

Fernando Doesn't Live Here Anymore

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It's morning; dawn is just breaking. Can you see it? The sun's warm rays are just beginning to stream onto the valley. They're like an alarm clock, calling all the animals to rise and shine. And so they do. Well, most of them do. Turtle, with one eye barely open, yawns and struggles as he climbs to the top his favorite log.

Turtle lives in Sugarbush pond, a wonderful home in nature. Along much of the shoreline stand white papery birch trees and tall sugary pines. At one end there's a meadow filled with wave after wave of tall grass and colorful flowers—reds, and whites, and blues. Large green lily pads with plump yellow blossoms dot the pond, and the cool, clear water glistens with strands of shimmering watergrass. And of course there's Turtle and his favorite log.

Turtle has lots of friends: Henrietta Horned Pout, Bartemay Beaver, and Danbury Duck, to name a few. But Turtle's best friend was Fernando. Fernando was a handsome young frog with muscles of steel, gleaming bronze skin and big brown eyes. He was a real hunk, if you know what I mean. Fernando was also the best frog you'd ever want to know. He would have been a great Frog Scout: trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent. But sadly, Fernando doesn't live here anymore.

“Why not? What happened? Where did he go?” I'll tell you.

One day Fernando was sunning on a large lily pad near the edge of the pond. Suddenly, something fell from the sky and struck Fernando on the head.

“Oh no,” shuddered Fernando. “Oh no! Is the sky falling? The sky is falling! I must do something quickly or I'll become a squashed frog.” So Fernando drew a quick breath, took a great leap, and hopped to another pad further out in the pond.

Fernando waited nervously to see what would happen, but nothing did. So he closed his eyes and went back to tanning in the sun.

Morning moved along, and the pond grew nicely warm. Soon Fernando's nose began to twitch—first to the right, then to the left. A strange odor was drifting by. What could it be? Slowly one eye opened, and Fernando peeked about the pond.

“Fire! Fire! The woods are on fire! I must do something quickly or I'll become a burnt frog.” So Fernando drew a quick breath, took a great leap and hopped to another pad even further out in the pond. Fernando waited cautiously to see what would happen, but nothing did. So he smoothed out his pad, adjusted his glasses and returned to napping in the sun. But the quiet didn't last long.

KAAAABOOOOM! CA-RASH!

“Help! Help!” croaked Fernando. “Lightning has struck! I must do something quickly or I'll become a crispy frog.” So Fernando drew a quick breath, took a great leap and hopped to another pad still further out in the pond.

Once again Fernando waited to see what would happen, but again nothing did. So he stretched and he yawned, and he went back to basking in the sun. Only this time Fernando kept both eyes and both ears open. And that was a good thing, for soon a large dark shadow began circling the pond.

“What now,” thought Fernando?

“It's a good thing my eyes were wide open,” he chuckled. “Ol Hawk isn't going to swoop down and snatch me for dinner. I'll show him.” So Fernando, with all of his might, made his greatest leap of all, and with a confident grin, sailed for the safety of the most distant pad in the middle of the pond. But alas, there wasn't any pad in the middle of the pond. There was only the waiting mouth of Big Bertram Bass. And now Fernando doesn't live here anymore.

When Fernando thought the sky was falling, it was only a small pine cone tossed by the wind. When Fernando thought the woods were ablaze, it was only smoke from a camper's campfire. When Fernando was fearful of lightning and thunder, it was only the boom of a high-flying jet. And when Fernando was afraid of Ol' Harry Hawk, it was only the shadow of a young boy's kite. If only Fernando had had discernment he would still be here today. But he didn't. And now Fernando doesn't live here anymore.

Passing the Word Along

Dis-cern-ment *n.* **1.** clearly recognizing and understanding a situation **2.** having keen understanding and insight **3.** having and using good judgment **4.** the quality of being able to tell good from bad, right from wrong, and important from unimportant.

Fernando didn't have discernment—he didn't check things out to clearly know and understand what was going on. If he had, he would have known that everything was okay. And he would still be here today. But he didn't, and so he isn't.

God doesn't want something to happen to you like happened to Fernando. God wants you to think clearly before you act—it will help you avoid lots of problems. God wants you to know and understand important from unimportant, good from bad, and right from wrong. So when you're not sure about something, or when you're not sure of what to do — at home, at school, at play or anywhere, ask for help. Ask your parents, ask your leaders and teachers, and ask God; all will help you gain discernment, especially God. God will give you knowledge, God will give you understanding, and God will give you wisdom just for the asking. And when you have knowledge, wisdom, and understanding — discernment, then you can make good and wise decisions.

“For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding” (Proverbs 2:6).

You can learn more about discernment by reading and study James 1:5-8, James 3:13-18, and Proverbs 3:13.

Something Called Discernment

I like frogs. In fact, I collect them. No, not live ones, but decorative ones. My wife and I have one frog that sits in our birdbath on a lily pad. He keeps the birds company. Another is "Guard Frog." He protects our back yard. And then there's "Christmas Frog" dressed in green and plaids with a red Santa hat. When you squeeze his left hand he croaks Jungle Bells. He's great.

Then the other day while shopping I saw "Fisherman Frog." I think he's a brother of Christmas Frog only he didn't croak. He would make a great Christmas present with his fishing clothes, creel and fly rod. But the price was too high, and I had to let him go.

Fisherman Frog reminded me of one of my favorite frogs, Fernando. I never actually met Fernando, but I heard about him from Turtle.

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lightning and thunder, it was only the boom of a high-flying jet. And when Fernando was afraid of Ol' Harry Hawk, it was only the shadow of a young boy's kite. If only Fernando had had discernment he would still be there today. But he didn't. That's why Fernando doesn't live there anymore.

Fernando is a cute, but tragic story from which I learned an important lesson. Everyone needs discernment, especially since each day is filled with one decision after another.

Discernment is clearly recognizing and understanding a situation; having keen understanding and insight; having and using good judgment; being able to tell good from bad, right from wrong, and important from unimportant.

Without discernment one can easily make unwise decisions. With discernment, one can avoid a lot of problems and mistakes. So as you go about each day, "check things out" to clearly know and understand what's going on, then think before you act. And when you're not sure of the right thing to do or the best way to act, ask God. God may send you to a friend, a colleague, your pastor, a parent or someone else to give you insight. Or he may speak to you through the Holy Spirit. However he chooses, he will give you just what you need and help you gain discernment.

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