

A Parable: Saving Lives

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by Charles R. Swindoll Scriptures: [Colossians 4:2-6](#); [Matthew 5:13-16](#); [Ephesians 5:1-33](#)
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On a dangerous seacoast notorious for shipwrecks, there was a crude little lifesaving station. Actually, the station was merely a hut with only one boat . . . but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the turbulent sea. With little thought for themselves, they would go out day and night tirelessly searching for those in danger as well as the lost. Many, many lives were saved by this brave band of men who faithfully worked as a team in and out of the lifesaving station. By and by, it became a famous place.

Some of those who had been saved as well as others along the seacoast wanted to become associated with this little station. They were willing to give their time and energy and money in support of its objectives. New boats were purchased. New crews were trained. The station that was once obscure and crude and virtually insignificant began to grow. Some of its members were unhappy that the hut was so unattractive and poorly equipped. They felt a more comfortable place should be provided. Emergency cots were replaced with lovely furniture. Rough, hand-made equipment was discarded and sophisticated, classy systems were installed. The hut, of course, had to be torn down to make room for all the additional equipment, furniture, systems, and appointments. By its completion, the life-saving station had become a popular gathering place, and its objectives had begun to shift. It was now used as sort of a clubhouse, an attractive building for public gatherings. Saving lives, feeding the hungry, strengthening the fearful, and calming the disturbed rarely occurred by now.

Fewer members were now interested in braving the sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired professional lifeboat crews to do this work. The original goal of the station wasn't altogether forgotten, however. The lifesaving motifs still prevailed in the club's decorations. In fact, there was a liturgical lifeboat preserved in the *Room of Sweet Memories* with soft, indirect lighting, which helped hide the layer of dust upon the once-used vessel.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast and the boat crews brought in loads of cold, wet, half-drowned people. They were dirty, some terribly sick and lonely. Others were "different" from the majority of the club members. The beautiful new club suddenly became messy and cluttered. A special committee saw to it that a shower house was immediately built *outside and away from* the club so victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up *before* coming inside.

At the next meeting there were strong words and angry feelings, which resulted in a division among the members. Most of the people wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities and all involvements with shipwreck victims . . . ("it's too unpleasant, it's a hindrance to our social life, it's opening the door to folks who are not *our kind*"). As you'd expect, some still insisted upon saving lives, that this was their primary objective—that their only reason for existence was

ministering to *anyone* needing help regardless of their club's beauty or size or decorations. They were voted down and told if they wanted to save the lives of various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast! They did.

As years passed, the new station experienced the same old changes. It evolved into another club . . . and yet another lifesaving station was begun. History continued to repeat itself . . . and if you visit that coast today you'll find a large number of exclusive, impressive clubs along the shoreline owned and operated by slick professionals who have lost all involvement with the saving of lives.

Shipwrecks still occur in those waters, but now most of the victims are not saved. Every day they drown at sea, and so few seem to care . . . so very few.

Do you?

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