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Set Sail

*“A five-step guide to winning the battle
in our minds so we can embrace God’s
incredible love and grace every day.”*



Contents

Introduction	3
Chapter 1 - Dare to Live Fearlessly	11
Chapter 2 - Define What Matters	17
Chapter 3 - Describe the Vision	25
Chapter 4 - Determine the Score	31
Chapter 5 - Do and Become	36
Forms.....	43



Introduction



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One night I was enjoying watching my 8-year old grandson play baseball. As he stepped into the batter's box his coach encouragingly told him, "Okay, just swing through the ball, you've got this!" His coach was putting strategic thoughts in his mind for success.

"Ding!" went the bat and the ball went sailing over center field for a double!

The fact is, whether we're in the batter's box or facing the many duties, difficulties and distractions in our lives, our thoughts are powerful and can really make a difference. So, what should we be thinking about?

In [Matthew 6:33](#) Jesus encouragingly tells us to, "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness." Jesus is giving us a strategic thought for success, just like the coach did with my grandson.

Jesus invites us to focus our thoughts and actions on Him and navigate away from the fear, worry and darkness that's all around us. He provides the awesome opportunity for us to set our minds on Him and sail toward the incredible peace, love and light that only He offers.

Just like ships on the ocean, if we don't use our ability to navigate and set our sails toward a specific destination, we'll quickly find ourselves getting lost drifting in the wind and the waves or even shipwrecked on the beach.

In, "Set Sail," we're using a sailing theme to glide through five steps to intentionally set our sails (our thoughts and actions in each area of our lives) toward Christ's kingdom and His righteousness.

Three Ships

There once was a young man who paused to look down over a cliff and saw the ocean.

It was a beautiful view. He thanked God for creating the sky, the water and the white sandy beach. He also noticed three ships.

One ship was directly below him. It was broken, partly on the beach and partly in the water. Obviously it was shipwrecked and he wondered how it became that way and what it would take to get it sailing again.

The second was a large and beautiful vessel floating halfway to the horizon. The sails were neatly wrapped and tied to the mast. It appeared to be just bobbing up and down, drifting in the wind and the waves.

Then there was a third ship that was sailing swiftly past. It was battle worn with scratches and patches, but its sails were strong and filled with the wind. It seemed to be determined as it purposefully cut through the water. He imagined it was sailing to an amazing place of beauty and adventure.

The young man recognized a connection between these ships and his life. Sometimes he felt like the one that was shipwrecked with mostly imagined lies and limitations holding him back from doing and becoming all that God was equipping him to do and become.

Other times he seemed to be just drifting at the mercy of the wind and the waves. His focus was on keeping everything perfectly maintained, clean and comfortable rather than using his gifts to navigate, take risks and follow the hopes and dreams that God had placed on his heart.

Then there were times when he was laser focused, on a mission toward making a dream come true. Like the third ship, he knew what it was like to be sailing right on course, navigating with a clear destination in mind.

The young man sensed that God brought him here to see the view and make a connection with his life. He decided right then and there that he wanted to be more like the third ship that was actively and intentionally sailing with a purpose. He thanked God for his mind and the ability to make choices, to take risks and take action. He surrendered each area of his life to Christ, trusting Him to help him navigate toward real purpose and fulfillment rather than a drifting or shipwrecked life.

Which Ship Are You?

Whether we feel like we're currently shipwrecked, drifting or sailing with a clear purpose in mind, let's remember that Jesus specializes in restoring shipwrecked lives, finding purpose for drifting lives and keeping the sails full of the wind of His Spirit for those who are already sailing with Him.

Regardless of which ship we identify with, the main thing is to **start right where we are** and intentionally put Christ first in each area of our lives. That's what Jesus was referring to in [Matthew 6:33](#) when He said, "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness," Only then can we begin to make good decisions and set sail with courage and confidence.

My Experience

When I was in my teens, my dad bought a windsurfer. You've probably seen the surfboards with a mast attached to a swivel at the center of the board along with a sail and a boom. I remember that there was a long learning curve of hours standing on the surfboard, using a rope to pull the sail up out of the water while draining all of the excess water out of it - again and again.

When I finally learned how to balance, I stepped over to grab the boom and WOW! The wind caught the sail and that thing really took off! It was all I could do to lean back and hang on. What a huge thrill to be gliding through the water hanging on tight carried only by the power of the wind!

Just like learning to windsurf, there's been a progression of steps for my life with Christ. When I was just four years old, my grandma passed away from cancer. Around that time I asked my mom about what happens when we die. She shared the gospel message in a loving way that even a four-year-old could understand. Within minutes I was praying with her, inviting Jesus to come into my heart and surrendering my life to Him.

That was the start of my Christian life. Of course, I had a lot of growing to do then, and I still do today. Even though I was fortunate to have Christian parents who took me to church, prayed with me and talked about God, I still struggled with how to put Christ first in my life and follow Him. I didn't know what it meant. I just wasn't putting it together.

Growing up, even through my 30's and 40's I would read my Bible, go to church and pray, but Christ still seemed distant to me. It seemed like I was just going through the motions while deep down I knew there had

to be more. I was spiritually drifting and not growing closer to Christ. Then an idea started forming in my head (that I believe was the Holy Spirit nudging me) about fearless living. Pretty soon I had a process to follow that really helped me remove the barriers of fear and open up the connection between me and Christ.

After practicing this approach to fearless living, I felt like I began to finally wake up spiritually! I was finally growing when another idea hit me (Holy Spirit again) that included sailing to islands representing different areas of my life. Soon I had a simple five-step framework for becoming more intentional and deliberate in my relationship with Jesus. He used this tool in such a powerful way for me that I began sharing it with others.

The more we align our thoughts and actions with Christ, the more fruit we will see. What I mean by, "fruit," are things like patience, kindness, less envy & anger and more love & compassion for others. The most exciting thing for me is to see evidence of these qualities growing both in myself and in the lives of others that God has brought into my path. I've been seeing this again and again including mended relationships, opened doors to career opportunities and a much greater excitement about life.

Carl's Transformation

Let me tell you about Carl (not his real name). Shortly after we began meeting together I asked him how a good day is different from a bad day. Without hesitating he said, "No police and no hospitals." Carl had been through some really rough dark times filled with anxiety, loneliness, despair and a lack of love. Months later, since he started becoming more intentional in his faith as we applied the, "Set Sail," framework, I asked him what life was like now in the light of Christ and he said, "Joy, so much joy!" We have such an awesome God!

Carl's results, along with the many others who have experienced miraculous transformations, made me want to write down this framework so I could share it with a wider group.

So here I am, excited to be sharing, "Set Sail," with you. I thank God for you and that you are here. I trust that Christ will speak through these words so they become meaningful to you. Because once God's Spirit fills our sails (our hearts and minds) we better hang on tight, just like I did with that windsurfer, as we sail ahead with His incredible power and joy.

Accepting Christ

God sent his Son, Jesus, to earth to provide the way for true success both in this life, and the life beyond (see [John 3:16](#) and [Romans 6:23](#)).

His truth is timeless and never changes. His love for us is incredible and was clearly demonstrated as He died for us on the cross bridging the gap between our naturally sinful selves and God (see [John 14:6](#)).

Our part is to accept Christ's free gift of forgiveness, not by our own works or accomplishments, but by His grace (see [Ephesians 2:8](#)). Then we have victory (see [Colossians 3:1-4](#)). Everything else pales in comparison to God's amazing love and forgiveness as we are born again.

If you haven't done this yet, you can do it now. In your own heart, simply pray, "Lord Jesus, I surrender to you and repent of my sins. Thank You for Your forgiveness. I invite You into my heart and accept You as my personal Savior and Lord of my life."

If you have prayed this prayer, then you have most definitely won in this life and can begin looking forward to your next life in heaven! Congratulations, you're forgiven and have Christ in your boat! Now, what's next?

Keep Sailing

Even though we've already won the ultimate prize in our salvation through Christ, it's just the beginning of our eternal life with Him. So, rather than stopping, we keep sailing (learning and growing) with purpose and discipline like we're going after first place (see [1 Corinthians 9:24](#); [Acts 20:24](#)).

In order to keep learning and growing, an important step after salvation is to plug into a Bible-based church. It's a great place to learn more about God, His Word and how to serve and glorify Him as a community.

The churches that I've been a part of have definitely been learning and growing places for me, but we have to watch out for drifting while going to church as well. That was my problem. I was just going with the flow. I was involved but not being intentional and not taking responsibility for growing in my relationship with Jesus. In fact, this sounds bad but I

remember thinking I had a wimpy Spirit. I even asked God why He gave me such a wimpy Spirit!

What's it like to feel like you have a, "wimpy Spirit?" I remember feeling stale and stagnant, like I wasn't tuned in to God or what He wanted me to do. It didn't seem like I was growing in my relationship with Him and was kind of in a spiritual fog. I looked around and saw other people loving, growing and serving and I just felt like, "Ugh, why do I feel stuck."

I had too many thoughts like:

- *If I have Jesus in my heart, how come He seems so distant?*
- *If I have faith that can move mountains, how come I'm stuck on this molehill?*
- *If I'm a child of the King of Kings, why do I feel like a peon?*

Instead of focusing on myself, comparing myself to others and whining about a wimpy Spirit, I could have shifted my focus to Jesus and intentionally spent time with Him ([see John 15:4-11](#)). What I wasn't doing was deliberately opening the door ([see Revelation 3:20](#)) and letting Jesus in to share my life with Him. But once I started applying and practicing this, "Set Sail," method for inviting Him into my thoughts and actions, I quickly began seeing God's transformational power in my life.

There's no need to feel like we have a, "wimpy Spirit." We can embrace the fact that God's Spirit in us is strong and mighty! God wants us to be fulfilled and complete the mission that fits us perfectly. He gives us the power and freedom to make choices and use the talents, skills and interests that He provides for His glory ([see Matthew 25:14-30](#)). Talk about power! Talk about potential! Let's go for it!

As Jesus said in [John 10:10](#), "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." When He says, "they," He means us! We can enjoy a truly amazing and purposeful life filled with God's love and grace as we, "Set Sail," with Him every day.

5-Step, "Set Sail," Framework

I'm excited to share this powerful five-step framework that God is using to transform me and others as we intentionally put Christ first, abide in

Him and sail on course even through the stormy times of life. We'll be cruising through the following five steps:

- 1. Dare to Live Fearlessly.** I practice thanking and trusting God with little problems throughout my day, then I'll be ready when a crisis comes my way (see [Psalm 37:3-5](#)).
- 2. Define What Matters.** I list each area of my life that is a high priority, then I surrender it to Christ and His authority (see [Matthew 6:33](#)).
- 3. Describe the Vision.** I visualize each area of my life as an island filled with the love and grace of Christ, then I sail with Him to fulfillment, purpose and ultimately to paradise (see [Matthew 6:21-22](#)).
- 4. Determine the Score.** I take a virtual cruise to my islands and examine how I'm doing on each one, then I turn any gaps over to Christ and see how renewal has begun (see [2 Corinthians 13:5](#) and [Colossians 3:1-10](#)).
- 5. Do and Become.** I take deliberate action to align my islands with God's loving commands, then my faith grows and my life fits perfectly into His plans (see [James 1:22-25](#) and [Matthew 25:14-30](#)).

Let's pause here before going forward to thank and praise God!

Lord, I thank You and praise You for creating me with a mind and body that are made in Your image. I thank and praise You for the ability to think and make choices. I thank and praise You for all of the gifts, interests and opportunities that You give me. I thank and praise You for Your awesomeness, holiness and for sending Your Son so that I might be forgiven and righteous in Your sight. I thank and praise You for the opportunity to go on this, "Set Sail," adventure over the next five chapters and I trust You to lead and guide me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Setting My Sails:

- *Which of the three ships have you experienced? When?*
- *What ship best represents your situation right now? Why?*

Scripture:

- *Read Matthew 6:1-34. Identify the issues Jesus raises that can distract us and take our focus away from Him.*

Personal Application:

- *What are two of your own examples of duties, difficulties and distractions that threaten to take your eyes off of Jesus today?*
- *If you haven't accepted Christ in to your heart, why not go ahead and accept Him now? He loves you and is waiting for you.*
- *Are you ready for a simple framework to help you fine-tune your thoughts and actions so you can be more intentional in setting your sails for a life centered on Jesus? Why?*



“Our lives are busy with hectic schedules. Pressures and demands pull us in every direction. Like ships on the ocean, we are at risk of becoming lost drifting in the wind and the waves or even shipwrecked on the beach. Once we put our faith in Christ, we can confidently set sail with Him toward doing and becoming all that He is equipping us to do and become in each area of our lives. Real change starts on the inside. We grow closer to Christ as we set sail for His way in each of our islands of opportunity.



Set Sail is a powerful tool for discipleship and transformation. Based on an island cruise theme, we take a step by step approach to clarifying our priorities, surrendering them to Christ and sailing with Him to an exciting life of fulfillment and purpose. We identify our strengths as well as our opportunities for growth. Then we schedule action steps for making the greatest positive difference while documenting our progress along the way.

It's easy to cruise to our islands of opportunity - but it's also easy not to. By choosing to be intentional about growing in each area of our lives, we can embrace Christ's love and power to prepare us for the next phase of eternity with Him.” - Dan Kliewer