



“Live and Work On Purpose” Newsletter

November, 2008

What Shape is Your Sail?

by Bradley Davidson

The headlines reporting our troubled economy and the bloodbath on Wall Street have sent shock waves throughout our communities. Most of us have felt the effects of the recent collapse of well-known companies, evaporation of retirement savings, loss of jobs, and political uncertainty. These challenging times remind me of winds blowing a boat at sea. Our lives are the boats in the brisk wind of change and uncertainty we are all experiencing. Is the turbulence of the world's events blowing you in the opposite direction of where you want to go? Are you being blown off course?

An experienced sailor will tell you that a properly shaped sail (triangular instead of square) and the physics of “lift” will enable him to sail a boat *into the wind*. Wouldn't it be great if we could set the sails of our lives in such a way that we could sail *into the wind* of life's difficult events? Guess what? We can do it!

Think of your life vision as your map and compass. Your personal experiences, outlook, and commitment make up the sail that takes advantage of the “lift” of faith. We have a choice to make. We can either use a square sail (our natural inclination to be victims of life's difficulties) and accept the idea that we will be swept away in whichever direction life's winds blow us or we can select a properly shaped triangular sail (a positive, persevering commitment that builds upon our positive experiences and enables us to see the opportunities - not the challenges - in the world), take advantage of the “lift” (our faith), and sail in the direction we were created to go regardless of the wind's direction.

Leveraging the “Lift”

“How do I create the sail in my life that will take advantage of the ‘lift?’” you may ask. Here are some simple (though not always easy) steps to set your life's sail to keep you on track:

§ **Recognize you were created for a purpose – You have direction.** Before we set sail, we must make sure our map is clear and our compass is operational. Each of us has been created with a unique purpose, or direction, for our life. This purpose is intended to create in us a hopeful future. *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”* Jeremiah 29:11. Study, pray, and discern your life's purpose and vision. Prepare the map.

§ **Identify the events in your life that prepared you for this journey.** Everything that happens in life was designed to teach us a lesson and prepare us to live our purpose. This is the structure and fabric of our sail. Spend some time thinking about your “greatest moment in life”. Why was that moment great? How did you feel? What did *you do* that made that great moment possible? This is what you can use to build the sail.

§ **Learn how to leverage.** Spend time in prayer and meditation to understand how to leverage what you did that made you successful in the past to make you successful in the present and future. We have what it takes within us to live our purpose regardless of life's situations. If we can only discern what made our greatest moment in life great, we can work to replicate that personal outlook, skill, or focus to achieve what is before us. This is your triangular sail that, combined with the “lift” of faith, will move your life in the right direction.

§ **Have faith.** In order to sail into the wind using what we have learned from our past (our sail), we must have faith. Faith is the firm belief in something or someone for which there may be no tangible proof. How do



“Live and Work On Purpose” Newsletter

we have faith? First we need to ensure the object of our faith is worthy and will never let us down. Find a fellowship of people who have strong faith. Spend time in study, prayer, and meditation. A proper sail (your outlook and behaviors that will move you forward) and the “lift” of faith will enable you to sail toward your vision.

§ **Make the choice and move forward.** Author Stephen Covey asserts that in that split second between the stimulus and the response resides the life-changing opportunity to exercise choice. Living in faith is an *assertive choice*. Being controlled by the winds of fear is a *passive choice*. When faced with difficult times, we can either default to the passive choice of “c'est la vie” or take the amazingly empowering opportunity to consciously choose faith. Choose the right sail and take advantage of the “lift” of faith.

§ **Don't look back.** Once you've set sail and you are sailing into the wind, stay focused on your purpose; your map. When you experience doubt or negative thoughts, engage in the practice of “mentally looping”; consciously refocusing your thoughts from the negative back to the positive direction in which you're wanting to move. In other words, keep referring to the map and compass.

Are you ready to take the next step?

Now that you understand how to use your map and compass, set your sail and realize you have a choice, the next step is to make the choice and create the attitude and actions in your life to affirmatively live your vision. A life coach with a strong spiritual life can help you through this journey. Or, you can “go it alone”, following these steps and partnering with other people of faith on their similar journey.

Get out the map. Set your sail. Leverage the “lift”. Make the choice to move forward in vision and faith today.

Bradley Davidson is a certified personal & professional coach whose personal mission is to empower people and organizations to lead their lives and worlds with purpose, vision, passion, and integrity by providing individuals life-changing learning, coaching, and support. He may be contacted through his website at www.liveandworkonpurpose.com .