

Part 1: The Net is Cast

The Fisherman's Net

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Chapter 1
A Time to Mend

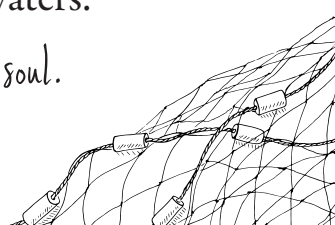
Oswaldo's hands had developed the raw calluses of a seasoned fisherman; years of casting and pulling nets had left their mark. Salt had toughened him, the sun had darkened him, and the tides had tested him.

He rose with the late morning tide, in no hurry. Oswaldo let the sun climb high before pushing off from the rocky cove below the village of Ponta do Sol on the island of Príncipe. The early boats had long departed, their lanterns flickering like fireflies in the dawn mist, the captains already chasing the prime hauls before the day's heat began to rise. But Oswaldo cherished the tranquility of midday fishing—the interlude between the bustling morning rush and the evening market—when the sea belonged solely to the wind and water, and time itself seemed to slow.



The ocean was his metronome, steady and unchanging as the tide. As his net sank into the blue depths, the waves whispered against the hull, and the wind hummed through the rigging. The rhythm was familiar, and the labor satisfying, yet beneath the weight of the day's catch, something was still missing. He was a fisherman who knew his craft but had yet to find his true waters.

A full net does not anchor a drifting soul.



The Fisherman's Net

There had been a time when Osvaldo's world revolved around ledgers and shipments, trade agreements, and fluctuating prices. He had been a businessman on the big island capital city of São Tomé, working in the tangled world of import and export—fish, cocoa, coffee, whatever turned a profit. The docks had been his domain, but not as a fisherman. He dealt in numbers; he struck deals over strong coffee. He thrived in firm handshakes; he was fluent in contracts and negotiations.

He had once watched the sea from his office window, but only as the backdrop to business deals. His rhythm was that of supply and demand. The fishing boats below—laden with the day's catch—were a part of the economy, not a part of his life. He measured success in accounts balanced and contracts secured, never in the weight of fish pulled from the deep.

Life in São Tomé began to unravel for him. The constant push for more had provided stability but not fulfillment. The long hours, the fragile economy—he was growing restless. For months, he felt the quiet pull of something beyond contracts and commerce, something he couldn't name. Then, one day, he simply left. He sailed away, leaving the city, the ledgers, the deals—all of it—trading boardrooms for the sea, business for the weight of a net in his hands.

A man can fill his pockets yet remain hungry.

A Time to Mend

Each morning, Osvaldo pushed his boat from shore, the worn wood creaking as the tide carried him forward. The sea provided—some days abundantly and some sparingly—but it was always something. By afternoon, he pulled in his nets, sorting silver-scaled fish into baskets, the scent of salt and the sea lingering on his hands.

At the village market, he took his place among the other fishermen, voices rising over the smell of fresh seafood and drying seaweed. Vendors called out prices, the clang of metal scales punctuating the hum of bargaining. A group of children darted between stalls, laughing as they tossed a half-eaten mango back and forth. A stray dog wove between the stalls, nose low, searching for scraps near the fish tables, hoping for an easy meal.

By evening, he had traded fish for ripe fruit, counted coins from weathered palms, and bought warm bread from the *padaria*. Unlike many men around him, Osvaldo did not fish to survive. His early retirement savings meant he was never desperate for a sale, never bargaining to afford tomorrow's meal. He had a reputation for fairness and never let a hard deal trouble him. Life in *Ponta do Sol* suited him—steady, simple, exactly what he had chosen.

Yet, as the sun melted into the horizon, a quiet hollowness remained—something no full net, no fair trade, no meal could quite fill.

Some things can't be weighed or measured.

The Fisherman's Net

At the market one evening, he spotted Dona Celeste, her small frame wrapped in a faded *capulana*, her basket emptier than usual. A widow who lived alone on the edge of the village, she was a fixture of the market, selling whatever she could, scraping to get by. Osvaldo wrapped several fish in paper and placed them in her basket before she could refuse.

She smiled, organizing the bundle of fish carefully. "*Deus proverá*," she murmured to herself. "God provides."

Osvaldo hesitated, his lips pressing into a line. *Hadn't I just given her those fish?* He thought. But she spoke with such certainty, as if they had never been in his hands at all. He frowned but said nothing. Osvaldo left the market, but Dona Celeste's words stuck with him. *He* had given her the fish. *He* had placed them in her basket. But she had spoken as if they had come from God. *If she's right—if God provided—what does that make me? The delivery boy?* He thought to himself, amused.

Above him, the stars had begun to flicker—first one, then another, until the sky was scattered with light. He gazed up towards the heavens, eyes tracing the constellations. He had spent many nights like this before, watching the stars—but tonight, something felt different. The sky didn't just shine; it reached back, pulling him into something long forgotten.

A fisherman casts the net, but the catch is never his.

A Time to Mend

He remembered sitting cross-legged on his grandfather's house floor, eyes fixed on the grainy black-and-white reruns of Apollo moonwalks and the live broadcasts of the first Space Shuttle flights. The old television—one of those heavy wooden cabinets with loudly clicking dials—flickered with static, the domed screen warping the images. The sound was not clear; voices crackled with bursts of white noise. Astronauts drifted across the moon's surface like ghostly figures. He watched in awe, captivated not just by the men walking on untouched ground but by the vastness of what lay beyond them—an infinite expanse that defied comprehension.

Later, he studied, hoping to pursue something in science—astronomy, physics, engineering—anything that might bring him closer to the stars. He memorized constellations, sketched rockets in the margins of his schoolbooks, and filled notebooks with theories he barely understood. Gravity, light, time—these were the mysteries he longed to unravel. He read every book he could find, especially those explaining how and why the universe worked. But São Tomé had no path for such things. Reality set in. He had never even left the islands of São Tomé and Príncipe.

And so, the stars remained what they had always been—beautiful, distant, untouchable, just like God.

You don't see the stars until your eyes adjust.

The Fisherman's Net

No matter how far his thoughts strayed—to the stars, to the past, to faded dreams—the tide always returned, pulling him back. Here, men did not navigate by the stars but by the currents, by the winds and the pull of the sea.

Manuel was one of those men. An old fisherman, one of the before-dawn men—his nets in the water long before the first rooster crowed. By the time Osvaldo's boat drifted from shore in the late morning sun, Manuel's hands were already stained with silver scales, his woven baskets full of *carapau*.

The two fishermen often crossed paths. They would meet at the docks, where boats rocked against the tide, while cleaning fish, where the sharp scent of fish guts and salt lingered, and in the market, where citrus smells blended with the scent of the latest catch.

Manuel rarely spoke when words weren't necessary. But when he did, his words remained. He had a way of speaking—not in lectures or commands, but in truths so simple they felt as though they had always existed. Osvaldo had once thought of them as passing remarks, but they lingered, surfacing when least expected, like driftwood carried back to shore. He spoke of the sea, of fishing, of life, of God—not to preach or argue, but as though it was the most natural thing in the world. And now, even in silence, Osvaldo could still hear him.

Truth, like the tide, always comes back.

A Time to Mend

Oswaldo pulled his boat toward the tide, preparing to push off for the day. Before stepping in, he examined the torn net in his hands—its weave loose, with a large gaping rip. Sighing, he rolled it up, tossing it aside.

Just then, the splash of oars drew his attention. Manuel's boat slid through the shallows, his baskets still heavy from the morning's catch. He stepped onto the shore and glanced at Oswaldo and the discarded net.

Manuel crouched, running his fingers over the frayed strands. "A torn net still knows how to catch," he said thoughtfully. "It just needs someone to mend it."

Oswaldo shrugged. "If you want it, I can get a new one." Manuel pulled a bit of twine from his pocket. He tested its strength between his fingers. "A new one might be easier," he said. "But some things are worth the time." Oswaldo hesitated. He could afford to replace it. He had rarely bothered with mending.

Manuel lowered himself onto the sand and carefully examined the net. "Come," he said. "Fixing something teaches you its worth." He began patiently threading the twine through the frayed strands. After a moment, he added, "I've been torn more times than I can count." He pulled on the frayed net with his fingers. "Fortunately, God never runs out of mending thread."

Some things must be torn before they can be mended.

The Fisherman's Net

Oswaldo observed Manuel's effortless repair of the net, a quiet testament to years of experience. The old fisherman worked with the kind of ease that only came from repetition. His fingers moved instinctively, tightening strands and confidently twisting knots as though the net were an extension of himself.

Oswaldo leaned in, watching closely as Manuel wove the thread through a frayed section of netting. It was a method he hadn't seen before—a subtle twist with a loop that reinforced the strands. "It's stronger this way," Manuel murmured, not looking up as he passed Oswaldo a length of mending twine.

Oswaldo followed his lead, slowly pulling the thread through, trying to mimic the method. His first few attempts were loose, uneven, slipping apart with the slightest pull. Manuel didn't correct him right away. Instead, he let him struggle, watching patiently as if the effort itself was part of the lesson.

He guided Oswaldo gently, nodding now and then as he worked. "It's not about speed," Manuel said at last, tying off another section. "It's about knowing where the tension is. Where the break begins." Manuel leaned back and watched him try again. "You don't fix a net all at once," he said. "You fix one break at a time."

You can't mend what you don't hold.

A Time to Mend

The following afternoon, the scent of salt and drying fish filled the air as Osvaldo and Manuel silently mended nets. The baskets beside them were far from full, and Osvaldo noticed Manuel's modest catch—just a handful of *carapau* glinting in the sunlight. He hesitated, guilt tugging at him. “I don’t want to keep you,” he said, eyes dropping to the sparse haul. “I see today’s catch wasn’t great.” But Manuel didn’t seem bothered. His hands moved steadily, his focus unshaken—as if his intention hadn’t even been to fish today anyway.

Manuel looked up, focusing on a pair of green pigeons fluttering nearby. With a slight smile, he replied, “See those birds? They don’t cast nets or plant fields and never miss a meal.” He turned back to his work. Osvaldo thought Manuel’s words sounded familiar. “You don’t seem worried,” he noted. Manuel chuckled. “Worry won’t fill a net.” He tested a knot, tugging it tight. “Trust in God might, but trust, like fishing, takes patience.”

Osvaldo hesitated. “So, you trust... God?” Manuel shrugged. “Some days, trust feels as natural as breathing. Other days, it’s like casting into deep waters,” He paused, tying off a section of the net. “*Oxalá*, something’s out there.”

Osvaldo considered Manuel’s words as they continued mending their nets, unsure what to think.

To fish, know the water. To hear, know the Word.

The Fisherman's Net

The two fishermen continued working in silence. Manuel, as always, spoke only when words felt necessary. “You learn to trust the sea,” he said after a while, his fingers testing the twine in his hands. “Watch the tides, read the winds, know when to cast and when to wait. It doesn’t happen all at once. It takes years.” He tugged a knot tight, thoughtful. “Learning to trust God is not much different. If you want to trust God, you have to know Him.”

Oswaldo pulled his thread through the net, attempting again to master Manuel’s technique without much luck. “And you know God?” Manuel chuckled under his breath. “I try to.” He worked silently for a moment before adding, “If you want to know God, you must know His Word. You have to talk to Him.” Oswaldo frowned. “Read the Bible, sure, I get that part,” he admitted. “But God doesn’t exactly talk back. Feels like a one-way conversation.” Manuel let out a chuckle. “Then you’re not listening.”

He tested another knot, tugging it firmly. “Prayer isn’t just speaking. It’s learning to hear.” Oswaldo studied the weave of the net between his fingers, struggling to manipulate the different strands all at once with the same ease as his teacher. “And how do you hear something unspoken?” Manuel smiled, glancing up. “Same way you hear the sea. You pay attention.”

Trust is patience—even when the sea gives nothing back.

A Time to Mend

Oswaldo turned the net, running his thumb over the repaired knots. He was slowly starting to get the hang of it. “And how did you learn to listen?” Manuel sat back slightly, testing the twine between his fingers. “A little at a time,” he said. “Some things I picked up here and there. Some I had to search for. I studied the Bible for many years. I still do, just not formally.”

Oswaldo glanced at him. “You studied?” Manuel nodded. “Study is a lifelong journey *meu amigo*.” Oswaldo frowned. “How did you study? Is there a Bible school on this little island?” Manuel tightened a knot, tugging it firmly. “Not as far as I’m aware. In the beginning, I studied by mail.” Oswaldo raised a brow. “By mail?” Manuel chuckled. “It took patience. Sometimes it was like casting a message in a bottle—never knowing when, or if, a response would return.” He exhaled. “But when it did, it was always just what I needed.”

Oswaldo considered that. “You mean stamps and envelopes, that kind of mail?” Manuel laughed. “Are you implying that I’m old? Well, I suppose I am.” Oswaldo chuckled, “And they just... wrote you?” Manuel nodded. “For as long as I wrote back.” Oswaldo hesitated, then asked, “And who was it?” Manuel finished his knot, tested its strength, and then met Oswaldo’s gaze. “*Escola Bíblica Mundial*, or something like that. That was a long time ago.”

Truth finds those who are willing to wait for it.

The Fisherman's Net

A few nights later, the tide lapped softly against the shore. The night was still—the kind where the sea whispered instead of roared. Osvaldo sat on the worn wooden bench outside his home, his bare feet sinking into the cool sand. The village had settled into its nighttime rhythm—the hum of distant voices, the faint hiss of frying oil, the low buzz of a radio playing morna somewhere down the road.

The glow of the screen on his smartphone cut through the dark. He had been searching for something—half-reading articles, half-chasing distractions. Then—his fingers stilled. A Google ad—Had his phone been listening to him?



Escola Bíblica Mundial – WBS Portuguese
<https://worldbibleschool.org/pt-br/>

He had never paid much attention to these things—pamphlets left at market stalls, preachers promising miracles in exchange for a little more money, sermons warning of judgment crackling through old radios. This was not unlike the old letters Manuel had described, but it was different. It was a website with an app that allowed him to do everything from his smartphone. No waiting for lessons to arrive by mail; no envelopes or stamps. A strange eagerness stirred in his chest.

With little thought, Osvaldo tapped the link.

Sometimes, the right net finds you.

A Time to Mend

For Osvaldo, faith seemed like something that might be solid in some people's hands but felt slippery in his own. He had seen the Bible wielded like a rulebook, used as a weapon. Religion seemed like a business transaction—about control. It was not something he was particularly interested in. But these online lessons reminded him of Manuel's thoughtful and deliberate words about trust.

Osvaldo leaned back, exhaling slowly. The Bible was not framed as a rulebook but as a map; it did not present Christianity as a weight but as a relationship. The lessons described life as a journey on an unfamiliar road—every traveler needs a guide. The Bible is that guide—God's words, preserved and true. Jesus affirmed its authority, the apostles carried its message, and its wisdom endures across generations. This perspective resonated deeply with Osvaldo. He knew he was drifting; maybe this was the direction he had lacked.

He reached for his grandfather's old Bible. It sat on a shelf nearby. He hadn't opened it in years. It was simply the relic of another man's faith, just another book, between the paperback novel *O Alquimista* by Paulo Coelho and an antique copy of *Os Lusíadas*, next to them, a few bird books—well-thumbed, unlike the Bible. Now, it felt different in his hands—like a map he hadn't known he needed. He stretched, yawned, and then he opened it.

You can't follow a path that you're not looking for.

The Fisherman's Net

He read and studied deep into the night, long after the village had fallen asleep. Osvaldo's world shrank to the glow of the oil lantern and his phone screen, the Bible spread open beside him. It was getting late, and his phone battery was nearly dead. He'd have to take it to Jotacê at the market first thing. Seconds before the screen went dark, he pressed it.

submit

That morning, Osvaldo went straight to the market. Jean-Claude was a Congolese migrant from the DRC. Everyone called him 'Jotacê'—the Portuguese phonetic pronunciation of the letters 'J' and 'C.' Jotacê wasn't there, but he plugged in his phone anyway. After a brief moment, the screen lit up with a message.

Terceiro Timóteo: *Bem-Vindo*, and welcome to *Escola Bíblica Mundial*! I'm Timóteo, and I'm real excited to be your study partner. Looking forward to walking this journey with you!

Osvaldo left some *dobras* for Jotacê under his phone and headed for the shore. After a day's fishing, he sat across from Manuel, mending nets, when the words tumbled out. "I started studying the Bible," he admitted, watching for the old man's reaction. Manuel didn't seem surprised—almost as if he had already expected it. "And?" Osvaldo hesitated. "And now I have more questions than answers." Manuel grinned. "Good. That means you're finally going somewhere."

One who stops asking questions has stopped moving.

A Time to Mend

Osvaldo and Manuel slowly made their way up the winding path to the village market. It was a familiar walk they had made many times before, usually in companionable silence.

Osvaldo paused at Jotacê's stall—a cluttered corner shaded by a patchwork awning. Wires dangled like vines and old phones lay cracked and stacked beside scattered circuit boards. Amid the chaos, one thing stood out—a fully charged phone, screen glowing. Another message:

Terceiro Timóteo: Well, I'll tell you what—I'm just thrilled to have a student from São Tomé e Príncipe! Don't hesitate to holler if you've got any questions, alright?

Osvaldo grinned. He had expected long delays, maybe weeks, between replies. But his Bible study helper, “Third Timothy,” responded almost immediately. Noticing that Jotacê was again absent from his stall, Osvaldo took a moment to compose a reply before heading home.

O Pescador: *Obrigado* Timóteo, looking forward to learning.

After submitting each lesson, he waited for feedback from Timóteo, who always replied with warmth and insight. Their messages became something he looked forward to—not just answers or graded lessons, but companionship in the Word. It wasn't like the system Manuel described, letters sent through the mail and answered months later. This was quick, personal, and felt alive.

Be grounded to navigate the right current.

The Fisherman's Net



The night air was still that evening, broken only by the sounds of insects and the occasional rustle of palm fronds. Osvaldo opened his grandfather's Bible—its margins marked with old notes—and tapped open the Bible study app on his aging phone, careful not to drain the battery.

He studied long after the oil lantern flickered low, reading Scripture, answering the questions, and sending reflections to his study helper, Timóteo. Then he put the phone away to get some sleep. This became his quiet, dependable evening routine. The app fit his world perfectly in a place where the phone network came and went like the tide. It didn't demand much data and worked offline once he downloaded the lessons.

Before heading for the sea each morning, he would charge the phone at Jotacê's stall, tucked safely amid the chaos of wires and circuit boards. By the time he returned to the market, the battery was full—and more often than not, so was his inbox.

After a few weeks of intense study, he finished several courses. Something was shifting beneath the surface of his soul. He wasn't sure what to call it, but he couldn't ignore it.

Then, one night, sleep never came; for the first time, he didn't feel restless. He felt ready.

You can't see the tide rise by staring at the shore.

A Time to Mend

At the first light of dawn, Osvaldo sprinted out of his house. The sky was still a deep, inky blue, the horizon just beginning to soften with hints of gold. The village was silent, except for the occasional rooster crow and the distant rustling of palm fronds in the wind. He had not slept, but there was no hesitation in his stride. He knew exactly where to find Manuel.

Down in the cove, the older fisherman was already at work, preparing his nets before the world was fully awake. The tide was rising—just enough to carry his small boat past the shallows without dragging. He worked quickly and efficiently, the coarse fibers of the net sliding through his callused hands. Manuel knew the sea favored those who moved with its rhythm, not against it.

Manuel glanced up as Osvaldo approached, noting the exhaustion clinging to his face—the kind that didn't come from work but from wrestling with thoughts too heavy to set down. Osvaldo swallowed, his pulse quickening. The words felt heavier than he expected, thick with the weight of something irreversible. “Manuel,” he said, his voice steady but low. “What must I do?”

Manuel didn't ask what he meant. He didn't hesitate. With the certainty of a man who had long known the answer, he set down his net and nodded toward the water. “Come with me.”

Trust the current, not your own strength.

The Fisherman's Net

Morning broke as they stepped into the water, the sky painted in soft hues of gold and crimson. The first light of dawn stretched across the waves, turning the sea into a shimmering path ahead of them. The air was thick with salt and the lingering coolness of the night, but the water lapped warm against Osvaldo's skin as he followed Manuel further from the shore. They waded deeper, the familiar pull of the tide wrapping around their waists, each step feeling both weightless and impossibly heavy.

The sea had become his companion, his livelihood, the rhythm of his days. But today, it was something more. The same water that lifted his boat, filled his nets, and shaped his life now had a different weight to carry. His heart pounded—not with hesitation, but with something close to awe. Beside him, Manuel stood firm, a man who had known the sea long enough to trust its depths. And now, he was offering Osvaldo the same certainty—not in the water, but in the promise it carried.

Manuel met his eyes, his voice low yet unwavering. "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" His words were not a test but an invitation. The waves swirled around Osvaldo's waist, the horizon stretched wide before him, and he felt like he was stepping into something he could never turn back from. Faith had led him here. This was the moment of surrender.

The same waters that sustain can also renew.

A Time to Mend

Oswaldo confessed, “I do—with all my heart!” then he took a deep breath. Manuel’s hands were steady as he lowered Oswaldo into the water and exclaimed, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” as if someone else was there to hear his proclamation. The sea closed over Oswaldo, cool and weighty, silencing the world. Then—he rose. The first hint of sunlight glowing on his face, the water rushing from his skin.

Oswaldo drew a deep breath, his chest rising, his body light. He turned to Manuel, ready to speak, but the old fisherman’s gaze stayed fixed on the horizon. “What is it?” Oswaldo asked. Manuel exhaled, eyes lingering where the sun would soon rise. A tear welled but did not fall.

“For so many years, I’ve been alone... I thought I’d run out of time to find someone to walk this path with me.” He let the waves speak momentarily, his gaze distant, thoughtful. “I waited, I prayed, and the shore stayed empty for years.” He exhaled, the tide swirling around them. “But today, God has answered. I don’t have to wait anymore.” He clapped Oswaldo on the shoulder, a knowing smile tugging at his lips. “And neither do you.”

Oswaldo laughed quietly, then draped an arm over Manuel’s shoulder. And in the same waters where Oswaldo was baptized, Manuel stepped out of the ocean with a brother by his side—no longer waiting, no longer alone.

A fisherman doesn’t always return with his expected catch.

The Fisherman's Net

Oswaldo and Manuel walked together along the shore, water streaming from their clothes. The past had sunk beneath the waves, and something new had risen. Oswaldo had spent years moving without direction. Manuel had been moving forward but alone. Now, their paths had converged. The tide had carried them here, but it was no longer the sea that guided them—they stepped forward, side by side, bound by faith and a purpose greater than themselves. Manuel had prayed for years for someone to walk beside him on his journey. Now, at last, he was not alone. And Oswaldo—who had spent so long adrift—had found in Manuel a guide not only for fishing but for life.

That evening, Manuel handed Oswaldo a blank folded piece of paper and, motioning to the open Bible between them, said, “Read this,” pointing to a passage in Luke 6:46–49—the parable of the wise and foolish builders. Oswaldo read it aloud, then looked up. “Now,” Manuel said, tapping the left side of the paper, “write it here. word for word.”

Oswaldo raised an eyebrow. “Why not just read it from the Bible?” Manuel smiled. “The Word that passes through the hand settles in the heart.” When Oswaldo finished copying the passage, Manuel nodded. “Now,” he said, “on the other side—write it again. But this time, in your own words.”

The Word written is The Word remembered.

A Time to Mend

Oswaldo looked at the blank half of the paper. Putting Scripture into his own words felt daunting—like trying to rewrite something already perfect. He tapped his pencil against the edge of the table, then began to write slowly.

If you hear what Jesus says and do it, it's like building a house on strong rock. The wind and water can hit it, but it won't fall. But if you hear him and don't do it, it's like building on sand. When the storm comes, the house crashes.

Oswaldo read his own words. They felt clumsy, incomplete—like trying to explain the ocean with a cup of water. Manuel seemed to breathe Scripture as if it lived inside him. He felt like he was teaching kindergarteners.

Manuel leaned over, reading Oswaldo's face. "It doesn't have to be perfect," he said gently. "The Word grows in you as you wrestle with it." Oswaldo tucked the paper into his Bible. "Do we do this with every passage?" he asked. Manuel smiled. "Only the important ones." He paused and smiled. "Which, you'll find to be nearly all of them."

The next few days, they were more often together than not, drawn by their work and by something deeper. Before, there had been long silences; now, there was conversation—nets and Scripture, work, and study. But now, Oswaldo wasn't studying online. He was with Manuel, who taught Scripture like he taught net mending: patiently, hands-on, one knot at a time.

You don't learn the sea from a map—you learn it by sailing.

The Fisherman's Net



The world felt quiet and still beneath the sprawling branches of a sycamore-fig tree. Its thick roots twisted beneath them, worn smooth by time and footsteps, offering a place to sit and read together. The breeze carried the rich aroma of peixe grelhado and boiling matabala from nearby homes, mingling with the salty air that always clung to the village.

It was their first Sunday together—not as fishermen, but as brothers. Osvaldo had his grandfather's old Bible, the leather worn, soft, and cracked, the edges of pages curled from years of use. And together, they read. They read of the early church—of believers who met in homes, broke bread together, and shared their faith. The stories felt so relevant. As if they weren't just reading history but echoing it.

"And now?" Osvaldo asked, watching as Manuel ran his fingers gently along the thin pages. "When two or three journey together, God is with them," Manuel replied. He flipped through the Bible, stopping at a passage and tapping the page. Osvaldo leaned in to read it, lips moving silently. Then, looking up, he asked, "Is this... enough?" Manuel exhaled, eyes soft. "It has to be, meu irmão. For now, it's just you and me... and God." Osvaldo nodded, and his mind drifted to the nearby village. "Maybe one day... it won't just be us."

What is shared in faith is never carried alone.

A Time to Mend

Then, with nothing more than some bread and a small juice box like the kind children drank from, they took the Lord's Supper. They bowed their heads. Their prayers were hesitant but heartfelt. Neither was completely confident in what they were doing—yet completely sincere.

They tried to recall old hymns, but the melodies had long since faded. Their voices were rough, untrained, and without harmony. Still, they sang—halting at first, then stronger. The words came back slowly, patched together from memory and feeling.

And they talked—about Scripture, faith, and what came next. The conversation flowed like the tide, gentle and unforced. It was as if years of silence had been stored up, waiting for this release. They spoke more in that one afternoon than they had in all their months of working side by side.

Manuel shared stories of his own journey—of mistakes made and lessons learned. A man who had once been a closed book began to open, page by page. He wasn't a master giving instruction but a mentor sharing the road. Osvaldo listened, questions forming like ripples in his mind, each one met with patience and grace. He was eager to keep learning—because it was clear now that Manuel had far more to teach than how to mend nets.

A table needs no feast to be full.

The Fisherman's Net

The following day, Ponta do Sol woke to an unsettling quiet. Not the usual hush before the market stirred to life, nor the gentle stillness of fishermen easing their boats into the tide. Something was amiss.

The news had begun to spread before the sun had fully risen. Another fisherman, noticing Manuel's absence from the cove, went to check on him. His door was still latched, his shack untouched. When knocking brought no response, the man finally forced it open—finding Manuel motionless in his hammock. There was no sign of struggle, no evidence of distress—just stillness.

Osvaldo rushed to Manuel's shack as soon as he heard. The body was already gone. As his eyes adjusted, he spotted Manuel's net carefully folded and resting on the table. Atop the net lay a piece of notebook paper, carefully creased, *Para Osvaldo* clearly written. Expecting a note, he opened it—only to find a simple list of scripture references. He slid the paper into his shirt pocket, picked up the net, and turned to go home—his chest hollow, unsure what to feel. He had thought there would be more time—more mornings by the shore, more Scripture studied together. Now, there was no one to walk beside him.

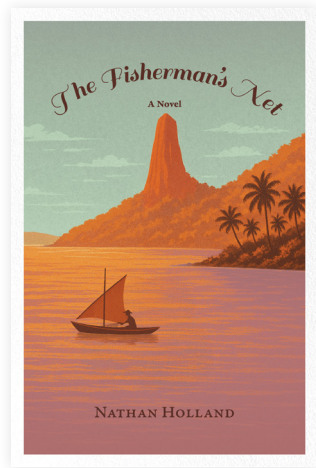
The funeral was quick and simple. Manuel had no family. A procession to the cemetery, a few words, a prayer, a burial—and it was over.

The sea will rise again, but no man will sail forever.

Manuel is gone—but his voice still echoes.

What he left behind will draw Osvaldo into an unexpected journey—and into a shared legacy that spans the countries of Luso-Africa.

In *The Fisherman's Net*, follow Osvaldo from the shores of small island of Príncipe into a movement greater than himself—where each chapter uncovers more of Manuel's past and Osvaldo's emerging role in God's mission.



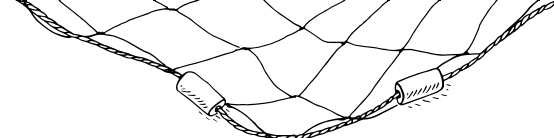
A serial novel in four parts—beginning May 2025, with the complete paperback edition expected in September.

Follow the journey at:

thefishermans.net



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Glossary

As you read, you may come across names, places, and cultural references that are new to you. This glossary offers small windows into Osvaldo's Luso-African world—where faith, language, and everyday life are deeply intertwined.

O Alquimista (oo al-kee-MEESH-tah)

The original Portuguese title of *The Alchemist*, the bestselling novel by Brazilian author Paulo Coelho. It tells the story of a shepherd named Santiago who leaves home in search of treasure.

Capulana (kah-poo-LAH-nah)

A colorful fabric wrap commonly worn by women in many parts of Africa, especially Lusophone regions. Used as a skirt, headwrap, baby sling, or shawl.

Carapau (kah-rah-POW)

A small, silvery fish common in Atlantic waters and a dietary staple across Luso-Africa. Often grilled or fried, it's inexpensive, abundant, and featured regularly in village markets and fisherman's baskets.

Celeste (seh-LESH-t)

A widowed market vendor in Ponta do Sol.

Dobras (DOH-brahs)

The official currency of São Tomé and Príncipe. Though coins are rarely used in real life, they make for a better story, so you'll find them in Osvaldo's pockets.

Dona (DOH-nah)

A respectful title for a woman in Portuguese, similar to "Miss" or "Mrs." in English. Often used before a first name—like *Dona Celeste*—it conveys a mix of politeness, familiarity, and social honor, especially toward older or well-regarded women.

Escola Bíblica Mundial (esh-KOH-luh BEE-blee-kuh moon-DEE-ahl)

The Portuguese name for "World Bible School." A global Bible correspondence program.

The Fisherman's Net

Jotacê (zhoh-tah-SEH)

A Congolese migrant and local phone repairman in Ponta do Sol. His nickname comes from the Portuguese pronunciation of the letters “J” and “C” (for Jean-Claude).

Os Lusíadas (oosh loo-ZEE-ah-dash)

One of the most important works of Portuguese literature, *Os Lusíadas* is a 16th-century epic poem by Luís de Camões that celebrates Portugal's Age of Discoveries.

Manuel (mah-NOO-ehl)

An old fisherman from Príncipe who becomes Osvaldo's mentor and spiritual guide.

Matabala (mah-tah-BAH-lah)

A starchy root vegetable similar to yam or cassava, commonly boiled or mashed in Central Africa and São Tomé.

Meu amigo* / *Meu irmão (meh-oo ah-MEE-goo / meh-oo eer-MOWN)

Portuguese for “my friend” and “my brother.” These phrases show affection, camaraderie, and spiritual kinship—especially between Manuel and Osvaldo.

Morna (MOR-nah)

A traditional style of Cape Verdean music known for its slow, soulful melodies and themes of longing, love, and *saudade*—a deep, bittersweet yearning.

Osvaldo (oosh-VAHL-doo)

A former businessman from São Tomé who leaves behind city life and success to become a fisherman on Príncipe.

Padaria (pah-dah-REE-ah)

Portuguese for “bakery.”

Peixe grelhado (PAY-shee greh-LYAH-doo)

“Grilled fish.” A staple coastal dish across Luso-Africa.

O_Pescador (oo pesh-kah-DOHR)

Portuguese for “The Fisherman.” This is the username Osvaldo chooses when signing up for his online Bible study. It reflects both his current profession and his emerging spiritual identity.

Clossary

Ponta do Sol (POHN-tah doo SOHL)

Portuguese for “Point of the Sun.” A fictional coastal town on Príncipe Island.

Príncipe (PREEN-see-peh)

The smaller of the two main islands that make up the nation of São Tomé e Príncipe. Lush, quiet, and often overlooked, Príncipe is known for its volcanic peaks, dense forests, and unspoiled coastline.

São Tomé (sown too-MEH)

The larger of the two islands in the nation of São Tomé e Príncipe, located in the Gulf of Guinea off the west coast of Central Africa. It is also the name of the country’s capital city, which sits on the island’s northeastern shore.

São Tomé e Príncipe (sown too-MEH ee PREEN-see-peh)

A small island nation in the Gulf of Guinea, off the western coast of Central Africa. Once a Portuguese colony, it gained independence in 1975. Its two main islands—São Tomé and Príncipe—offer a striking contrast between city life and quiet remoteness.

Terceiro_Timóteo (tehr-SAY-roh chee-MOH-teh-oo)

“Third Timothy”—a playful online username in Portuguese.

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