "Here I am a poor runaway slave! My Lord, I bear the shackles still upon my wrists. Will you set me free, and make me your own?" Remember, it is written, "...whoever comes to me I will never drive away" [John 6:37]. Never did a runaway slave come to Christ in the middle of the night without Jesus taking him in; and he never gave one up back to his old master. If Jesus makes you free you will be free indeed. Quickly flee to Jesus. May the Holy Spirit help you, and he will in time make you a winner of others to his praise! God bless you. Amen.

# How To Be Fishers of Men

## Questions for Digging Deeper

1. In today's culture, sharing the Gospel has been reduced to an "addition" to salvation. It's described as being a *spiritual gift*, one that's only applicable if you possess that certain gift, or is also thought of as an accessory you can put on/take off as you please. What is the BIBLICAL view of sharing the Gospel?

2. What sort of emphasis did Jesus put on sharing the Gospel? (The root of your answer should definitely come from the Scripture!)

3. What truths about the Gospel are often left out?

4. Sharing our own story can be effective, but our experience isn't the root Truth of the Gospel. Why must we always return to the Bible when sharing the Good News?

5. In what ways is forming a relationship with someone not enough when it comes to sharing the Gospel?

6. How do we grow lazy in our presentation of the Gospel? When we think about how essential the Gospel is, it should stir us to action. What could be keeping us from that?

7. Sharing the Gospel can often seem like Mt. Everest, and we can often feel like climbers without any equipment. But that's the key, beloved! We are called to be obedient to Christ, to follow Him, and He has promised to *make us* fishers of men. There is no special recipe, though the work of Sharing the Gospel takes dedication! If you belong to Him, He isn't going to abandon you to do this work alone. He's going to enable, strengthen, and equip you. Your only task is to follow Him. (A task which will cost you everything, might we add!)

Be encouraged by His Word!

**When you are brought before the synagogues, rulers, and authorities, do not worry about how to defend yourselves or what to say. For at that time the Holy Spirit will teach you what you should say.”**

**Luke 12:11-12**

**But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. John 14:26**

**“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7**