

CFAMC DEVOTIONAL PAGE
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Sometimes God asks us to trust him when our eyes are telling us that he can't be trusted. An experience in the great outdoors demonstrated this for me.

I became certified as a sailing instructor while in college, and began working weekends for a local sailing club. One February Saturday, the owner called and asked if I would take a group of novices to Anacapa Island, an uninhabited mountain peak that sits about 11 miles off Ventura (a coastal city 1 hour north of Los Angeles). The ten adventurers ranged in age from teens to seniors.

The club gave us a magnificent 44-foot wooden cutter, complete with a captain's bedroom that had a porthole the size of picture window, looking directly behind. The weather forecast called for typical afternoon winds to about 15 knots, sunshine, and a high of around 66 - perfect winter weather for that area.

Our trip over to Anacapa was uneventful, with a few dolphins swimming under us and even seeming to lead us laughingly toward this rather remote place. It was a bit windier than normal for a morning sail but, after all, I had been looking at a benign forecast, and I told myself not to worry.

We anchored on the far side of the island, which in most conditions is fairly protected from strong northwest winds and swells, and got acquainted over lunch. (As an aside, I have always said "Does anyone mind if I say a word of grace before we eat?" and to my continual surprise, no one has ever objected - most say "not at all" or even "I wish you would.")

After some exploring with a small inflatable raft, we pulled up anchor and started back. As soon as we rounded the southeastern tip of this hilly little island I knew we were in trouble, because the wind had been steadily building since we anchored. As we pointed the boat toward a now-invisible mainland, great green seas began breaking over the bow, and one crashed right into the cockpit, giving at least 5 passengers an unwelcome shower. Two teenage girls had decided to retreat to the captain's berth, and were lying on a mattress, looking out the huge porthole, and screaming "we're gonna die" at each other. My senses told me to start the motor, turn around, and head back to the anchorage - and then possibly call for help.

But then for some reason two sentences came to mind: "A cutter is designed for heavy seas," and "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you - they will not pass over you." (Isaiah 42:3) I remember praying quickly, and then hearing a third sentence: "Fly only the staysail." This is a little sliver of a sail, found on the very front of a cutter, that provides just enough stability to keep the boat heading forward when the winds and waves are beside or behind it. Hoisting any more sail in what was now a gale would have most likely caused the boat to capsize.

So that's what we did - we dropped all the canvas and then raised a sail half the size of a tablecloth. For the next 3 hours we listened to the wind howl through the rigging as we rocked and rolled across a sea that at times seemed almost white, like an undulating field of snow. The little staysail didn't produce any speed records but it did its job, and we reached the marina before dark, just like the advertisement for the trip promised. The next day a friend of mine who lives in Ventura said "You were out in that yesterday? You must have been crazy."

I am far from a perfect sailor, but for some reason the Lord led me to trust him - not my eyes, my ears, or even my common sense - on that windy day. It would have actually been dangerous to return to island's anchorage and wait for help, since the seas would now have been breaking into it as well, and we might have actually been driven farther out to sea with even worse conditions. But of course God knew this, and led us every step of the way.

We set our eyes, not on what we see, but on the things that are invisible.

--2 Cor. 4:18

It's true.