

THE CHURCH THAT LOVES TO FISH

the great commission or great omission

FOUR

We are all missionaries (soul-winners). Wherever we go, we either bring people nearer to Christ, or we repel them from Christ. – Eric Liddell

We must never underestimate the potential of youth. Throughout history God has called young men and women to rise up and change their world through the power of the gospel.
– Loren Cunningham

Why don't churches today love to fish? What's not to love? Here's why I think they aren't excited about it: They're concerned with other things and could simply give a flip about unbelievers in their lostness, but Jesus still cares about them. They don't know how to fish, but much training is available. They get distracted and all fruitfulness is choked out by the cares of the world, but the things they pursue only leave them scratching their heads wondering which fad to go after next. They don't spend time in corporate or individual prayer for nations or lost people, but the Spirit is still beckoning them to steal away with the ultimate Fisherman. They don't know God's heartbeat, or the details of His specific call for their future. What's the solution? We need to care, pray, go, learn how and love the church more! We need to fish well and live to change all that!

Here's Why Local Churches Die:

- 1. Visitors with one lame reason after another refuse to become true converts (we don't give them the opportunity)*
- 2. Converts for one lame reason or many refuse to become true disciples (they don't seek Christ aggressively or make Him their Lord according to His Word)*
- 3. Disciples for one lame reason or another refuse to become true fishers of people (they don't evangelize the way Jesus did it for the glory of the Father)*

“Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word.” Acts 8:4

Anywhere with You, Lord, provided it is forward. –David Livingstone

Today we hear a lot about the emergent church, about seekers and being seeker sensitive. A Bible teacher yesterday evening wanted to talk with me about the validity of gold dust, feathers and oil appearing on churchgoer's hands. What a bogus distraction for Christians! He wanted to know my opinion about such great phenomenon. I told him that I was not called to defend or endorse such things like that, but I also never once in the Bible see God working purposeless miracles merely to dazzle people or get a crowd. He said I was scoffing at this stuff, but I don't

care or have the time. I guess being raised in a traditional church that was into kissing the feet of bleeding statues—images of sinners turned saint that supposedly have spiritual powers... you know, spending years in a church that revered Mexican tortillas with the face of Jesus appearing on it or on the stuck wall of their building outside... even though I could never see such a picture... I simply grew tired of such jive.

But why don't we see more so called seekers coming to Christ? I believe that a true seeker will be a true finder. But many seekers remain with lots of questions. They want more time for analysis. It's good to think things through and ask questions, if you will act on the truth in the answers that you find. But some would-be-intellects seem to have analysis paralysis, after decades of being witnessed to they still refuse to forsake their old life of sin to accept the Savior.

Listen, if a person really wants answers to their questions, they will seek those answers out. And God can answer those questions very easily. He's right there for them, but some are determined to look in every direction but

in His direction. And it is often not because of unanswered questions that they remain outside the Kingdom. It is because they are more "comfortable" where

they are in the darkness where they stand. God says, ***"I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently will find me"*** (Prov. 8:17). He said, ***"And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart"*** (Jer. 29:13).

***Let us go to win for the Lamb the
reward of His sacrifice!***
– Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf

The simple answer to why some people do not come to Christ is summed up in John 3:19-20:

"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

The story is told of a castle-like dungeon in Paris known as the Bastille that was about, to be destroyed in 1789. A prisoner who had been kept confined in a dark, dingy dungeon in this prison for many years was brought out. But instead of welcoming his new found freedom, he begged to be taken back into the darkness. It had been such a long time since he had seen the sunshine, that his eyes could not immediately endure its brightness. His only desire was to die in that murky dungeon where he had been held captive for so long.

***There are no closed
doors to the Gospel,
provided that, once
you go through the
door, you do not
care whether or not
you come back out.***
–Brother Andrew

In the same way, some men continue to reject Jesus Christ until they eventually become so hardened in their sin that they prefer the dark ways of eternal death.

We can't repent or make the decision for people. We can make closed sinners suddenly open or make the perpetual analyzer

come to faith, when he can't see the proof of all spiritual things in test tube. We must seek the Lord for the unbelievers around us though until He takes away the blinders and opens their eyes.

"Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire." Psalm 104:4

"Preach Christ. He's preachable!"
—E.V. Hill

"Let every kindred, every tribe on this terrestrial ball, To Him all majesty ascribe and crown Him Lord of all!"
—John Rippon

We need to do our best to pray and study. It's our duty to do the best we can as Christians, to answer the questions people are asking. At the same time, remembering that conversion is ultimately the work of God alone, we need not take on His job. We need to trust Him for the results. Doing my best, I commit the rest. Please believe God for the impossible this year. Do pray fervently that your non-believing friends, co-workers, and family

members come to see their personal need for Jesus Christ. Do study and prepare to answer their questions. Apologist Norman Geisler said, *"Before we can share the Gospel, we sometimes have to smooth the road, remove the obstacles, and answer the questions that are keeping that person from accepting the Lord. The objections unbelievers raise are usually not trivial. They often cut deep into the heart of the Christian faith and challenge our foundations."* Do pursue Christ and learn how to do it better depending upon Him. God said, *"...Seek Me and live"* (Amos 5:4).

Does the name **Dwight Moody** mean anything to you? You might say that Moody was the "Billy Graham" of the late 1800's. He was the great evangelist whose work to serve Christ carries on today at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. Does the name Edward Kimball also sound familiar to you? Kimball was just an ordinary guy who loved the Lord. He was a Sunday school teacher in his local church. One day an 18-year-old named Dwight Moody visited his class. From that first visit, Kimball could tell that Moody was unfamiliar with the Bible. One Saturday as Kimball was preparing the next day's Sunday school lesson, God placed a burden on his heart to share the Gospel with Moody. He hemmed and hawed and fought against it for awhile. Finally he mustered the courage and went down to the shoe store where Moody worked. In Moody's biography, *A Passion for Souls*, by Dr. Lyle Dorsett, Moody recalls that moment:

"When I was in Boston I used to attend a Sunday school class, and one day I recollect my teacher came around behind the counter of the shop I was at work in, and put his hand upon my shoulder, and talked to me about Christ and my soul. I had not felt that I had a soul till then. I said to myself, 'This is a very strange thing. Here is a man who never saw me till lately, and he is weeping over my sins, and I never shed a tear about them.' But I understand it now, and know what it is to have a passion for men's souls and weep over their sins. I don't remember what he said, but I can feel the power of that man's hand on my shoulder [even now]. It was not long after that I was brought into the Kingdom of God."

And the rest is history. Listen Christian, like me you too might be just an ordinary person, but you really do have a significant ministry in Jesus! While God may not have called you to stand up in front of thousands and tell them about Christ, he can use you in powerful ways. Let Edward Kimball's story and example inspire you to be more open about sharing your faith in Jesus—Let it give you an even greater passion for the lost souls around you! Let it drive you to your knees in fervent prayer.

You've probably read about *Operation Andrew* in the Bible. A young guy named **Andrew brought Peter** to Jesus. It was one soul to Andrew, but it was really many souls. You remember how Peter was used of the Holy Spirit with the Word of God to bring three thousand to Christ with one sermon.

Mr. Kimball, a Sunday school teacher, brought one **Dwight Moody**—but that one person was in reality a multitude. For Moody, by the Holy Spirit taking one continent in one hand and another with the other hand rocked two continents toward God.

In 1879, **D. L. Moody** awakened evangelistic zeal in the heart of **Frederick B. Meyer**, a pastor of a small local church.

Preaching on an American college campus, **F. B. Meyer** brought to Christ a student named **J. Wilbur Chapman**.

Chapman, engaged in YMCA work, employed a former baseball player named, **Billy Sunday**, to do evangelistic work.

Billy Sunday held a revival in Charlotte, North Carolina. A group of local businessmen became so enthusiastic about the things of God after the revival that they planned another evangelistic campaign. They brought **Mordecai Hamm** to town to preach. In the revival, a young man named **William Graham** heard the Gospel, repented and yielded his life to Christ.

Now **Billy Graham** has won tens of thousands to Jesus and the story goes on.

Could the Sunday school teacher possibly have known the spiritual chain reaction being set into action when a Boston shoe clerk gave his life to Christ? Just one soul became multiplied thousands upon thousands to Jesus for the Kingdom of God.

Billy Graham said, "The evangelistic harvest is always urgent. The destiny of men and of nations is always being decided. Every generation is strategic. We are not responsible for the past generation, and we cannot bear full responsibility for the next one; but we do have our generation. God will hold us responsible as to how well we fulfill our responsibilities to this age and take advantage of our opportunities."

Won't you come and join us in fishing for souls? You do this by getting right with the Father through the One who still loves to fish named, Jesus Christ? The church that loves to fish loves Jesus most! He's the only way you'll make it.

If I had it to do all over again, I'd seek the Him even more and then I'd go fishing!

One day at my funeral when I am gone... please don't cry for me. Why? Because I'll be in a better place. I so enjoyed the fishing journey. I've never had anything to boast about, I couldn't have afforded such a wonderful life in Him. It was all a gift—a great adventure! Don't weep for me because.

*I've surfed beautiful glassy waves for more than eight years.
I've camped all over California, Nevada, Texas, Colorado, Mexico, Germany and Romania with saints and sinners ...many of which came to Christ.
I was privileged to witness to a handful of TV personalities and other movie stars that were visiting our city.
I've kissed and married a beautiful woman.
I've smelled a red rose and a white gardenia.
I've enjoyed the company of wonderful people as a missionary in twenty one nations and spent time learning their language.
I've enjoyed unique holiday meals and festivities with people of different cultures.
I've done outdated skateboard tricks on cobblestones far away and told those interested about the One I love
We taught the Bible enthusiastically in a couple languages and have given altar calls in mega churches.
I've preached the Word on Nicaraguan and Dallas Radio shows reaching out with all that was in me.
Don't cry for me, I've owned a nice home and new cars in America, but not from my church paychecks.
We've watched many colorful sunsets.
I've spent time raising three wild boys.
I've worked hard and been employed with interesting people in different settings.
I've enjoyed a great library after many worthless books of charisma and other types were chucked.
I've enjoyed health soundness of mind and good sight for many years.
I've had my parents around even as I grew old.
Don't cry for me, I was totally forgiven.*

***I CAN'T THINK OF ANYTHING MORE EXCITING ON EARTH THAN
FISHING TOGETHER WITH JESUS AND HIS CHURCH!***

It was so awesome in Him. Reaching out horizontally, can simultaneously be one form of vertical worship when we allow Jesus to be Lord! We did this in Europe. God, thanks boookoos for all the exploring and traveling experiences! Who wouldn't have enjoyed seeing the beauty of your creation deep in those tall forests and the great cities of far away lands? Who wouldn't have enjoyed the luxury train rides through the tunnels of the tall Alps, the white sand beaches, the boat rides on the romantic canals of Venice and the sailing away to and from islands in the sea, or the skin-diving in turquoise waters with big clouds of colorful fish. Who wouldn't have loved entering the warm tide pools and blow holes of the Pacific or the hiking, biking and horse back

riding way up in the Rockies, or the exotic world class spas on the hotel's nickle, the weekend getaways in Paris, the German castles, art museums, and resort hotels for free or all the fine linen dining for the cost of a good tip? Thanks for my wife who likes to dance with loud polka music in the Gasthof at a German wedding. She loved so many interesting weddings that she put together—the cakes, dresses, roses and other events in Bavaria. It was magnificent just to witness along side of her along the way. I feel so grateful and blessed ...so don't cry for me.

Lord, what we've always craved is the closeness of Your presence and a sound church family that likes to go fish! Just to be apart of your worldwide rescue plan and Church that's making a difference with Your Word. Just to help gain for You a bride without spot or wrinkle! What a privilege and JOY! We were in brilliant Christian seminars and had true fellowship as Your Spirit moved. We've enjoyed years of fulltime employment that was connected to harvesting—thrilling evangelistic outreach. How energizing and refreshing like a swim in a gentle stream in the Sierras, like basking in the tranquil Son light with the constant cleansing from Your torrential rain. It's been like a Holy Spirit massage in a way for the inner person! Thanks God for the edifying books, the crusades and the fishing tools. You've set eternity in our hearts! Nothing else could have satisfied, but You. Man, the hours spent engaged in worship along with loved ones and then going soul-winning along with experts—it has been more radically stimulating—invigorating than any pampering of an expensive masseuse or masseur on some secluded beach near the water's edge as it lapped up on the Mexican sand. Your love exceeds the comfort of napping on a creaky boat anchored at night in a quiet Catalina harbor!

It's never been about being served in a five star way or just getting away or gaining more toys. It's been about serving You and helping others. ***“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'”*** (Acts 20:35). And there's so much more to give than currency. It's not about being an inside member at some exclusive, high-end club or even at the Cooper Clinic. It's still about helping outsiders become insiders in the splendor of a Kingdom that has no end! It's about limiting your time with people not serious about growing in the Word—yes, excluding the evil, not those open to the impulses of the Spirit! How empty and lonely mere travel apart from You would be. How boring and insignificant life would have been without going fishing with the One who can teach us how. When I am gone Church, please don't cry for me. What an exciting life it's been! Just learn to love fishing with Him until He comes.