

**Let us imagine** that there was a gambler. He visited a casino in Las Vegas regularly, when he got paid. He spent his days, yearning for the day he would hit it big. He dreamed that he would quit his job, quit gambling, and take care of his poor wife and kids. At least that was his plan.

And there was a lady who worked at a dead-end job that no one appreciated. She worked long hours for a low pay. She imagined the day she would get a big break: she wanted to start her own business, and be her own boss.

Then there was a shopkeeper who struggled to survive in the intensely competitive market. He, too, was looking for a big break. He needed it, so that he could invest into his beleaguered business, and soar above the bills and mounting debt.

**To their delight**, somehow, they all did get their big breaks. They found themselves suddenly flush with a serious capital. They now could do whatever they have

been dreaming about. But to our surprise, the gambler left the jackpot on the table and walked away; the dead-end job lady gave up the big money, gave up on her dream of having her own business; the shopkeeper he gave up on his newly found capital, and walked out of his store.

Is this a likely scenario? Who would actually give up the big pile of cash? Yet, that is exactly what the Bible says to the readers: Yup, when the boys hauled in the record catch, they gave it all up, left their boats, and followed Jesus.

**Peter**, James, and John have struggled to make ends meet. The Bible reveals this tiny piece of information: they even fished all night long the night before. How pressed were they to stay out in the water all night long to fish? Yet they had no luck.

And then, suddenly a stranger showed up, and told them to put the boat out further in the deep, and let down the net. What did the ex-carpenter know about

catching fish? Who was he to tell them how to catch fish? And yet, Peter responded in the most humble and obedient way:

Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.

I was wondering: would the real fishermen in San Francisco who returned with nothing in the crab season be in such an agreeable mood to address a tourist who suggested the same? "Hey, guys, why don't you try Farallon Is., instead of hanging about the Bolinas Bay?" I may not be the brightest bulb in the Christmas tree, but I know what not to say to those guys, especially when they came back empty in the season. Then again, I'm no Jesus.

**The Bible** says that the fishermen caught so much fish, that their nets began to rip. When Simon asked his partners for help, and filled their boats, the boats began to sink. That much fish they caught. It was a tremendous haul. That was the

bigger break than they ever imagined.

So Peter told Jesus: Jesus, sign this exclusive contract, and hang tight with us; we will make you a rich man. Jesus was the human fish radar. If you contract with Jesus, it is a guaranteed jackpot. But we know that was not how it happened.

**People** tend to rely on religion, because they want the big break. They believe that the religious faith is equal to trusting in the God who will eventually grant them the big break. They firmly believe that God will reward their faithful generosity with the big break. They trust that God will make them rich and prosperous.

Such a way of believing has been always popular since the ancient times. Some preachers took advantage of such a mentality, and kept preaching the message that people longed to hear. This is a modern phenomenon: the mega church preachers do very well. They do well with the book

royalties, too. I guess God found the good examples of God's blessings in the preachers. So, when their faithful followers finally get their turn and deserved share of the big break, would they drop everything, leave everything behind, and then follow Jesus? Can you be the fishers of men while keeping everything you hauled in?

**I believe** there are basically two kinds of people. Those who get the big break, and those who never get their big break. And of those who *do* get the big break, there are yet two kinds of people. One is the people who keep the big break, and dream about what they could do with the big break, and try their best to re-create the big break again and again.

The other is the people who see something ineffable that lies beyond the big break—something whose value is so much superior to that which they have been aspiring to acquire it all their lives. Suddenly, they realize, in comparison, the big break which they have been

yearning all their lives was nothing, compared to this new vision which the big break allowed them to see. That vision was becoming the fishers of men for Peter, James, and John.

**Two groups** of hikers got lost, and spent a night on the mountain. Finally, at the daybreak, one group found a trail marker. They were so overjoyed to find the marker, they pulled it out of the ground and carried it on their shoulders. As they went on, they found more trail markers, and they pulled out as many as possible, and loaded them on their shoulders. At this point, finding the way was not as important as collecting more markers. They decided that they liked the trail markers so much, they even chopped down some trees as they went, and made trail markers out of them. They ended up carrying a lot of trail markers with them. They never left the mountain.

The other group of hikers also found their trail marker. But they noted the direction, and they

hiked on. No, they did not pull out any markers. Yes, they left all the trail markers alone. They soon left the mountain behind.

Some people believe that God is in the business of doling out the big breaks to his most ardent fans. They believe that God wants them to be the owner-manager of wealth, and they continue to collect wealth. They believe their religion will help them become the owner-manager of the big breaks.

**A man** was trying to tell cave dwellers what the moon looked like. So he convinced them to come out of the cave, so that he could show it to them. It was the full moon that night. He pointed to the moon, saying, "See? That is the moon!" But the cave dwellers kept on looking at the index finger the man stretched out. "No, no, no! Don't look at my finger, look at the moon!" The man stretched out his finger even further, forcefully poking at the moon. And with even more fierceness, the cave dwellers stared at his finger.

At certain point of life, the Christian disciples discover that the wealth management may interfere with the spiritual welfare. The Christian discipleship radically chooses the human welfare over the wealth management, and subjugates the wealth the human welfare. They are the ones who quit looking at the finger, and follow where the finger pointed. They are the ones who follow the trail marker, instead of collecting them.

**Becoming** the fishers of men is not compatible with the wealth-oriented perspective. The fishers of men must be willing to treat wealth as expendable. For some people, the big break blinds them. For others, the big break opens their eyes. Peter, James, and John saw through the big break that it was not the wealth-oriented life that God wanted from them: it was the human-oriented life that God wanted from them. So they left everything, and followed Jesus who promised to make them fishers of men.