

...FOR THOSE SEEKING THE EMPOWERING PRESENCE OF THE *Holy Spirit*

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Significance Shift

Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord." So when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, He...threw himself into the sea (John 21:7).

It is one thing to share the spoils of success with others; it is another thing to give up complete control of all you have. As demonstrated in the verse above, Peter lost interest in his right to the catch after he recognized the Lord standing on the seashore. In biblical terms, he relinquished ownership of everything he had attained and threw himself into radical pursuit of the "pearl of great price" (see Matthew 13:46).



You Know You Are Fishing From the Right Side of the Boat When You are Willing to Give up Ownership of What is Rightfully Yours

by Larry Randolph

What motivated Peter to give up rightful ownership of his possessions and go after the ultimate prize? In my estimation, a series of past events brought Peter to this threshold of change. First, by all accounts in the Gospels, his earlier years of ministry seemed to be driven by self-importance and significance. According to Mark 8:32, he was so blinded by his need for recognition that he took the Lord aside and reprimanded Him for His predictions about the future. Jesus quickly rebuked the misguided disciple and reminded him that such presumption is demonically inspired.

Thankfully, after several years of living and ministering with Christ, Peter seemed to realize his bent toward selfish

ambition. No doubt, he was impacted by the actions of a Savior who possessed all the legal rights belonging to a king, but also declared in John 8:50, "And I seek not mine own glory..." (KJV). Especially potent were other declarations of Jesus such as His exhortation in Luke 12:31 – to seek first the kingdom of God instead of one's own rights. Once again, the Lord raised the spiritual bar for Peter when He declared in Luke 14:11, "For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

In my estimation, these words of Jesus probably had a great impact on Peter's drive for self-importance. This seems evident in the way Peter addressed the fading glory of mankind in his later writings to the church. At the end of his life, the now broken and less presumptuous disciple was able to proclaim that "...all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass" (1 Peter 1:24 KJV).

I, too, have been preoccupied with a struggle for ownership—especially in the area of personal significance. Tragically, as

Lutheran Renewal

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2701 Rice Street • St. Paul MN 55113-2200
Telephone: 651-490-1517 • Fax: 651-486-2865



Alliance of Renewal Churches
www.arcusa.org • 651-486-4808

The Master's Institute

www.themastersinstitute.org • 651-765-9756



a young man, I was driven to make myself known among men. My focus was set on what I must do to get where I was going.

Certainly, I had a heart for people, and a burden to see the kingdom of God established in their lives. But to reach my absolute destiny, I believed I must first establish my authority as one called and anointed by God. I worked hard to take possession of everything I felt was rightfully mine. As a result, I invested an abundance of time into the development of my spiritual gifting.

As the years passed, however, my identity became dangerously tied to my accomplishments. Driven for significance, I drifted into a world of spiritual acquisition, where it became more about me than about Christ and His church. Without knowing it, I had given a greater part of my time and effort to building my own ministry instead of His kingdom.

It all came to the surface in 1993. While pastoring a church that was diminishing in numbers and finances, the Lord took advantage of my vulnerable position and disarmed me with one simple statement. Out of desperation I had been praying, "Lord what is going on with my church? Why is my church going through such a hard time?"

The Lord quietly replied, "The moment it became your church, it stopped being My church." At that point, the problem was unmistakably clear. Because of "my fish syndrome," Christ's headship of that particular congregation had been replaced by my own need for significance. Unintentionally, I had compromised in a way similar to Lucifer's original sin and exalted myself above the boundaries of my spiritual authority (see Isaiah 14:14). In response to this revelation, I began to cry out, "Please Lord, deliver me from the sin of self-importance."



Significance or Contribution?

In answer to my prayer, the Lord has shown me several differences between the way sons and fathers conduct themselves. One of the most striking distinctions is their motivation in life. As a rule, sons are driven by performance

and a need for significance, whereas fathers are primarily motivated by contribution.

"...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve..."

Matthew 20:28

The majority of young men, for example, are overly concerned about marking their territory through acts of performance. They work tirelessly to elevate themselves and have little room in their hearts to share the spoils of success with others. It is always about peak performance and the success of the moment. They often live for their own advancement, and are rarely concerned about the long-term contribution that is necessary to build God's church.

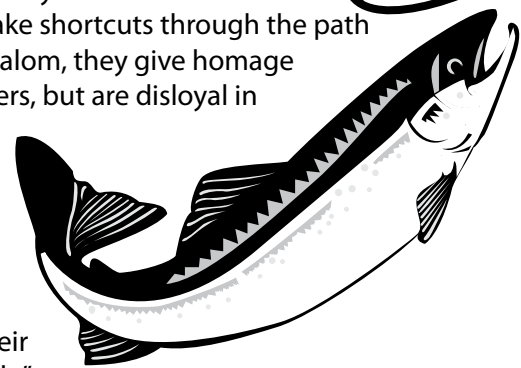
Also, those driven by a need for significance are reluctant to play by the rules. They have little tolerance for spiritual protocol and often take shortcuts through the path of integrity. Like Absalom, they give homage to their spiritual fathers, but are disloyal in secret. Given the right opportunity, they will sacrifice a lifetime of friendship for rulership.

Consequently, men who are driven by their need to be "somebody" become one of the most dangerous threats to the advancement of God's kingdom.

True fathers, on the other hand, are motivated by the investment they can make in the lives of other people. They value the success of others above their own, and work to elevate those who are less visible. Their ceiling truly becomes the floor on which the next generation stands. Because they have been delivered from an unhealthy need for recognition, performance has no place in their hearts. These fathers are free from the stress of self-promotion and are content to let Christ perform His perfect will in and through their lives.

Ultimately, fathers live to give. This means fatherhood is attained when a man contributes more to his family than he takes out. This is true for natural fathers and spiritual fathers alike. In either case, a father does not require his children to provide for his welfare, but works tirelessly to nurture the dreams and visions of those under his care. In short, real fatherhood is defined by the investment made in others, not by the ability to acquire for himself.

Also, this investment goes far beyond financial provision and includes time, friendship, and other aspects of benevolence. Speaking about His own fatherhood, Jesus



stated in Matthew 20:28 that He came to serve, not to be served. He also expressed in Mark 10:43 that the distinctive mark of greatness is the ability to give ourselves to others.

World-Class Fishermen

There is an aspect of fishing which also speaks to the theme of significance and contribution. It has to do with a method of fishing that distinguishes a world-class fisherman from a common fisherman. The concept is known as “catch and release.”

A world-class fisherman, for example, fishes for the thrill of the catch and has no desire to take permanent ownership of the fish. After the fish is reeled in, he gently takes the lure out of its mouth and releases the fish back into its natural habitat. Although the fisherman has gained total ownership of the fish, he would never think of placing the fish in captivity. He knows if he lets the fish loose, it will grow and produce more of its kind.

On the contrary, the common fisherman is usually motivated by ownership. The whole sport is about the size of the catch. Even if he does not eat fish, his ego will not let him release the fish back into the water. In most instances, he will put as many fish as he can on a stringer and have his picture taken as a reminder of his success. The issue is not whether the fish live or die, or that anyone actually benefits from the catch, but it is rather a tribute to his fishing skills.

Catch and Release

Which is the proper method of fishing? Is it “catch and release” or “catch and restrain?” Before I offend both the spiritual and the natural fishermen, I want to make several things clear. I am not assigning a greater value to either technique of fishing. Neither am I suggesting there is anything wrong with catching, keeping, and eating fish. I am simply trying to illustrate a spiritual principle by using an everyday example of different methods of fishing.

Having said that, I do believe, in a spiritual sense, that the “catch and release” method is more in tune with God’s end-time harvest than the “catch and restrain” method. Jesus clearly demonstrated this truth by the way He handled His disciples. After catching and training them, he quickly released them back into the world to reproduce God’s life. The same was true for a demoniac in Mark 5:18-19, who after being delivered of demons, asked to follow Jesus. Like the disciples, he was also released by Jesus and commissioned to go back to his family and friends and testify about the great things the Lord had done for him.

Considering Jesus’ behavior in these two incidents, it is apparent that the goal of the harvest is to catch and release fish, not confine them to religious boxes. The Lord seemed

to be saying that it is more profitable to release one live fish back into the sea of humanity than to show off a whole stringer of fish. If this is true, then the challenge before us is to shift our thinking from church mentality (catch and restrain) to a kingdom mentality (catch and release).

The late John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard Fellowship of Churches, exemplified this mentality more than any pastor I have ever known. He was determined to equip and release as many Christians as he could disciple back into the mainstream of society. Although meetings and conferences were high on his list, two of his main goals were to advance the kingdom through evangelism and to establish new churches.

Also, because of John’s catch and release mentality, he had fewer church splits than most other Christian organizations. When an upcoming leader or group of people became discontented and wanted to leave his church, he would readily send them out with a blessing. Because of this approach, many who left decided to stay connected



organizationally, and reproduced John’s core values in their new church. As a result, the Vineyard movement grew to several hundred churches within a few short years.

Rick Joyner, another friend of mine, has also adopted the same fishing style. His motivation for having church is not to entertain lazy Christians or build the biggest congregation in town, but to equip and release an army of radical disciples into the marketplace. He recently told me that he was uncomfortable with fruitless Christians who sit in his congregation for more than two years, and he often prays that they will leave. He explained that they are taking up valuable space, and he needs their chair to equip someone else.

Like the late John Wimber, Rick also understands the incredible value of the “catch and release” principle. Actually, both men have refused, time and again, to define their ministry by the number of dead fish on their stringer. And, because they have consistently chosen kingdom

principles over religious dogma, their effectiveness has been far-reaching in the world. In my opinion, this makes them world-class fishermen.

Spiritual Poverty

The same spirit of poverty that causes people to hoard money, and fishermen to keep more fish than they need, also drives many leaders to selfishly hold onto people. Throughout the years, I have seen ministers operate in a bizarre type of poverty spirit that masquerades under the guise of commitment and loyalty. Many of them expect believers to serve their ministry with unconditional



commitment, but they are often reluctant to release them into their individual destinies.

What really is the bottom line for many of these leaders? I suspect the real issue is not that they possess a special revelation about commitment or that they need such a great number of people to survive. Rather, many of them are harboring deep insecurities and a lack of faith to succeed without the constant support and adoration of others. Ultimately,

this mindset makes some of the greatest leaders cling to people in an unhealthy way.

Please don't misunderstand me. I am not saying that we minimize the value of commitment to our leaders; nor am I suggesting that we take lightly the issue of honor and loyalty. It is clear in Scripture that we are called to support the leaders God has chosen to train and equip us.

I am saying, however, that the mindset of the kingdom is quite different from today's philosophy of religion. Perhaps it was in this frame of mind that John the Baptist released his disciples to the ministry of Jesus. It is also conceivable that he knew Jesus would also give them away for the proliferation of the gospel, and send them out into the world to establish the kingdom (see Luke 9:1).

In this frame of mind, we must hold those God has committed to our care loosely in our hands. In our search for significance, we must not cling selfishly to things the Lord deems to be transitional and temporary. As I have amply stated, it is better to catch one soul and release it

alive back into the harvest, than to have a large church filled with dead fish.

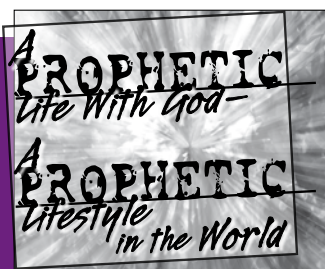
Closing Thoughts

In order to make the transition from significance to contribution, we must disconnect from old paradigms of thinking. Otherwise we will continue to preach a self-centered gospel that puts the emphasis on our right to ownership, instead of God's right to give away our disciples for His purpose on the earth. Bear in mind that the next move of God and the coming harvest are not about you and your ministry, but about the salvation of the world (see Luke 10:2).

Does this mean that we downplay the individual gifting of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Absolutely not! We all have extraordinary gifts from God that make us special. However, Jesus never said there was a shortage of extraordinary ministries—He said that the laborers are few. His prayer in Luke 10:2 was to send a body of believers into the harvest, to seek the lost, not their own glorification. In view of this, the ultimate challenge of the harvest is to learn to shift our focus from solo ministry to an army of workers.

*This article was taken from **The Coming Shift** © 2006 by Larry Randolph. Used by permission of Larry Randolph Ministries. To order a copy of this book or to order other resources by Larry, please visit his website, www.larryrandolph.com, or call 336-921-4447.*

Larry Randolph has a global prophetic ministry with a strong teaching anointing. He is the author of several books including *User Friendly Prophecy* and *Spirit Talk*. Larry will be one of the speakers at the August 1-4, 2007 Holy Spirit Conference, "**Jesus and the Kingdom of God.**"



The teaching at the Equipping Conference was rich with inspiration and challenge. Graham Cooke drew us into the heart of the Father as he talked about

who God is and who He is for us. He confronted our ideas concerning judgment and grace. He encouraged us to leave our baggage at the cross, and then to pick up "luggage" from the Spirit—that which we need on this journey called life. Michael Frost challenged us to be the Church out in the world, not merely behind the walls of our sanctuaries. He planted seeds that contain the DNA of the Kingdom that will enable us to become the missional church of the future.

You may order recordings of this conference using the enclosed form.