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A Guide for Personal or Group Study



Are you ready
to accept
God's **POWER**?

soar

kenny luck

president and founder of Every Man Ministries;
men's pastor at Saddleback Church

God's man
series

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SOAR

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in the midst

Hell on earth would be to meet the person you could have become.

—KEN BLANCHARD

“Don’t fight me!”

The firm and calm rebuke came from Gary, a flight instructor with twenty-nine years of glider experience. Sailing along at four thousand feet above the ground over California’s central coast, only moments before—after I had released the tow cable and Gary had trimmed us out—he asked, “Do you want to take the stick?”

“Yeah!” I yelled, almost bursting Gary’s eardrum, and eagerly grabbed the stick with my whole hand. Unknown to me, Gary gripped his “chicken stick,” which is the second flight control stick used by the instructor in case an overeager and undertrained novice forgets that flying gliders is not his day job.

Apparently, I had messed up, so Gary had rebuked me with his “Don’t fight me!” command and took control of the aircraft.

Shocked and surprised at his words, I quickly released my hand from the stick.

“Let’s try again,” Gary said calmly. “Forward is down. Back is climb. Left is left, and right is right.”

Slowly, I put my hand back on the stick and again grabbed it with my whole hand.

“Don’t fight me!” Gary said even more firmly this time.

I felt the “invisible force” wiggle my hand off the stick. My spirits dived again after hearing those buzz-killing words: “Don’t fight me.” Patiently Gary explained one more time how less is more when you are riding the wind in a glider. Specifically, that means a thumb, an index finger, and light pressure on the stick. “Gently keep the nose up and head for that mountain,” came the voice from behind me. “Gently,” he repeated.

For the third time I assumed control, this time lightly grasping the stick with my thumb and index finger, and for the next fifteen exhilarating minutes I rode the wind. Gary told me where to fly the glider, and after each prompt, I gently leveraged the physics of those long, skinny wings to float us silently toward different points on the horizon. For me, the third try was the charm. It was amazing.

I got into a rhythm of small, calculated, subtle adjustments on the stick. The silence and lack of more chicken-stick takeovers from Gary meant that I had earned his confidence. I suppose embarrassment makes you listen more closely so that you apply instructions and integrate the learning pronto. For those fifteen “Don’t fight me”-free minutes, the only gliding-related comments from Gary were of the chest-inflating nature. As in, “You’re a natural.”

When he said that, a loud voice in my brain shouted, What? Talk about a flip-flop! I’ve gone from “Don’t fight me!” to “You’re a natural” in ten minutes? What a turnaround!

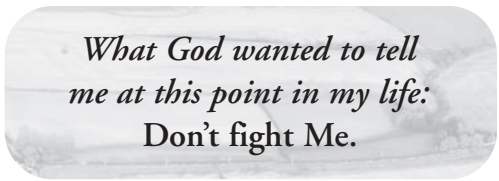
I went from embarrassment to elation, from doghouse to penthouse, and from novice reactions and failure to a new intuition and success in the skies. High above the earth, inside that canopy, I was literally *and* emotionally soaring. Victory was snatched from the jaws of defeat, shame, and embarrassment. Selfishly, I was thinking what any man would be thinking: *Thank God, I turned it around up here!*

We landed, popped open the canopy, and were greeted by my buddy Paul, who asked, “How’d it go?”

Gary offered, “He’s a natural.”

Attaboy, Gary.

Now here’s the embarrassing confession: I took that ride in the glider before writing this book, not to learn how to fly, but mainly to experience the feeling of soaring. I went up there for an emotional rush, not to get called out by a teacher! What a downer when all you want is to experience something, not to learn or think about it that much. I wasn’t prepared for *correction*. But when Gary directed those three little words at me four thousand feet above the ground, the real life lesson began to sink in. More specifically, a message from *up there* was being directed at me for consideration *down here* where I really live. Gary was the blissfully ignorant but perfect voice to say what needed to be said. Or rather, to say what God wanted to tell me at this point in my life: *Don’t fight Me*.



*What God wanted to tell
me at this point in my life:
Don't fight Me.*

Needle Sticks and Splinters

When someone says to another person, “Don’t fight me,” or “Don’t fight it,” it’s because something’s going on that is counterintuitive or not in line with expectations.

I recall another “don’t fight me” incident. I was with my son Ryan in the emergency room of Mission Hospital, watching his face redden by the second. He was pinned by heavy Velcro straps to a wooden backboard. Blood trickled from his nose where a nasogastric tube dripped black charcoal down his throat to soak up the medicine in his stomach that he’d swallowed because it “looked like candy.” Worst of all, he had a hurt and accusatory look on his face that pleaded, “Aren’t you gonna do something?” Our eyes met, and I told him, “Dad’s here, son, and it’s going to be okay,” so that he

could stop fighting the terrible process intended to help him. Ryan had to trust me, and my message was, “Don’t fight it.”

Amazingly, as we locked eyes and he began releasing himself to my calming presence and instruction, his breathing slowed, the redness in his face returned to his normal color, and he made his peace with the most terrifying experience thus far in his short life. Ryan relaxed.

Or imagine the scene as a nurse tries to stick a syringe with vaccine into a panicked child’s arm or a mom tries to extract a splinter shoved deep under the skin of her daughter’s finger. Any way you experience it, “Don’t fight me” is synonymous with the discomfort and suffering that are *necessary* for other positive things to happen. It’s an emotional stretch, especially if you are the one getting poked, plucked, or stuck for a “higher purpose.” And when love doesn’t listen to the cry to make it stop or make it go away, but instead does the painful thing because that’s the most loving thing, the reality is disillusioning.

Up in that glider cockpit, God delivered such a message to me. Gary didn’t know how I was struggling to get my arms around certain events of my life, my insecurities over the future, and some circumstances engulfing me for the first time. He was just

When love doesn’t listen to the cry to make it stop or make it go away, but instead does the painful thing because that’s the most loving thing, the reality is disillusioning.

doing his job of helping me fly a glider, but God figured that I would be motivated in such a place to hear a message I desperately needed.

Here’s the kicker, though: I learned from one of the workers at the airfield that Gary doesn’t usually let the

uninitiated take the stick on a first flight. But since I was writing a book titled *Soar*, he took a risk, and God seized the opportunity. He’s very clever, and His sense of humor knows no bounds!

My spiritual condition that day was reminiscent of an aircraft that is not “trimmed” out. That’s pilot lingo for an airplane not adjusted and aligned to match the wind

conditions on the nose during flight. An untrimmed aircraft is unwieldy and unstable, thus tough to fly. It will struggle to stay airborne because its rudder, ailerons, and elevator are *fighting the conditions* versus being adjusted to fly *in those conditions*. Sadly, that was my personal condition—unstable and unwieldy under some forceful and unpredictable headwinds in my life.

What exactly was God's Spirit getting at with His "Don't fight Me" message?

Don't fight My purposes in your circumstances.

Don't fight the growth I want to bring about in you.

Don't fight My providence in your life.

Don't fight My authority to mess with your expectations of how you feel your life should be.

Don't fight My voice that is asking you to go against your feelings to be God's Man in this season.

Don't fight Me when I ask you to surrender to this process.

Don't fight the new man I am making *in the midst* of uncomfortable circumstances.

I probably felt like Ryan did when, against his will, he lay strapped on that emergency room backboard, looking into his dad's eyes, fighting to reconcile the panic and pain of the unknown with the strong presence and promise of his father. My son had powerfully conflicting emotions flying head-on into an equally powerful force in his life: me. The more he looked at me, the more peace and resolve he found to endure the process that would save his life from toxic poisoning. The more he listened, the more calm he became.

Ryan stopped fighting. He soared in the midst of disorientation and emotional challenge and came out the other side healed.

Invitation to Elevation

In the day we live, where all of God's Men are challenged economically, culturally, relationally, emotionally, and spiritually, what might the Holy Spirit be saying to you and me?

- You can rise above and face the challenges before you because I have custody over you and your circumstances.
- All undesired, unplanned, and unexpected conditions you find yourself in today are to show the world how My people can rise above all because I AM above all.
- You were created to soar in the midst of, not in the absence of, tribulation and trial.
- You may be weary and confused, but I am strong, confident, and crystal clear about My goals.
- My kingdom will advance most powerfully in you and through you because of your difficulties and challenges, not in spite of them. That is My will.
- So don't fight me! Instead, discover me in the midst of trouble...and soar.

When the Holy Spirit says "Don't fight Me" to God's Man, it is an invitation to elevation. He is saying, "Why act like a common pigeon when I designed you to fly like an eagle?" Remember the words of the prophet Isaiah:

Do you not know?
Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He will not grow weary,
and his understanding no one can fathom.
He gives strength to the weary
and increases the power of the weak.
Even youths grow tired and weary,
and young men stumble and fall;

but those who hope in the LORD
 will renew their strength.
 They will soar on wings like eagles;
 they will run and not grow weary,
 they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:28–31)

This promise was directed at God's people as they faced dynamic and challenging times. In a similar way, in the midst of disillusioning and uncertain times, all men need to make adjustments. The main adjustment is to determine how to connect what's happening to them personally to the larger life context so they can meaningfully live in the midst of their challenges. They need to be "trimmed out," adjusted, and realigned to fly into some serious wind. If a man doesn't do this, he's going to succumb to the gravities of life on earth, lose altitude, and fall out of the sky.

Through His man Isaiah, God said to His people then and to God's Men today:

You can choose to soar or crash in the midst.

Remember who I am.

Dial Me in and listen to me.

Wait upon My word to you and receive it.

Let Me "trim you out" so that you can fly high in these conditions.

Make the adjustments I tell you to make.

I will stabilize, strengthen, and steady you so you can rise above even the most severe winds.

Not many books invite you to welcome and fly directly into the storms of life. Yet you are holding a book that does.

Just like my friend Paul's invitation to take a glider ride was too tempting to pass up, this book is an invitation to experience a different and thrilling dimension of the spiritual life through the power of the Holy Spirit. It may not be what you were looking for, but it just might be what God intended from the moment He created you.

Eagle or Pigeon?

My buddy Dan loves eagles. And while he loves to see them up close in nature, he hates seeing eagles in a cage. His thinking goes like this: a "sitting eagle" is an oxymoron. Imagine being created to soar but being grounded for perpetuity in a zoo. Think about it for a second. This is a bird designed by God to drift, wings spread, effortlessly over mountains, climbing thermals, and covering many miles with ease. As far as birds go, eagles are as strong as they come. They can ascend to altitudes of ten thousand feet or more. They rarely have to flap their wings when migrating to feeding areas, and yet they can hit speeds up to seventy-five miles an hour when descending to nest or munch on a rabbit.

Dan told me about once visiting an eagle cage in a zoo. While comparatively large and expansive to the other holding areas, the cage was totally enclosed with thick black netting and a fence. Curious, Dan asked

The only way to live such a life of transcendence while on earth is to make a transition in the way you look at life and experience the Holy Spirit's work in and through you. Miss that, and you miss the transcendent life.

the handler, "What would happen if the netting and cage were gone?"

"He'd stay right there on the branch," the handler replied. Apparently this eagle was past the point of no return. He had imprinted (or attached) to his environment in captivity and fully

recalibrated its natural instinct, desire, and design to soar. This was an eagle acting like a common pigeon. This magnificent creature would never experience the full promise, potential, or power of his design. He would rather perch than fly.

My purpose in this book is to remind every God's Man that he is an eagle, not a pigeon. The problem is that we have millions of men who are eagles that have

imprinted, practically and spiritually, like they are pigeons. They are majestic, highly created servants of God who are acting out of character, contrary to their design, wings tucked, and imprisoned by their own bad thinking about themselves and their God. They are swallowing the lies of their feelings, flesh, and fantasies about who they really are and what they are really supposed to be experiencing. The result:

- Low-level living
- Low-level hope
- Low-level discipline
- Low-level spiritual growth
- Low-level risk
- Low-level witness to the world
- Low-level Christianity

This is all wrong. We are able to rise above and live differently in the midst of the earth because we are connected to the most high God. Every person ever born is created to live in this realm, connected to the eternal, transcendent God. That person can, because of this connection, transcend, rise above, and live figuratively like an eagle among pigeons. Why? He is intimately connected to the winds and workings of the Holy Spirit. The only way to live such a life of transcendence while on earth is to make a transition in the way you look at life and experience the Holy Spirit's work in and through you. Miss that, and you miss the transcendent life.

Amid the winds of change and challenge, God's Man must activate, partner, and grow with the Holy Spirit—God's active power on earth. Practically, we do this by embracing the four key SOAR principles that will be outlined throughout this book:

Say yes to the Holy Spirit now...make a switch.

Open new doors to the Holy Spirit...make way.

Actively pursue the Holy Spirit...make strong.

Release the power of the Holy Spirit...make a powerful impact.

Got that? Make a switch. Make way. Make strong. Make a powerful impact. These are the ways in which God's Man trims out his faith to ride the winds of change and challenge. Each action is spelled out clearly in the flight operations manual (Bible) so you can ascend to the exact altitudes of faith and growth as God's Man in the midst of earth. No need to fear these heights.

Equally plain in the Scripture is the fact that the Spirit-formed life will always be challenged by the storms, natural gravities, and injustices of life. That means, as spelled out in the other books in this series (*Risk, Dream, and Fight*), these principles and accompanying disciplines are not an event but a way of life for God's Man.

Final Orientation

God comes to man most powerfully in the midst of his darkest hours and biggest challenges, calling him to trim out his faith and fly into the wind. Versus what? Fragmenting or panicking in the midst of trials, choosing to speak and act "pigeon," and ending up planted comfortably on a ten-foot perch in a cage (looking goofy). The

soar fact

Just as gravity is necessary to experience lift, so change and challenge are necessary for God's Man to soar spiritually and experience growth through the Holy Spirit.

difference between flapping hard to stay aloft in the air versus soaring in a different dimension is knowing how your faith is designed to respond in the midst of some heavy winds.

Writing this book has compelled me to take a long, hard look in the mirror and ask, "Am I living like an eagle or a pigeon? I want this book to help you ask the same question and make you reflect seriously on how you are going to approach your spiritual journey with God.

You will experience God confronting and then encouraging. Most likely, He will give you a laboratory to test and prove what you are learning in real time. He will throw some delay and difficulty into the mix if you are not already there. He's a great dad, and good dads know how to shape boys into men. So as we enter the arena of Holy

Spirit growth, the encouragement from the Scripture and me is that squirming is expected, but staying in the process makes a man.

Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! (Hebrews 12:7-9)

So how about you? Are you ready to get off that perch and spread those wings? Your Father, through His Spirit, wants to say to you, "Could I have a word with you, son?"

It is time to accept the power and soar higher. Don't fight Him.