



Surrender

By Russ Howard

(an excerpt from his article)

Growing up in the church, I suffered a hard idea for living. “God deserves your best – all the time.” “Always have a daily quiet time – the earlier and longer, the better.” “Sin less.”

While there is nothing wrong with exhortations like these, they and many others combined to leave me with a spiritual inferiority complex. Instinctively, I knew I could never pray enough, read my Bible enough, do my best enough, or sin less enough. For years I felt like a second-rate Christian.

Then God spoke to me through a simple metaphor in John Ortberg’s *The Life You’ve Always Wanted*. In a simple, almost cast-off paragraph, the author contrasts the difference between doing life as if one is in a speedboat, versus a sailboat. I laid the book down. I knew in that moment that I had not been living my life in a "speedboat," nor in a "sailboat." **I had been living in a rowboat.**

I worked my spiritual disciplines like oars. I felt good if I had prayed long and hard. I felt unworthy if I had not. I earned every bit of movement by the strain of my muscles and the sweat of my brow. But I knew I wasn’t moving far enough, fast enough. I should always be doing more.

Imagining life in a sailboat released me. It didn't mean life would be easy. There is plenty to be done on board a sailboat: mending, raising, and adjusting the sails, maintenance of all kinds. But all my effort cannot move the ship alone. Only the wind can move the ship, and God is in the wind.

This simple metaphor transformed my spiritual life – now I work my spiritual practices as sails rather than oars. It also transformed my leadership. As a church leader, my dream and passion is for people to flourish in their lives with God: enjoying God, together, for the good of the world. It’s a big dream, and it’s not one I can make happen. I can, however, raise sails. And I can trust the Wind to take people where I cannot.

When I face big...decisions or struggle to find words to share with a grieving friend..., I remember that it’s my job to do what I can. I put in effort, but I know I am not earning anything. When I raise sails, I am more confident in God’s strength. I am more hopeful when the wind is still, knowing I’ve raised the sails and God will send the wind when it’s time. I am more grateful accepting the wind as a gift and thanking God for moving the ship. I am more winsome knowing that God is more than enough to take me where He wants me to go.

Jesus once said, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it” (Matthew 16:24-25). He says surrender to Him, and He will gift you with a life like no other. Take Him up on it. Put down your oars and set sail.

From My Heart,

Billy