



Fishnets—What to Do With Them

...other than merely wear them in your hair working in a fast-food kitchen.

By Kurt von Schleicher

“My one purpose in life is to help people find a personal relationship with God...” —Billy Graham

What do you do with a fishnet today? Sometimes it's hard to find time to head for the lake or sea and those who do usually carry a pole. Besides, aren't there better less primitive ways in our high-tech society to bring home the tuna? Doesn't the teamwork of Wal-Mart along with Starkist make things much easier for those who like to dine on swimming animals? In Paris the designers use fishnet in fashion for their runways.

In Newport Beach, California the homes on the bay and along the beaches are luxurious, palatial, creative and beautiful. It's a nice place to visit as you hear the gulls, pelicans, seals and listen to the clanking of the sailboat masts as the cables and clasps shift in the wind on these vessels that are docked in the water found in their backyards. And during the '50's and '60s it was stylish to decorate these homes with a Tahitian or Polynesian island-styled fishing flair. Do you remember seeing all the Tiki-torches and wild bores roasting on the beach fires in the old silver screen movies of that era? It was evident to see that the island art of lauhala weaving was also prevalent at those beach parties. I remember seeing bamboo furniture, grass skirts, floral and reed window coverings, Hawaiian eucalypt guitars, varnished starfish, spinney blowfish, fishing rods, colorful shells, all types of Hawaiian coconut palm frond hats, mats and palm leaf baskets hanging on the walls of the sunrooms in these homes or on their shelves. Even in many of the restaurants there, I remember seeing wharf-like settings with lots of white, red or yellow lanterns and weathered fishnets hanging on the walls with those large brown cork floats attached to them. It was all very rustic and people really enjoyed the candlelit romantic ambience this type of backdrop provided. Who knows, maybe some form of this style will return after the industrial, eclectic and popular Asian Fugshway interior designs fade away.

In Bible times, men used nets in fishing for fish and then Jesus subsequently used the profession of fishing to illustrate what His followers should be about in regards to helping the irreligious in the area of their greatest need. That's what I want to do! Rather than cook with nets in my hair or design homes, clothes or restaurants with nets or other beach paraphernalia for appearance, I desire to talk about

fishing and fishnets in relation to helping people, because lots of people still need to be caught for Christ today and He is still in the fishing business. He hasn't changed His purpose for us.

Please understand that you can know all the facts and Bible information about personal and mass evangelism, and still lack the power and desire to go fishing for souls. You can go to Bible study after Bible study, prayer meeting after prayer meeting, worship conference after worship conference (and you should go to these things for edification) but never get your body out the door to go fishing in obedience to your Master. You can even teach through the entire Bible which is so great and all about developing a lifestyle of worship unto the ultimate Fisherman (Jesus Christ), about discipleship to become better fishers and about going fishing for souls ...and yet fail to appropriate any impetus or incentive to go example such fishing. Maybe that characterizes your life? Perhaps you want to get close to God and please Him in witnessing or preaching; maybe you've even read a lot of books about personal and mass-evangelism, but still you lack the courage, the momentum and the practical experience in net fishing. Maybe you need a fresh touch of the Spirit to transform your entire ministry? Is there such a thing as a soul-winner's anointing? That is what we need—that unction to function rather than for mere Christian consumption? Can such a thing be released in and through your life for the glory of God and the benefit of others? You know, we see a lot about *anointing* in the Old Testament. The word occurs twenty six times in twenty four verses in the King James Bible and it often appears with the word *oil* which represented the Holy Spirit's missionary empowering. But I only see this word anointing appear four times in three verses in the New Testament.

John the beloved apostle—a fisher of souls—talked about it. He said to Christians, ***“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things”*** (1 Jn. 2:20, nkjv). He also explained to them, ***“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him”*** (1 Jn. 2:27). He wasn't telling them they had arrived or had become know-it-alls who no longer needed a Bible teacher. He was reminding them that the ultimate Teacher and Fisher now lived on the inside and would guide them in His work. John was talking about this in the context of making disciples that are real and go the distance; ones that abide in the Son and in the Father. He was stressing the importance of winning souls that will continue on in fellowship with Christ and His Church (2:19 and 24).

Listen, if you want to see fruit that abides, you need the empowering of the Holy Spirit! If you lack the tremendous desire to go fishing for souls and lack the results in this work, then you need to be baptized in, fully immersed in, filled to overflowing with the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Every single day, you and I need to be completely controlled by the Holy Spirit Who has the aptitude, knack and ability to adjust us as well as to convert sinners!

You know, I'll always feel that fishing poles are lots of fun to use if I have the anointing (I'm talking about one-on-one witnessing with lost people here), but using nets can be even better if the Spirit is leading you in your evangelistic effort. The Holy Spirit loves to be included in the process; in how we go fish for souls! Jesus wants to guide you in this. When He was on earth, He was no wallflower or soft homebody off secluded, hiding out, and afraid to interact with common everyday people. He went out to where the people were, because He loved to fish for them! He might not have always felt like putting His body into gear, but after time spent alone with the Father, that's exactly what He did. He was into meeting needs rather than impressing others. In fact His last words to His disciples before He ascended up into the clouds were about receiving the anointing for fishing—fishing with an ever increasing sphere of godly influence. He said, ***“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and***

Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). That's what missions is to be all about, rather than just polished videos and fundraising (and those things done right might have their place)! If there is no anointing for fishing, if there is not witnessing or preaching the Gospel, then it's really not missions at all even though it's called missions.

Christ was a fishing Missionary for the Father! And it's so interesting to observe how Christ intermingled with and related to people at the point of their need. Have you ever taken a close look at how He won His first disciples and called them from their regular careers; from their old lives to become fulltime fishers of men? Surely you know that every real Christian is also called to be a fulltime minister and fisher of people? And this is a great privilege that we can participate in—telling people about Christ and how wonderful He is.

Of course I don't mean that everyone should lay down their current jobs to become professional clergy-persons. We all can't be career *preachers*—God forbid! Man, that could even work against you if you're not called to this. But we all can be *reach-ers*. You and I are called to that. You understand how God will lead some Christians to go into the ministry fulltime, and how He doesn't

do that for all His kids. But you've got to see yourself as a full-time minister just the same! God really wants some fishers out in the secular job arena where lots of unbelievers are each day; where some will come to know His saving grace due to their witness. Salvation is ***"a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace"*** (2 Tim. 1:9). I want you to know that you can never speak to the wrong person about Christ. How else will you find out who is open or closed, friendly or antagonistic, hungry or disinterested in your Message, until you at least try to share the Gospel with them? Your timing, tone, demeanor and attitude might be wrong for that particular moment with that particular person, but that's why we need to listen closely to the Holy Spirit. That's why we need to obey Him according to the Word of God! If you'll take a moment to check out How Christ worked with the Spirit when He caught four of His disciples, I believe that you'll gain a better understanding of how all this will relate to your situation and to our every daily lives.

***If we just keep fishing, we'll "catch" some,
And God will make the foulest of the catch
clean—just as He has done with us.
You've fished for men's souls for years,
Yet little success you can claim;
Keep casting the net where God leads—
Your faithfulness honors His name. —Egner***

The Bible says, ***"As He [Jesus] walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then Jesus said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.' They immediately left their nets and followed Him. When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets. And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him. Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught. And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes"*** (Mk. 1:16-22, nkjv).

Fishnet Casting

I find it interesting that Jesus never said to the crowd: *"Come to church,"* but He did tell believers to go and tell (See Mark 5:19). Right after the baptism of Jesus, we see brothers Simon and Andrew out fishing with a net for the purpose of catching fish and in this passage we do not see them cleaning the

fish first or pressuring the fish to clean themselves before they swim into the net. These guys were simply out skillfully casting a net into the water with expectation and as they did this Jesus Christ spied what they were doing and probably thought to Himself, *“Hey, I can work with that! I can work with these fisher-boys.”* At that time Jesus was fishing for those who were fishing—some brothers.

When we are casting a net out evangelistically to catch multiple people for God's Kingdom, we've got to develop some skill in this. We need experience in hands on training. We need to keep it straight forward and simple. People appreciate that. This is not a time to use flashy worldly things that are kind of raunchy and perverse. Why become needlessly controversial or offensive? Why make enemies when we're out there to make friends for God? The Lord wants you to 'catch' them without compromise and then He'll 'clean' them without compromise! That's how He works.

When a real fisher goes out to sea fishing for fish with pole or a net, they never expect to see the fish cleaned before they get caught. But we Christians do that with other people that we meet and want to see caught. Why are we like that? Why do we try to reform their bad habits when we are powerless to change anyone? They don't even want us all up in their Kool-Aid so to speak? They will probably feel that you are acting presumptuously and have not even earned the right to bring up their personal habits. Many of us try to get them to clean themselves as a prerequisite to being caught and this is so unwise. It's controlling.

Jesus Christ affectionately won people face to face, one at a time. Yes, even when ministering to the masses, their hearts were captured individually. The person entering the arena of professional net fishing should never lay down their pole! Christ's extremely personal passion addressed each one separately—each person as vitally important and extremely valuable. —KvS

Don't get me wrong, I would say that if someone—anyone is doing serious wrong right there in your presence then please do rebuke them. Simply tell them to stop it. There are enough walking-wounded out there already. And if they won't stop it, then call the police to come stop it before someone—anyone gets hurt. We never want to see anybody harmed especially when so many already need to be healed!

“Do you know that if the church did its job, there would be no need for welfare in this country? The original church was the welfare board, they were the unemployment insurance agency, they were the soup kitchen, they were the pregnancy-counseling clinic. They were all these things and more. They were the representation of God's glory upon the earth. Now look at us. Oh we're still the representation of God's glory on the earth, but can people see it? And if they can't, how will they? If we don't show them Jesus how are they going see Him? We are the only living representatives on the face of the earth to shine the light of God's glory through His Son, and if we don't show them, they won't hear.” —Keith Green

Fishnet Mending and Washing

Fishing nets (I mean the kind that are for catching real fish ...and we can sure learn some things about evangelism as we compare the natural to the spiritual here) can be a blessing or a major nightmare in disguise. They are among the most effective tools in a fisherman's arsenal. They can catch hundreds of pounds of fish at one time in fact. Fishing nets in the hands of mere human fishers often catch more than fish, however. They catch practically anything that passes their way! The result is often a net that

is much in need of repair. Yes indeed, nets cast into any type of body of water today will typically catch more than just fish.

I remember how it went as I was fishing with a net in a Jamaican river in 1981. I was down there for a summer mission trip and some of the other Bible students and I got real hungry so we headed for a nearby river with a net. And I experienced it firsthand; nets commonly catch leaves, brush, ole car tires and sometimes even large parts of trees that are propelled into the nets by the swiftly running currents of the river.

What you catch will depend on where you are fishing too. In Florida, more than one fisherman has inadvertently caught alligators and other large animals to the hurt of their nets. Even smaller animals like snakes, raccoons and squirrels can do some damage to a fishnet though. In Texas freshwater lakes, gar fish are commonly caught. Man, have you ever seen the teeth on those things? They can bite too! In brackish waters catfish, stingrays, and even sharks can become entangled in fishnets as they thrash about and flop around trying to escape. Of course if goes without saying that most of these unintentional catches are quite unhappy about their fate as they wiggle and writhe and just get all tangled up. They tear the net's mesh and sometimes they rip it free from the float line or the lead line.

Today, what it takes to repair a physical fish net is lots of patience, a big thick needle, and some replacement monofilament or multifilament twine. Sometimes sections of the float line and lead line will have to be replaced as well but more often than not they only require reattachment to the mesh.

What a fisher of fish does with their net in preparation for fishing is this:

1. They clean out all the debris from the holes of the net.
2. They rinse the net in fresh water and then stretch it out so that the damaged areas can be easily inspected and accessed.
3. They find the proper net-needle and twine (that's heavy enough to go the distance) and they start sewing up one hole after another. Yes, they do this preferably using a twine that matches the type that was used by the net's original manufacturer. They want it to have enough strength to hold the mesh of the net to the float line and to lead line.
4. They continue to mend as they locate all the rips and damaged areas along the parameter.
5. They work methodically and unwearingly as they tie off, darn and patch up the fissures with one clove hitch after another until all the rips are gone. In fact they tie an extra clove hitch at the end just to strengthen, reinforce and finish off the job.
6. They insert the proper spacer (according to their target catch) between each stitch to gauge the amount of twine to leave between stitches so that the individual holes won't be too big and allow their fish to slip through and they continue in this manner with each successive row.

Even severely damaged fishing nets can be repaired, so be encouraged! When the fisherman is good, the net will end up as good as new when they are done!

What a fisher of other people does in preparation for fishing is this:

He or she will sow to the Spirit a lot, as they grow and mature. They will build themselves up in their most holy faith. Today, what it takes to repair a net ...so to speak, for spiritual fishing is patience and obedience in a close relationship with the Lord. It takes true repentance and faith-filled prayer with the right address attached to the prayers (to the God of the Bible through Jesus Christ). It takes walking in the Spirit as you get yourself fully and firmly in the Fisher's hands. It takes you trusting Him to heal,

restore and forgive you. It takes His anointing to make you become useable; to help you forgive others and make full restitution in repairing the rending or damage that you have caused others intentionally or unintentionally. It takes you humbly linking-up together with other healthy "net-holes" (Christians). It takes the right attitude, the right spirit, the right thinking and good clear communication as you do everything you can to develop relationships and reach out. It takes you regularly getting with other growing Christians who love to fish and are good at it (or at least are seeking to be that way). It takes commitment as you mean business about serving and learning from the expert Fishermen; as together with Him and with other believers you thoroughly study His fishing manual (the Bible) and apply what you learn. How else do they prepare for fishing?

1. They prepare by allowing God to sanctify and mature them spiritually. They make confession and repentance a habit of life and keep short accounts with the Lord so that no debris hinders their relationships or work. They examine their own hearts, motives and methods regularly. The blood of Jesus needs to be regularly applied so that you can effectively fish with a clean conscience. Your whole fishing endeavor needs to function clean and pure, with an unsullied innocence and sincerity in the approach. When in doubt about where you stand, how you fish or where you witness ...have a long talk with Jesus about it all and be willing to let Him redirect you. Don't let sinners pull you down or defile your walk and effort. Don't let them condemn and accuse you into an inert useless passivity. If they are correct in pointing out hypocrisy, then admit it, apologize and quit it. Let Jesus deal with it until it's gone. Never return to a lifestyle of sin for anyone or anything! Don't go back to the world—there's nothing there that satisfies. Just before Simon Peter heard Christ's instructions about where he was to throw out his net, the Bible says in verse two, *"He [Christ]...saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets."* What does that mean for us Christians?
 - a. It means that any good net that's in use is going to pick up debris. If you do not wash the net you'll find this result. It's only the decorative nets that don't pick up debris or wear. They just collect dust with no glory for God.
 - b. It means that the net will smell up the boat and area if the debris is not removed. Yes, the net often catches dead fish; seaweed, sea urchins and maybe some mud off the bottom and consequently this will be pulled into your boat.
 - c. It means that the cord will rot if nothing is done about it. If you allow filth to foul the net, your net eventually will disintegrate before it sees its productive potential reached.
 - d. It means that un-cleaned nets will make the work hard. The net is meant to be almost invisible underwater, but an untended one will be seen. It is supposed to just kind of slide through the sea undetected without spooking the schools of fish. Sinners can often smell and detect an unclean net so to speak.
 - e. It means that the fish will indeed get frighten away and others will join them. Fish can see a dirty net even from a long distance, but sometimes they just encounter other scared fish. You will find some who prefer to think that the junk gathered in the net is really just part of the net itself. But we must continue to wash our nets, keeping our lives clean and pure. As we go to God, He will wash away the filth of sin and all the needless junk and activity in our net (life).
2. They prepare through getting brutally honest, stretching themselves out in prayer to seek the Fisherman (Christ) so that all damaged areas can be easily inspected and accessed by Him. Yes, Jesus will locate all rips and damaged areas and He doesn't need our coaching in the repairing process. Jesus spoke of honesty saying, *"The hour is coming, and now is, when*

the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” (Jn. 4:23).

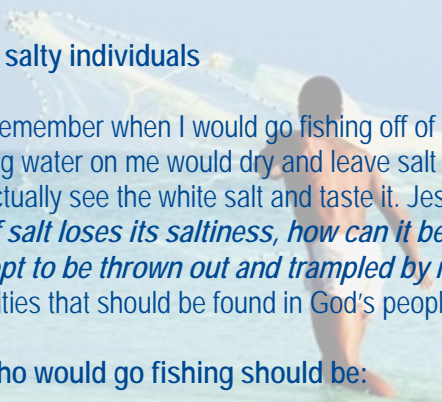
3. They prepare by allowing the Fisher with His proper instruments to perform the surgical sewing procedures in their life for the good of the whole fishing team, for He already knows this His fishing instruments well and He is the original Manufacturer. In regards to painful times of testing, James said, *“But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jam. 1:5).*
4. They prepare by flexibly working together with God (and His family) as He methodically and patiently mends the hole with one clove hitch of His Spirit after another one until all the pain and problem is gone. This calls for obedience, deferring, stick-to-itiveness and sensitivity. Paul challenged us to receive this grace for a purpose saying, *“We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For He says: ‘In an acceptable time I have heard you’” (2 Cor. 6:2).*
5. They prepare by God’s strengthening as He reinforces, further teaches and finishes off the job right. He is more interested in what He accomplishes in you than in what He can accomplish through you, but He is also concerned about what He does through you. They have come to trust that what He has started in their fishing venture, He will complete with them. Paul said, *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:3-6).*

In that Mark 1 Scripture passage we were looking at, we saw brothers James and John fixing-up a busted fishnet in their boat. They were probably weaving the tears back together, using tools that they used every day. Everyone knows how the infrared and ultra violet rays from the sun, along with the water will cause some damage to the fibers of any net over time. And when your livelihood depends on the net being strong and working right, you will be even more vigilant and give the right amount of attention to your methods, to your tools and to how to use all of this stuff well.

Why Churches Die:

1. *Visitors don’t become converts (Many Christians and pastors won’t give them the Gospel, the Law or an opportunity).*
2. *Converts don’t become disciples (they don’t make Jesus Lord according to His Word).*
3. *Disciples refuse to allow Jesus to turn them into audio visual witnesses.*

The fishermen of James and John’s day were very accustomed to using their tools and repairing their nets. Again in review, they would regularly clean and rid them from all the worthless floating items and plant life, sewing-up holes, tying knots in the outer line and mending all the frayed edges that would rub across the bow of the boat. A net is basically a lot of thick string, or cord, or rope that’s tied together to create a wall of strands with many small holes in it. And you know why—it’s so that thousands of gallons of water can quickly be released through those holes without allowing any fish to slip away with the water. We in the Church are just like a bunch of holes with God living water flowing through us. We are linked to each other and working together for a catch. A hole in a net is basically *nothing at all* and good for nothing apart from the hands of the fisherman. Keeping that in mind will help us stay humble in His hands.

A person is seen from behind, standing on a pier and casting a large fishing net into the ocean. The net is green and yellow, and it is partially submerged in the water. The background shows a clear blue sky and the ocean.

Christ was and is the ultimate Fisherman. He wasn't busy decorating with a net when He reached out to catch me, a good for nothing person, and as He did, He used people that ordinarily are also good for nothing, but He used them. They were dependant upon Him in this effort. And perhaps just like He used with me, He might have used some decent bait and willing personnel to catch you as well—bait that really attracted you towards His net or hook. These warmhearted people that invited me into their home played some pretty cool music in worship that I liked. I enjoyed the entire experience as they studied the Bible and prayed for each other. I'd never seen such love like this. But my point is this: you and I are a bunch of "nothings" and yet God valued us enough to send us His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem us. And when God takes a bunch of nothings, saves them, fills them with His love, with His anointing and unites them all together like a big net for one purpose, they can become a powerful tool in His hands! I don't want to point you to the net or a pole or towards fishing primarily. I want to point you to Jesus! He is so magnificent and He alone gets the credit for making all types of fishing a joy. We've got to know Him well and then make Him well known!

We are united together with Him in order to accomplish a purpose that He has for us. And Christ can do far more for God's glory with and through us united, than any one Christian could accomplish alone. Together, we are praying and holding hands so to speak, and working as one to literally span the entire globe.

Fishermen can be salty individuals

I love the ocean. I remember when I would go fishing off of the pier in San Clemente or off of a boat out at sea, the splashing water on me would dry and leave salt crystals on my eyebrows and shirt. When I got home I could actually see the white salt and taste it. Jesus told His disciples this: *"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men"* (Matt. 5:13). Christ used salt to illustrate three qualities that should be found in God's people.

A real Christian who would go fishing should be:

- 1) **Faithful**, Yes, we should remember God's faithfulness! Just as salt, when it was used with a sacrifice in Old Testament times, helped the Jewish people recall God's covenant with all His people, so it should remind us of how faithful we are to be. Can you be counted on, or are you flakey?
- 2) **Flavorful**, Yes, we should make a difference in the "flavor" of the world that we live in, just as salt changes meat's flavor. Are you boring or effervescent and interesting?
- 3) **Preserving**, Yes, we should counteract the moral decay in society around us, just as salt preserves food from decay. When we lose this desire to "salt" the earth with the love and Message of God, we become useless to Him and to His Kingdom. Are you a preservative-type of Christian or are you a chameleon type that compromises?

Salt in the Bible represents living what you believe. Light in the Bible represents proclaiming what you believe. If you are trying to be light without being Salt, please do us all a favor and stop telling people about Jesus. I mean it. If you are driving like an inconsiderate maniac on the road with an angry look on your face, please take the Jesus stickers off your car. We'd all rather have you not be an on-the-road-witness if you can not be other than a road-rage-witness. We'd rather have you not be a verbal witness if you can not figure out how to appropriate Christ's power daily to be other than a bad verbal witness! We could even have a de-sticker-ing ceremony for those who are bad witnesses on the road. Let's walk what we talk in Him. Let's shine brightly in this dark world!

Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament, and those who turn many to righteousness like the stars forever and ever. —Daniel 12:3

Lighthouses are built by ex-drowning sailors. Fishers of souls are made from those who have been caught and cleaned by Jesus as He worked by His Spirit through at least one Christian fisher. God builds witnessing churches through ex-lost people! —KvS

A fisher of people is often zealously thinking about how he or she can verbally get the Message of the Gospel out further, and influence more and more people with the Bible and the love of Jesus. That's great! I think every Christian should be like that, but we also must remember that a lit city on a hill in the night is pretty hard to hide. People will notice. Jesus said, *"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:14-16, kjv).

For salt to be effective, it must get out of its container and into the world of hurting, dying, suffering, sinning people. In this dark world, there is no impact without contact, and yet, after knowing the Lord personally for some five years or so, the typical Christian has little or no significant evangelistic type of relationships with non-Christians left for the most part.

Frequently, the unsaved are viewed as enemies of the Church rather than victims of the ultimate enemy. The Christian begins to feel he has nothing in common with non-Christians. Frankly, we have a lot in common with the unsaved: we have mortgages, car payments, bills to pay, food to buy, kids to feed, a lawn to mow, interests in sports and hobbies, Indeed we have life in common, and with our dedication to evangelizing the lost with the Word of God will can have His saving Grace also in common. It is good for us to remember that Jesus was called a *"Friend of sinners"*—He was a committed Fisher of men and of women.

Work The Net

We don't want to merely design beautiful things with a net; we want to throw out the net. We want you to cast out a line while you still have some time! Don't fret, the net can be a sure bet. When Christ is in your boat your mission will stay afloat! Yes, there is directed-work and non-preachy preaching involved with this. Paul said, *"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away*

Nets are for casting and fishing, they're not really for home decorating and dust. Bait is for luring and attracting, it's not really for spreading on crackers and munching on as a snack. Hooks are for lowering and setting, they're not really weapons for fighting with other fishermen. Sinners are for loving and winning, they're not for mankind to reform, manipulate or control. You are for Christ, to serve in His Enterprise rather than for yourself, for the world or for dead religion! —KvS

from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Ti 4:2-5, nkjv).

A great example of this guidance principle is found in the gospel of Luke (5:4-5). Jesus spoke to Simon Peter who was out on the lake and He directed him saying, "...**Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net.**"

This story isn't merely in the Bible for Pete's glory, as some *fish story!* It wasn't embellished nor was it inserted so that Simon could brag about his huge catch like some contemporary fishermen like to do. Jesus already told the disciples they were to be fishers of people ...for God alone. He was instructing them just like He is teaching us today. But Simon didn't grasp all there was to this *fishing stuff*. He did understand enough to do some work by casting out his net exactly as Jesus commanded him to though.

Christian, you and I are woven together with Christ's church and we must rely upon Christ daily as we work together and cast our nets out where He directs us to. We don't merely sail through the ocean of this world's humanity guessing about what and where to do this. No, no, we must maintain a right spirit, and we follow Christ's instructions moment by moment in casting out and in drawing the net aboard. The holes will work if Jesus is obeyed. That's where the blessing is!

You see He is working on their end too. He's working in you (Christian) both to will and to do of His good pleasure, but He is also preparing the unbeliever's hearts who will hear you ..as you pray in faith and reach out to them. Sure, we might hear some pre-believers scoff or some Christians mumble, "*Man, I just want lost people to observe my life and then they'll come to me and ask me to lead them to Christ.*" But listen, most unbelievers don't know that they need the "para experience" of the Holy Spirit convicting them ...or even know what's going on inside them to where they would need help with the Scriptures or to be led to Christ. With all due respect, sinners are not saved by your life; they are saved by His death! Your life alone isn't enough. They do need to see a person living a wonderful life, but more than that, they need to hear the truth of the Gospel and how wonderful Jesus is. They might not understand the anointing on your words as you explain the Gospel, but the Message will be powerful inside of them.

The supreme task of the church is the evangelization of the world. No one has the right to hear the Gospel twice until everyone has had an opportunity to hear it at least once.

—J. Oswald Smith

Fishnet Worshipping

When we fish for fish, think about it. We take them out of the beautiful life they knew into death, but when we fish for men we take them out of ugly death into a beautiful life they never could have imagined. How true and cool is that! It is so fun to evangelize by life, deed and words of truth. It's exciting! I love to work with other Christians who are used of God in fishing for souls. But it's no time to put them, or any sinner, or any practice or habit ahead of the Lord. It's never time to trust in your tools, in your abilities, in your education, or even in your soul-winning denomination, church or pastor ahead of God. God will never let you down when other people might.

It's always a huge heartbreak when a fisher comes to the place where they actually start worshipping their net or their catch. I remember some Christian girls in Germany that would go out witnessing at

Rock Fabrik night club every week. God used them and they so enjoyed telling others about Jesus. And some people were listening to them. Some were changed as God drew them to Himself. Some even came to church, but then the ladies started going inside the club regularly to try to witness to the young men over the loud worldly music. It was hard to be heard and the lyrics were filthy and oppressive. But the guys were subtly hitting on those ladies and eventually talked them into drinking with them as they witnessed.

It's sad when a fisher gets influenced in a negative way by their unbelieving audience. It's disastrous when their priorities get out of whack and they become too busy to spend some quiet time alone with Christ in His Word daily! It's heartrending when they get so busy in evangelizing the lost that they don't take time out for their spouse or their children anymore...or even to attend a Bible teaching church with their growing friends. They eventually lose their fruit, their joy and their peace. Some without realizing it start listening to the lies of the enemy and start echoing what their new unbelieving friends who are ill or partly informed say about Christians. They actually start criticizing the church and those who attend it without any fairness. It's so sad when they backslide spiritually or make a total shipwreck of their faith. It can happen to any of us if we don't keep our guard up. It starts with little compromises, so beware you who think you stand, lest you fall! Above all else, guard your heart, your spirit, your thoughts, your motives and attitudes, for your heart condition will affect everything you do. Watch over it with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life (See Prov. 4:23). In Habakkuk 1:13-17, Habakkuk tearfully prays asking how the Lord can allow the Chaldeans to come and devour His people.

In verse 15, Habakkuk depicts the invading army coming across the land as a net swallowing up the people, ***"They take up all of them with the angle [hook] they catch them in their net and they gather them in their drag and therefore they rejoice and are glad."*** As the Chaldeans rejoice in their victory, verse 16 goes on to say, ***"Therefore they sacrifice unto their net, and burn incense unto their drag"***; they had something that worked in the water so excellently and was so effective, yet tragically they began to worship it—the created thing, rather than their Creator. And to worship anything other than the true and living God is idolatry.

My main focus and emphasis is not the net, not the fisherman, not the boat, not the baited hook, not the fishing headquarters, not what we could catch near or far away, not even the enemies of what God can catch through us—it is in **knowing and serving Jesus Christ!** The most valuable thing to God is not the net; it's the souls (you and me), but He alone is the most precious to us! Please adopt the characteristic of a passionate fisherman by always loving the Lord most and having His compassion towards the souls that are lost! If a certain method works well for you this decade, great! Why fix what isn't broke? But don't build an altar or monument around it or yourself—don't bow down to it or allow anyone to bow down to you. If I have told you something that has worked well for me in the past, simply pray about it, but do what God says and be more committed to His Word than to what I or any other person says. Have courage to step out and cast out your net, but always spend time loving the Top Fisher more than fishing or any other type of ministry!