

Francois Retief



tippet
wisdom

... as taught by an invisible teacher to the fly fisherman.

What follows here is the text of my speech "Tippet Wisdom" as presented during my participation in the Toastmasters Club and Area Speech Contest at the Sanlam Speaks Club during March 2017.

The metaphor of the tippet has for a number of years fascinated me. The idea of "invisible– yet vitally important" – has occupied my thoughts for many hours alongside the fishing waters.

My website at www.tippet.co.za further explores this concept as it speaks to the purpose of our lives as well as the functioning of organisations.

I trust you will enjoy this short read. Feel free to contact me at fjretief@tippet.co.za

Francois Retief

Pretoria April 2017

TIPPET WISDOM

I am a proud member of the elitist club that believe the only way to cast a fishing line is by flicking the rod back and forth, back and forth – and then letting the line run through the guides to softly land on the surface of the water.

You've guessed it: I am a fly fisherman.



Fly fishing differs from other forms of fishing in that the weight we cast is the thick fly line. The bait is an artificial fly, carefully tied to imitate a spider, a mayfly or a bloodworm. These flies have strange names such as Mrs Simpson, DDD, Woolly Bugger and Walker's Killer.

The fly fisherman's outfit can be something to see.. Fly fishing is not an overly expensive sport, but you do find anglers going to the extreme. Between the fly rod, the reel, an upper class fly line, the net and the flies you can spend a huge amount of money. And then you have not even

added the cost of the obligatory (so they tell me) 4x4 to get to the rivers and dams high up in the mountains...

The amazing thing is that the most important part of the outfit costs maybe R3: the tippet.

It is the thin piece of line that connects the thicker fly line and leader to the fly. It is as good as invisible to the human eye – and hopefully to the trout as well! Invisible – yet crucial. A messed up tippet will have you casting for hours without even a chance of enticing a clever trout to take your fly.

This tippet has taught me much about life. We are often tempted into putting value onto what we can see and touch and own. The tippet opened a new world to me: the value of what can not necessarily be seen. I grew an awareness of the value of what is often overlooked, ignored – even ridiculed. Invisible – yet vitally important.

Welcome to the wisdom of the tippet...



THE TIPPET TEACHES ME ABOUT THE VALUE OF PURPOSE.

Have you ever watched a fly fisherman next to the water? He's a busy angler. He's observing the water for any fish activity. He notices the small circles formed on the surface that indicate fish that are feeding just below the surface. He's aware of the direction of the wind and the position of the sun. He is interpreting what's going on. He's using his experience to interpret the insect life in the shallow waters that may give an indication of what the fish are feeding on. He's focused.

Tippet Wisdom reminds me of the value of living with a sense of purpose. Focused. In the moment. Aware.

I have learnt the importance of having a good answer to questions such as "what am I doing here?" and "what is the purpose of my life?" and "how come that I have been given the privilege of a certain number of years here on earth?" The almost invisible tippet challenges me to think and rethink the meaning of my life.

There is no quick answer to these questions. You need some time with a fly rod in hand to chew on these. You have to dig deep into your innermost convictions. Shallow answers will not do.

Tippet Wisdom helps me to find my sense of purpose.

THE TIPPET TEACHES ME THE VALUE OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY.

The enemy of the tippet is a wind knot. It is a small knot that is formed in the tippet while you're casting the line. It is formed as a result of the high speed at which the end of the line travels.

The wind knot is very small. Often you are not even aware that it has formed. The temptation is always to ignore it. But you can bet your bottom dollar that it is exactly at the point of the wind knot that your tippet will break when you hook the big one. The line's strength is halved at this knot.

Integrity means to live according to who you really are and want to be. Integrity means that you are true to your purpose and connected to your deepest values.

I have learnt this piece of tippet wisdom: fix the integrity issues while they are small. White lies, dodgy relationships, underhand business deals – fix them while they are small. The wind knots do not help us. Get rid of them - even though they appear to be negligible. They can ruin your life.

THE TIPPET TEACHES ME ABOUT PASSION.

Trout fishing on the Mpumalanga Highveld is mostly a winter sport. This means frozen fingers, runny noses, red ears and wet boots! We love this! We are passionate about it. We cannot wait for winter to arrive so that we can "endure these hardships." The passion of the fly fisherman is something to be seen!

The tippet tells me that this is the way life was meant to be lived. Passion. Energy. Commitment. Enjoying every moment of it. Going for it. Making the most of every opportunity.

The tippet often asks me whether this is also true of the rest of my life. How much passion do I put into important relationships? Do I have a contagious passion for the work that I do? Am I passionate about my physical and mental health? How do I handle the obstacles that life throws my way? Do I bring energy into a meeting?

The tippet challenges me to live with passion.

PURPOSE. PERSONAL INTEGRITY. PASSION.

You may think that you can live without these. You may believe that you can be successful even though you are ignoring these.

But do not try to be a fly fisherman.

The wisdom of the tippet knows better...



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