

# WHO STEERS YOUR BOAT?

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By Jim Jordal

"Jesus, Savior, pilot me, over life's tempestuous sea. Unknown waves before me roll, hiding rocks and treacherous shoal. Chart and compass come from Thee. Jesus, Savior, pilot me."  
From the song, "Jesus, Savior Pilot Me," by Edward Hopper.

Perhaps you've sung the above words of that well known song any times, thinking it's wonderful to have Jesus as your guide through the unknown, tempestuous seas of life. It's especially comforting to have Jesus in your life when disaster, losses, or perilous times threaten. But what about when things go well, when no immediate threats are visible, and when everyone is your friend? Who controls your life then?

It's as if we're sailing through life in a small boat with a single sail. We don't like sailing alone, so we invite Jesus into our boat, allowing him to sit beside us, and even to place his hand beside ours on the tiller. It's so nice to sail with Jesus on a warm and placid sea. We make it clear, however, that we're still captain, and that we decide which direction we will sail. As long as the wind is favorable and the sea calm, we're able to maintain our illusion of control. We're content just to sail with Jesus, but we don't want him interfering with our sailing, or questioning our mastery of the boat. But when the scudding, lowering clouds driven by gale force winds scurry by, and the waves charge by as if ridden by demons, and the boat rocks and pitches, seemingly in imminent danger of sinking, then we're only too happy to turn the helm over to Jesus.

TV preacher Charles Stanley uses the analogy of someone who has purchased a house. Upon taking possession, he discovers a locked room into which he cannot enter. So he calls the previous owner, saying, "I've paid for this house, and it's mine. What about this locked room?" The previous owner says, "Well, you did buy the house, but that room is still mine, and you can't enter because I have some important things in there over which I still want control."

Isn't that exactly what we often do in our personal Christian lives? Jesus has purchased us, and all that we are, but we still maintain locked rooms, or parts of our lives, into which we resist his entry because we're not ready to surrender full control to the new owner. These locked rooms may represent money, power, freedom, beliefs or people, but the effect is still the same. We lock God out of major portions of our lives.

The exclusion of God from major parts of our lives short circuits our spiritual growth, leading to complacency and stagnation. Instead of commitment and triumphant growth we get what too often passes for the fulness of Christ: an excessive reliance on ritual and tradition in worship, passive acceptance of things and behaviors we know are wrong, and a loss of vision and mission. We become "robots" of the faith, with little joy, peace, love or compassion. We spend our lives "going through the motions" of religion, with little or no experiencing of the Savior.

Galatians 5:22-23 lists the fruits of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness and moderation. These fruits, or outcomes of Holy Spirit presence, sprout, grow and flower as we submit and surrender our lives to Christ. When we close off certain areas of our existence to the leading of the Savior, we subvert our growth toward, as Paul puts it, "the stature of the fulness of Christ";

"Baby" Christians of any age fill many of our churches. If these were new converts to the faith it would be wonderful. But, unfortunately, many of them are not new Christians, but older persons who have accepted Christ, but have never allowed him to sit on the throne of their lives. They maintain "locked rooms" of resistance to Bible teaching, the commands of God, and the leading of the Holy Spirit. They remain stunted in whatever areas of life they withhold from the kingship of Christ, and will no doubt stay that way until some crisis or spiritual breakthrough enables them to complete their surrender to the Lord.

If you have areas of your life still not yielded to Christ, why don't you begin to pray that God will reveal these areas to you, and will help you unlock them to the entrance of his Spirit?