

## Parable of The Lifesaving Station

On a dangerous seacoast notorious for shipwrecks, there was a crude little lifesaving station. Actually, it was merely a hut with only one boat, but the few members kept a constant watch over the turbulent sea. With little thought for themselves, they would go out day & night tirelessly searching for those in danger as well as the lost. Many lives were saved by this brave band 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, energy and money in support of its objectives. New boats were purchased. New crews were trained. The station, once obscure and crude and virtually insignificant, began to grow. Some of its members were unhappy 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, handmade 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, and systems. By the time of its completion, the lifesaving station had become a popular gathering place, and its objectives had begun to shift. It was now used as a sort of clubhouse, an attractive building for public gathering. Saving lives, feeding the hungry, strengthening the fearful, and calming the disturbed rarely occurred.

Fewer members were 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. Lifesaving motifs still prevailed in the club's decorations. 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, away from the club so victims of the 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. As you'd expect, some still insisted on 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 the years passed, the new station experienced the same old changes. It evolved into another club – and yet another lifesaving station was begun. History repeated 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 others seem to care . . . so very few.

- From "A Parable of Saving Lives" by Chuck Swindoll