

# REMOTE CONTROL



**THE POWER OF HOLLYWOOD  
ON TODAY'S CULTURE**

**CARL KERBY**

First Printing: October 2006

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ISBN-13: 978-0-89051-491-7

ISBN-10: 0-89051-491-7

Library of Congress Catalog Number: 2006934885

All Scripture is from the New King James Version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

Cover by Jayme Brandt, Twice Born, Eureka Springs, AR.

**Printed in the United States of America.**

For information regarding author interviews, please contact the publicity department at (870) 438-5288.

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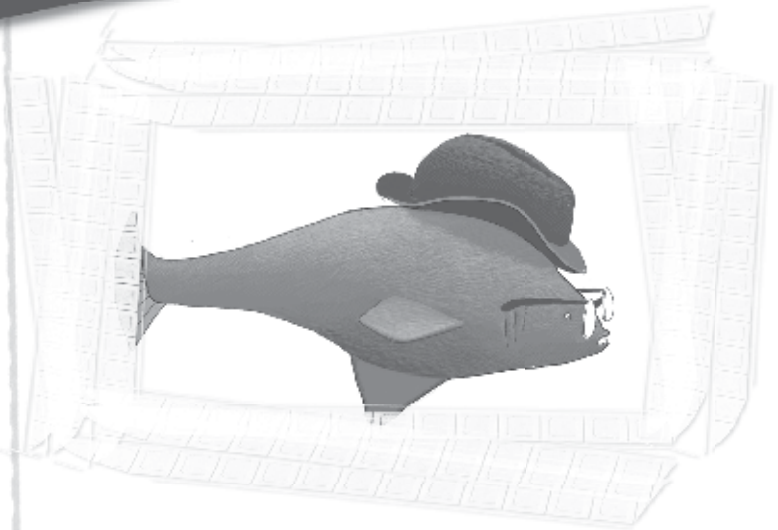
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# THE INCREDIBLE MR. LIMPET



**1964**

**Director**  
Arthur Lubin

**Writers**  
Jameson Brewer  
Joe DiMona (adaptation)

## **Plot Summary**

Milquetoast Henry  
Limpet experiences his  
fondest wish and is  
transformed into a fish.

**Actors**  
Don Knotts, Carole  
Cook, and Jack Weston

I want to compare two movies and show you just how evolution has covered our culture like an ocean. The first movie, released when I was a kid, really started my whole fascination

with evolutionary concepts, because I was watching it one night with my own kids.

*The Incredible Mr. Limpet*, starring everybody's favorite funnyman, Don Knotts, came along in the years just after a renewed interest in science education in the United States. Our educational culture was shifting from one that at least acknowledged God (through prayer and Bible readings), to one that removed Him altogether. Public policymakers were embracing evolution, prayer was taken out of schools, and television and movies promoting evolution exploded across the country.

As a young person, I loved this movie, so when I saw it in the video store, it was a no-brainer to take it home for family night . . . popcorn, the works! To my surprise, 13 minutes into this family fun event, we had to stop the movie and talk! What in the world could take place that could cause me to stop the movie?

I had forgotten that this engaging movie in the '60s actively promoted an evolutionary concept straight out of the 19th century, in the time of Darwin. Early on, Henry Limpet's wife and best friend are trying to get him out of his apartment. All that ol' Henry wants to do is hang around his apartment, read his book, and watch his fish. His frustrated friend says the equivalent of "What is it with you and these fish?" Henry's response caught me off guard: "Well, I've given it a lot of thought, George, a lot of thought. George, do you realize that our ancestors were fish?"

Whoa! Stop the movie! We gotta talk! I'd never caught this as a young man. I had been raised around the church but never taught how to apply the Bible to the "real" world. I'd never learned to think critically. After discussing this with my children, I turned the movie back on.

Shortly thereafter, Henry's wife and his friend finally get him out of the apartment. They go to Coney Island. On the subway ride there, Henry is still reading his book, oblivious to the world around him. What could be sooo interesting? Hang on!

Once at Coney Island, Henry automatically goes down to the pier to watch the fish. He still has his book under his arm. It's at this point that he (for lack of a better term) "prays." "I wish, I wish, I wish I were a fish!" Keeping in step with Disney, that line in this Warner Brothers movie would not be considered a Judeo Christian "prayer" by any means. But, some deity, whatever it is, heard this "prayer" and the "angels" sing, "Be careful, be careful!" Everything gets dark around Henry, a light then shines on him and he understands something special is about to happen. He smiles and stretches toward the water, eventually falling in.

Henry, who can't swim, then goes through an amazing transformation. Henry Limpet is transformed, stage by stage, from a human into a fish (the reverse of a famous theory by Ernst Haeckel, in which humans allegedly progress from the guppy stage, to fish, to land animals, and finally humans). At one point, at the end of the transformation you see the book that Henry has carried with him up until this time falling behind him in the water. What's this got to do with anything? I've left one piece of information out until now. While standing on the pier, just prior to falling into the water, we see the title of the book. It is entitled *The Theory of Reverse Evolution*. Something interesting occurred to me after watching this as a Christian. Up until this point, everybody was laughing and mocking Henry. Especially, his wife. At one point, his wife tells his friend

in a mocking tone as Henry explains evolution, “He’s read hundreds of scientific books on the subject. He claims that millions of years ago, there was nothing but fish in the world.” Henry: “That’s right, and then you see, some of those ancient creatures they became amphibians and they crawled out on land, you see. And then millions of years later they became men!”

Everybody feels sorry for poor, foolish Henry. The movie, though, asserts that HE was right! When he went through the “reverse evolution” process, this was proof positive that Henry was right and that those who don’t believe in evolution are wrong.

This movie was entertaining, funny, and was a small part of a cultural shift that embraced evolutionary concepts. Hollywood couldn’t have gotten away with that in 1924, or 1944, but you see, attitudes were shifting. The centennial of Darwin’s landmark book *On the Origin of Species* had been observed in 1959. The ground had been prepared, so to speak. Or, to think of it another way, the theory of evolution was “in the water,” literally.

