

FOUR FISHING FAILURES!

-- SOME MIS-ADVENTURES OF A FLIRTY-FISH!
-- THE FOUR THAT GOT AWAY!

BY
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1. YOU CAN'T HOOK 'EM ALL! But you stand a better chance of doing so if you obey the Fisherman! He knows best, and he has a better view of the whole situation from his elevated vantage point on the bank. He knows where the fish are, what they are and the best way to bait them.

2. BUT HE CAN'T DO A THING IF THE BAIT IS UNWILLING to be cast wherever he says or to obey him when she gets there. She's got to follow his advice if she's going to "catch men" with the love of God.

3. PEOPLE MUST LEARN TO LOVE YOU FIRST BEFORE THEY CAN LEARN TO LOVE YOUR GOD! The world-famed personal evangelist Dr. Dwight L. Moody used to say that,

4. "THE ONLY BIBLE THE WORLD READS IS BOUND IN SHOELEATHER!"--MEANING YOU! But no matter how much you love them and no matter how much you want to show them that God loves them and that He loves them even to the extent of meeting their deepest and greatest needs, whatever they may be, unless you fish according to the Fisherman's wisdom you can waste a lot of time in the water without catching a thing!

5. SOME PEOPLE FISH JUST TO BE FISHING, for the mere enjoyment of the sport of it all, without necessarily caring whether they catch anything or not. So they just use the bait to tantalise them and like to watch them churn the water, and then like to brag about all the big ones that always got away.

6. SUCH FISHERMEN JUST GO ALONG FOR THE RIDE because they enjoy the boat ride and the fellowship of other fishermen, and like to swap yarns even longer than any of the big ones that got away!

7. OTHERS JUST PREFER THE QUIET peace and tranquility of the river bank and the cool shade of the tree for a frequent restful snooze, sit-

ting on the sidelines watching all the fish go by and not really concerned whether they get any nibbles or not! They are sometimes so lethargic they don't even notice the bobbing of their floats or other indications that the fish are interested or even actually nibbling!

8. THE AMATEURS DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE TO FISH or where the fish are or how to catch them and wouldn't even know what they'd caught if they did catch one! Some do it just for the fun of it and actually throw them back in again after hooking them, not caring what happens to them afterward. Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men" and "from henceforth ye shall catch men".

9. WE ARE IN THE BUSINESS OF CATCHING MEN for the Lord, and we mean business! We're not just fooling around playing games as a mere interesting hobby or fascinating sport, but our life and living and their eternal future depends on it! We're out to catch them for the Lord and His service and their own good and to make them useful food for others, so we're not about to let them get away if we can possibly help it!

10. WE LIKE TO MAKE EVERY DAY'S OR NIGHT'S FISHING COUNT and come back with results, not just tall tales! We don't enjoy talking about the big ones that got away. We like to show you the ones we actually hooked and know they're going to be more useful to God from now on because of our love and His. So we're not very proud of the big ones we almost hooked or could have hooked but failed because of foolishness and disobedience.

11. BUT WE HAVE ONE PROBLEM WITH THE BAIT in our business which most fishermen don't have: The bait can argue with us and can be reluctant or stall and delay, or refuse to be-

lieve and obey until the psychological moment is past, the golden opportunity is lost and the fish has swum on his merry way, leaving you high and dry with absolutely nothing to show for your wasted efforts.

12. LET ME WARN YOU HERE THAT EVERY LITTLE PIECE OF FLIRTY-FISH BAIT NEEDS A GOOD FISHERMAN to cast her into the right waters, to show her where to go, call the shots or signals and watch over her very prayerfully and guard her safely while she operates exactly according to his instructions and with the split-second timing that is often required to hook your fish at just the right moment and know how to dig the hook in!

13. IF SHE DOESN'T DO THIS, SHE'S GOING TO MISS A LOT AND LOSE A LOT OF FISH that you've worked so hard to snag. It takes a lot of prayer, a lot of real thought and planning and particularly a lot of total and instant obedience when the time comes.

14. BUT IF YOUR LITTLE BAIT GETS A LITTLE CONTRARY and says, no, she doesn't like this particular hook or that kind of a line or doesn't like to be displayed in this or that fashion or cast into those waters with that kind of fish, or doesn't like the looks of the one that's about to swallow her and insists on swimming in some other direction away from your trap--you're sunk!

15. OR MAYBE SHE THINKS YOUR TARGET LOOKS INEDIBLE or undesirable, or perhaps even so happy she thinks he doesn't need to be caught and she'd rather he'd just swim away! Then she can make you lose a lot of valuable time, waste a lot of tiring effort and exasperate you with a lot of near misses when a miss means as good as a mile!

16. SOMETIMES SHE MAY FEEL SO SORRY FOR HIM she doesn't even want him to be hooked because it might prove too painful for him! She doesn't want to break his heart for God or get him

so hooked he'll think he can't live without her. Sometimes she's even so sympathetic toward her potential catch that she's afraid he's too tired, that he needs to get to bed but not her bed, even over his protestations that he's feeling fine and can take it!

17. SOMETIMES THESE ARE JUST STALLS AND EXCUSES because she just doesn't always enjoy getting gobbled! It's a real crucifixion and it's not altogether always pleasant! There are some thorns and nails and piercing points to endure, including quite a few penetrations that sometimes hurt, and she's not always that anxious to get penetrated!

18. BUT WE MUST DIE THAT OTHERS MAY LIVE: Die to pride, self, reputation and sometimes even personal comfort and safety! So it's not easy to be bait. Flirty-Fishing may seem fun until you finally get the point that you're probably going to wind up getting stuck yourself in a most humbling fashion, and there can be some very embarrassing moments.

19. ONE OF THE BIGGEST PROBLEMS IS WORRY about what other people will think. Until you're willing like Jesus, to make yourself of no reputation, or even a bad reputation of hobnobbing with publicans and sinners and drunks and harlots as Jesus did, and being called a winebibber, a glutton and demon-possessed as Jesus was, and having your motives and good intentions questioned and your purposes in doubt, you'll not be a very good Bait or Fisherman either one, and had better consider some other safer and more predictable business!

20. YOU ARE CONSTANTLY RUNNING THE RISK of having your motives misunderstood, your intentions misinterpreted and your real reasons doubted, and you may sometimes not even know the real results of your planting of the seeds of love until God brings them to blossom a long

time later.--And you often worry about what may blossom from your fish's seeds too!

21. SO IT CAN BE A VERY DIFFICULT AND TRYING BUSINESS and sometimes very disappointing. It takes lots of faith to stick to it, trusting that God knows what He's doing and that the catch will be made sure later, even if you can't always see immediate results.

22. IT TAKES LOTS OF FAITH AND PATIENCE TO FISH! After some recent fairly successful adventures, our little Flirty-Fish has had a few mis-adventures which have taught us both some good lessons and we've learned a lot, we hope--thank the Lord!

23. ONE VERY FINE YOUNG HANDSOME FISH (who would have been quite a catch) we noticed had been eyeing the bait a little warily, until he too finally decided to risk a nibble by bringing her breakfast to her room one morning. I had a feeling it was going to be Tony this time and I told her so. We noticed that he waited until late, just before his time off, so he could make it his last trip and have plenty of time and not be missed.

24. A LITTLE WORRIED about what to do, our little Flirty-Fishy asked for advice, and we gave her the simplest counsel we could possibly give:

25. "JUST WAIT AND SEE what he does, follow his lead--or in this case you may have to take the initiative because of his pride and give him an appreciative squeeze which could be interpreted as an invitation for more if he wants it or needs it." We felt it was worth it, since he would be leaving in just a few days and the opportunity would be forever gone.

26. BUT PRIDE'S FEAR OF REFUSAL OFTEN PREVENTS US FROM MAKING THE FIRST MOVE--but nothing ventured, nothing gained! Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all! So when the big fish swam con-

fidently in for a real close look, our little Flirty-Fishy got scared and swam away just because she wasn't sure he was interested.

27. INSTEAD OF THROWING HER ARMS AROUND HIM and giving him a nice big kiss of thanks for breakfast, she merely lightly patted his shoulder as he hurried warily back out the door, and our fish was gone again! We now only hope and pray that God will give us one last crack at him before he has to leave, as that's about the only way you can show some of these foreigners the utter love of God when you can't even speak their language!

28. WHERE YOU CAN DO MORE WITNESSING WITH YOUR MOUTH YOU MIGHT NOT HAVE TO DO QUITE AS MUCH WITNESSING WITH THE OTHER END OR YOUR OTHER MOUTH! But when you've no other way to show them God's total love and concern, kissing them with that more basic and fundamental mouth of your physique can be pretty convincing, even if you only say a few words in their language such as, "I love you because God loves you!"--or, "I share God's love with you!"--or "God wants me to make you happy!"

29. IF YOU WANT IT TO BE A WITNESS OF GOD'S LOVE, BE SURE YOU GIVE GOD THE GLORY, so they'll always remember you did it in His love, not just your own. If you can't say anything but, "Jesus loves you", they'll get the point that Jesus is loving them through you. This is what all of our witnessing is after all, no matter what form it takes, and loving them in this way is simply loving them all the way and showing them the most love you could possibly show them.

30. ALSO MAKE IT VERY CLEAR THAT YOU'RE NOT NECESSARILY EXPECTING ANYTHING IN RETURN!--You're not after marriage (unless you want to be!), you're not after their money or their material things, but are simply offering them the gift of God's love, but for which you may receive

love gifts in return, and should not refuse them, if you can make it plain that's not what you did it for.--Just be sure you do not accept any money at the time, as this is illegal in many places and may be a trap! Try to make it as clear as you can that you simply want them to love Jesus and that's why you've shown them such love.

31. THE OTHER NIGHT IN A LOCAL CLUB while eyeing the quarry, there didn't seem to be very much that was very desirable until finally a very fine-looking cleancut young man passed us by three times eyeing us, until it was obvious he was greatly attracted by our cute Flirty little Fishy but was hesitant to approach the Bait because of her proximity to the Fisherman. I told her I was sure this was what he had in mind, but was too timid to ask her to dance with him while she and I were holding hands.

32. SO I SUGGESTED SHE SHOULD ASK HIM! But while she herself was somewhat doubtfully contemplating such a bold approach, he began to swim away. I told her I was sure he didn't want to dance with anyone but her, but she couldn't believe it, so she stalled until he had swum clear to the other side of the pond and nearly out of sight.

33. DELAYED OBEDIENCE CAN BECOME TOTAL DISOBEDIENCE if prolonged too long, and you can make up your mind too late if you flounder around too long! However, she finally decided to give it a try, to walk clear over to the other side of the room and try to find him, and if he was still alone and hadn't found anyone to dance with, she would consider that a fleece and of the Lord and ask him.

34. SOMETIMES IT TAKES QUITE A BIT TO CONVINCE OUR LITTLE FLIRTY-FISHY that it's either God's will, or this is the one, or this is the way to do it, or the time is now! Sometimes either the Fisherman doesn't make it clear or she doesn't clearly get the

signal because of the noise, confusion or other distractions, or she's just plain not listening or paying attention, or is already worrying about the future and what's going to happen next, so she can't keep her mind concentrated on the move of the moment.

35. "FORGET THE THINGS THAT ARE BEHIND" (Phil.3:13) AND "FRET NOT THYSELF FOR TOMORROW" (Mat.6:34) are two of God's cardinal rules for eliminating most of your worries! Every good fisherman must really concentrate on the immediate job at hand and not mope over the ones lost yesterday or dream of the ones of tomorrow! Keep your mind on the work before you. You can't change the past and the future will take care of itself--God says so!

36. SO YOU FLIRTY-FISH KEEP YOUR EYES FASTENED ON YOUR FISHERMAN for constant direction if you want to catch fish, or follow at the heels of the Shepherd if you don't want to lose your way to greener pastures! Sure enough, when she finally obeyed she found him waiting for her and they danced long and lovingly together. As they danced she asked him why he hadn't danced with one of the many other women available, and he replied in simple frankness, "Because I want you!"

37. BUT THE POND BEGAN TO GET SO CROWDED SHE COULDN'T KEEP HER EYE ON THE FISHERMAN and she was oft out of his sight, so she began to worry about him and he about her. He was also worrying about the unsafe crowding of the place, while she was afraid the Fisherman might think she was getting too deeply involved. So while worrying together over these less important matters, our fish got away that night before we had a chance to really witness to him.

38. WE HAD FAILED TOGETHER THAT TIME, so we prayed together that we would find him again at the same place the next night, which we did. Only this time we made sure we sat

in a position of greater visibility of each other and accessibility. At first we did not know he was there, so she began dancing with one of our friends from the hotel.

39. HOWEVER, SOON WE CAUGHT SIGHT OF HIM again standing eyeing her from afar in his sweet shy way, this time apparently hesitant to cut in on her new dancing partner. But we waved him over and invited him to join us and to take his turn at dancing while I chatted profitably with the other fellow.

40. THEN WHEN DOMINIC HAD TO RETURN HER TO JOSEPH for a bit, since he had joined us first, I had a very good chance to have a prolonged talk with this very fine young member of the administration of a very large local business firm, telling him how we liked him at first sight, and he said he the same. He seemed very thankful she had invited him to dance, and said how much he liked her.

41. I EXPLAINED THAT THE REASON SHE WAS SO SWEET AND LOVING WAS BECAUSE SHE WAS FULL OF THE LOVE OF THE LORD and liked to make others happy. He still couldn't understand why I wasn't jealous, so I said simply because I loved her and wanted her to be happy, and that it made us both happy to make others happy, and that this was all because of God's love for them.

42. HE STILL WONDERED IN AMAZEMENT AT SUCH LOVE, saying that, although a Catholic, he had never known such love! But he continued to accept it very simply in child-like faith and was very grateful. I felt the preparation had been long enough and now it was time for a commitment, so I invited him up to our flat.

43. BUT OUR DEAR LITTLE FLIRTY-FISHY, knowing that he had to rise very early for work, was so concerned for his health that she immediately protested profusely that it should be some other time, that

he was too tired. But he said, "Oh no, I'm all right!" But she continued to protest for his sake, she thought, although in misguided concern, as he would gladly have gone with us. But she had now given him the impression that she was reluctant, and so he began politely to agree with her and said he would have to go.

44. SO WE LOST HIM DUE TO OVER-CONCERN FOR HIS HEALTH AND NOT ENOUGH CONCERN FOR HIS SOUL! Nothing is more important than an immortal soul, not even their physical health! Although you should show a measure of concern for their temporal welfare, you should not let it overbalance your concern for their eternal welfare.

45. SO WE LET ANOTHER ONE GET AWAY, although we do hope to see him again. But some of these golden opportunities are gone forever! There's many a slip twixt cup and lip if you do not keep a firm grasp on the situation, and sometimes we must strike while the iron is hot, lest it cools till it's no longer malleable. May God forgive us!

46. THE NEXT TWO SLIPS occurred at the same luxury hotel where our Flirty-Fishy had met and landed her first Frenchman, the handsome young multinational salesman, Alain. He had been there a week in a business conference, and we had met and hooked him the first night.

47. AFTER THIS FIRST SATISFYING ENCOUNTER I SUGGESTED OUR LITTLE FISHY PHONE HIM and see how he was, but she said he had her phone number and that if he wanted to call her he could, and she preferred to write him a line instead. She did write him a sweet little love note and sent him her picture, reminding him of God's love.

48. BUT BY THE END OF THE WEEK and his imminent departure, both of these two proud little Leos were still too proud to phone each other! She also claimed that she was afraid

that any further contact with him might lead to deeper involvement which might hurt my feelings, because I had had a few little relapses of jealousy and concern over her.

49. THIS FLIRTY-FISHING WORK IS ONLY FOR THE STRONG, and if you have any reservations, you'd better not get into it! Your agonies can sometimes feel like those of God watching His Lamb being crucified! As we've indicated before, you may find yourself looking at that couch like the cross of your own little lamb!

50. IT'S NOT EASY! In fact, sometimes it can seem pretty difficult. But that's love, real love--unselfish, sacrificial and undying love that causes you to die for others! It's sometimes even hard for the Bait to see the Fisherman suffer at her crucifixion, and she wonders if he's going to be able to make it, or is he going to feel sorry and remorseful afterward.

51. IT IS ALSO HARD FOR THE FISHERMAN, because he's tempted to fear that she'll even think that he doesn't love her in letting her go through all of this! Jesus, God's Lamb, even cried out on the cross to His Father, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" So I'm sometimes afraid she'll think I'm letting her go too far.

52. THEREFORE I'M OFTEN HESITANT AT EVEN SUGGESTING certain procedures, and want it to be her own free and voluntary choice, with no feeling of compulsion by me. However, she doesn't usually feel free to do it unless I ask her to, and yet I'm sometimes afraid to ask her because I'm fearful that she won't feel free to do it.

53. OUR PERSONAL FEELINGS FREQUENTLY WORK AGAINST EACH OTHER and miss some beautiful opportunities to manifest the love of God. This happened the other night at the same hotel where we'd met Alain, and whither we had finally gone on his

last night there to attempt to tell him goodbye. I'd convinced our little Fishy that to love him and leave him without any further contact was not really showing very much love or concern for his welfare and happiness.

54. SO THE SHEPHERD AND HIS LITTLE LAMB WENT SEEKING THE LITTLE STRAY SHEEP, but found him not in his usual haunts, neither his room nor the bar nor the club nor the lobby. But instead we discovered he was in a business meeting in the basement, a final cocktail party of speeches which could have been a very interesting situation, as I like to crash parties!

55. HOWEVER, THIS TIME OUR LITTLE FISHY FLATLY REFUSED for fear he'd think she was chasing him--which of course she was, because that's our business! But that's why you can't have pride in this business, or you'll be totally defeated as we were that night, because of her refusal to follow me down the steps into the Lion's den in front of all the other young Lions!

56. SO WE SPENT A FAIRLY FRUITLESS EVENING sitting in the club hoping he would appear according to her way of doing things and in keeping with her dignity.--But he never did! Although she called his room again and again, he never returned there either, and we lost our last chance to contact him!

57. SO WE "DID NOT MANY MIGHTY WORKS BECAUSE OF HER UNBELIEF" (Mat. 13:58)--and actual disobedience in this case! So she was only able to cheer up one little high-school boy who was sitting in misery between his parents in the empty club without a girl in sight but ours, who finally encouraged him with a few dances and words of God's love.

58. HOWEVER, THE LORD DID GIVE US ONE LAST CHANCE to minister to another hungry soul in need of His love when Alain's friend Ault suddenly showed up desperate for companionship and looked at us like we

were angels out of the sky!

59. HE CAME CHARGING OVER TO OUR TABLE and invited himself to join us and began talking about what a great time he'd had in both a successful business conference as well as two wonderful nights with a beautiful Dutch model. But then he humbly confessed to me that while the rest of the boys had gone to town for their final fun, he had gone back to his lonely room but couldn't stand it.

60. SO HE HAD COME UP LOOKING FOR SOMEONE TO TALK TO and very happily finding us, which we immediately recognised as another of God's frequent set-ups! Having missed Alain He had sent Ault in his place, Ault --the alternative!

61. WHEN WE MISS GOD'S WILL, HE SOMETIMES GIVES US A SECOND CHANCE to do someone else good instead.-- But this one too we muffed! Because although Ault was moved with her dancing and realised she had what he needed, she didn't think he needed it enough to make the sacrifice to give it. So he was left alone in his loneliness while we went off chasing other rainbows because of another invitation she felt was more important.

62. THE FISHERMAN HAD NOT MADE IT CLEAR how lonely Ault was, and therefore she did not follow his ad-

vice to try to comfort him, even though he was a very important man, a real king in his own country, and could have been a real help to our kids there. Incidentally, our other rainbow vanished that night but re-appeared more beneficially at a later date.

63. HOWEVER, WE WOULD LIKE TO ADD ONE HAPPY ENDING--or beginning?--to one of the stories told above: Hand-some Dominic had promised to return to the same club the following week to see us, and sure enough, true to his word, he was Johnny-on-the-spot looking for us and was overjoyed to see we'd come, true to our word as well!

64. KEEPING DATES FAITHFULLY IS VERY IMPORTANT to both your word and their faith in you and your witness, to encourage them to trust in you and what you have to say. So our little Flirty-Fish was soon proving how much she and God loved him in her ever-loving arms! Praise God!

65. SO YOU CAN'T WIN 'EM ALL!-- But God'll give you enough to keep you encouraged so you won't quit! So God bless and keep you trying! --Here's to good fishin' and happy hookin' to all our happy little hookers! Keep on fishin' and hookin' and you're bound to catch a few!-- PTL!--Amen?