

“ *How To Be A Successful Seafarer* by Rev. Martin Otto is a handy tool for our seafarers whose dreams and aspirations remain steadfast during these extraordinary times. The biblical principles embedded in this practical guide help navigate through the exciting and challenging seas of seafaring.

Seafarers, I encourage you to be intentional in reading this book by learning as much as you can and applying the principles in your everyday life. This book will help you clarify your purpose as you endeavor to begin with a clear goal and purpose in mind. You will be reminded that God is with you in every ebb and flow, through all the waves and storms, because He will never leave you nor forsake you. It is my prayer that the Lord will grant you fresh revelations and clear direction so you can attain success for the glory of God. ”

Sen. Manny Pacquiao

*Eight Division World Boxing Champion
The People’s Champ from the Philippines*



Rev. Martin Otto and his wife Monika have been serving seafarers in the port of Hamburg since 1987. They work with the International seamen’s mission, Seamen’s Christian Friend Society based in the U.K. Martin has visited more than 20,000 ships (cargo ships, cruise ships, navy ships and yachts). Martin is the author of five other books: *Seafarers a strategic missionary vision*; *Church on the Oceans*; *Faith at Sea*; *Help, how can I overcome temptation?* and *The Seafarer’s Mind*. He is also the director of training for the Church on the Oceans project in the Philippines.



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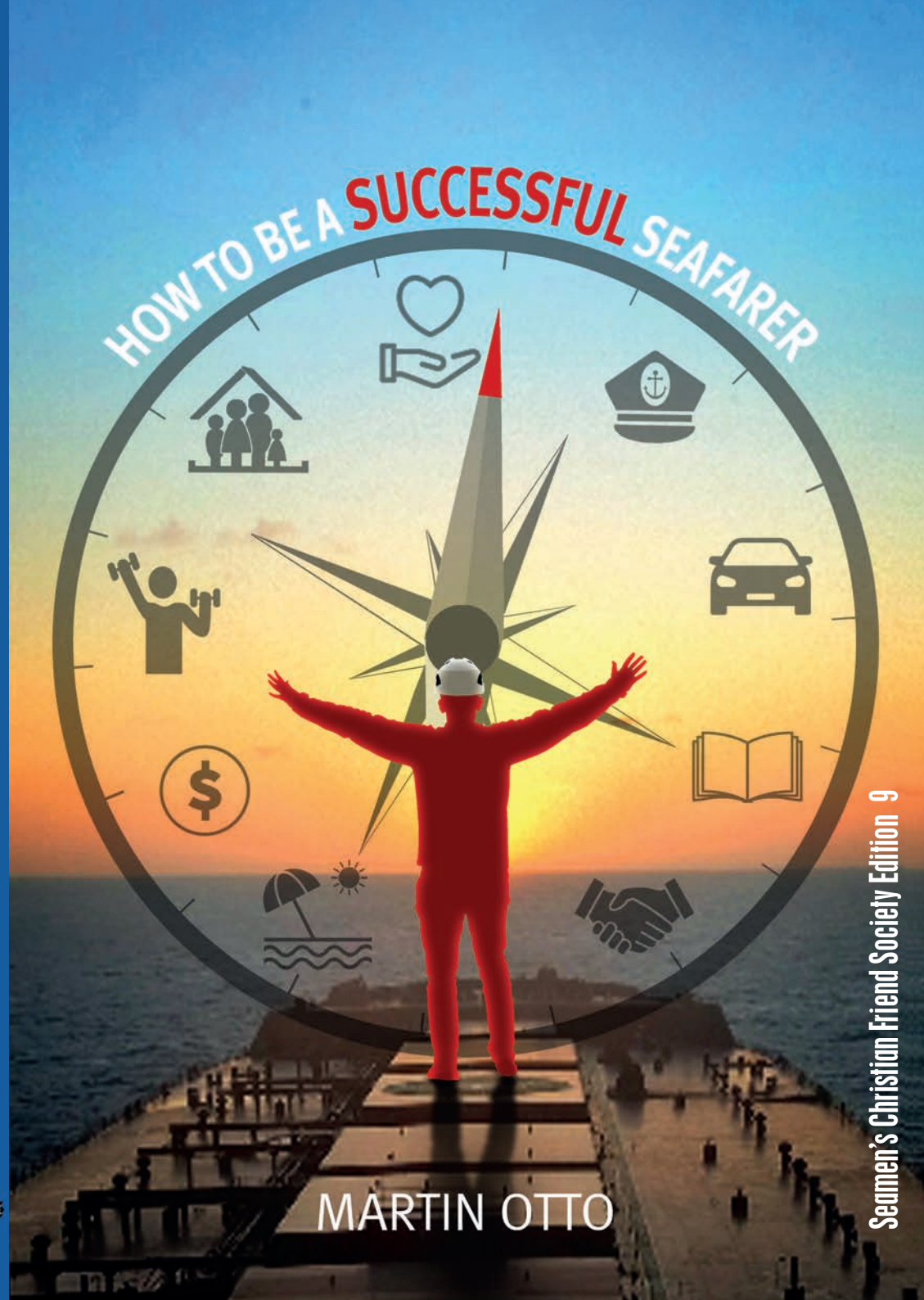
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MARTIN OTTO HOW TO BE A SUCCESSFUL SEAFARER



MARTIN OTTO

Seamen’s Christian Friend Society Edition 9

Martin Otto

How to be a Successful Seafarer

Seamen's Christian Friend Society Edition

Vol. 9

- Vol. 1 Volker Lamaack. The Prison at Sea (English, German, Taglish)
- Vol. 2 Martin Otto. Seafarers – a strategic missionary vision (English, German, Spanish, Tagalog)
- Vol. 3 Martin Otto. HELP! How Can I Overcome Temptation? (English, Taglish)
- Vol. 4 Martin Otto. Faith at Sea (English, Taglish)
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- Vol. 7 Martin Otto. The Seafarer's Mind (English, Tagalog)
- Vol. 8 Volker Lamaack. How to have a happy marriage (English, Tagalog)
- Vol. 9 Martin Otto. How to be a Successful Seafarer (English)



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Martin Otto

How to be a Successful Seafarer

RVB

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Introduction

Through the many years I have been on ships trying to help seafarers deal with difficult situations, I have noticed that a variety of matters commonly occur that seem to cause seafarers distress. Many questions go through their minds. (Please see my other book “The Seafarer’s Mind”¹) Seafarers are too often alone with their questions, which can become a problem. They have to live on a ship, sailing over the vast oceans for six to nine months at a time, and sometimes even longer, such as when the coronavirus first appeared. Therefore, the question arises: Who can these seafarers turn to when they need to talk about their questions and problems? Of course, they have colleagues on board, but not all seafarers share their deepest thoughts, their emotions, and insights with their workmates. Sometimes it helps when they reach a port and the chaplains of the different Seamen’s Missions come and listen to the worries and needs of the lonely seafarers. Many things need to be looked after. There are questions about the family at home, financial difficulties, health issues, marriage problems, and sometimes also questions regarding how to be a more successful and competent seafarer. How can the seafarer get promoted and thus be able to better provide for his family? Of course, among the many, you will always find some who are satisfied with their situation on board. They are happy to have a salary and be able to send money home to the family. At least their present financial situation is better than if they were working in their home country. However, many seafarers want to know how to get a better job, ensure better living conditions for their family, and so they have questions like: How can I be a successful seafarer? What do I have to learn on the ship and at home that will improve my job skills and enable me to be more successful and obtain a better position? Is it just enough to attend more courses and improve my knowledge in various areas of shipping, or is the solution found in waiting for a promotion? And after all, what does it mean to be successful? Does my success depend on my salary? Am I successful when I have climbed the ladder to the top position on a ship? What does it mean to be a successful seafarer? And what does the shipping industry expect of a seafarer? What are the requirements and expectations of my company? Would they agree with my understanding and level of success? Probably not. They might have a different definition of success. For a lot of seafarers, there is not one right answer to the questions about success. They need to consider many things and many suggestions.

¹ Martin Otto, *The Seafarer’s Mind*, 2020, RVB Verlag, Hamburg, Germany.

There are seafarers who also wonder who even defines what success is. Some people say that success is not measured by what you achieve, but rather it is measured by the obstacles you overcome. For others, success is found in relationships. They can trace the successes and failures in their lives to their most significant relationships. We can be sure that success is defined differently depending on the country and culture. A question of importance also is, what keeps me from being a successful seafarer? How can I make sure I won't repeat the mistakes of others?

However, many people accept only human advice concerning the questions and challenges they face, and they don't think about seeking God for advice. Some seem to be very confident. They are convinced of their ability to be a successful seafarer. They just trust their natural talents. People often think that God does not care about their human situation. God only cares about the spiritual things, but not about the practical day-to-day situations. I have heard people say, "I cannot bother God with my problems". They do not know that the Bible has a lot to say about success and failure, and about success and successful people. The Bible also talks about building good character and performing well on the ship. I will give you some examples in this book. At this point I would like to encourage you to take a Bible and read in it regularly. You will find amazing answers to the questions that you have probably had for a long time. The Bible is a very practical book which addresses the problems and situations which occur in life, and it provides the best advice ever. Yes, God wants you to go to him and ask him things. He longs to be involved in your everyday life. We read the following in the book of Matthew, chapter 11:28-29: "*Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*" Can I invite you to accept God's invitation to come to him with your problems, questions, and whatever troubles you daily? God longs to start a relationship with you today. God longs to communicate with you and be your guide in every possible situation. You can find more about this in the last chapter of this book. Finally, I would also like to make this book practical, so that you can identify with it. I will include a lot of testimonies from seafarers who have found answers to many questions you might still be going through. I hope and trust that these testimonies will not only help you with the decisions you need to make, but that they will also be a rich encouragement and inspiration for your seafaring life, and for your personal life as well. And finally, if you still have questions, comments, or if you would just like to get in touch with me, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am always glad to hear from you and will do my best to assist you in whatever way I can. You can reach me at: M.Otto@allianzmission.de.

May God truly bless you and your family whether you are at home or at sea! God is alive, and he has a deep desire to be with you! Your life matters to God! With God, you can not only make a difference in your family, but also in the maritime world. The maritime world needs people who are courageous, who are dedicated in their service on ships, and people with good character and a noble attitude. By God's grace you can make a difference!

"But blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him."

Jeremiah 17:7

"Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart."

Psalms 37:4

Acknowledgments

I did not intend to write another book, but the corona situation allowed me to work from home and that gave me extra time to write. However, the main reason for writing was my good friend Capt. Kennette C. Clavel. He encouraged me so much, that I started to pray about it and now you see the result in front of you. Dear Kennette, thank you for your dedication to the Lord and to the seafarers and your desire for them to be successful. Thank you for encouraging me. I am also very grateful to Capt. Nelson Sotelo, who, through the many telephone conversations we had, encouraged and motivated me to write this book. Your advice, inspiration, and great wisdom have been so helpful indeed. I do not want to forget our dear sister Nikka Sotelo who did a huge job and dedicated a lot of her time to help us get connected to Bro. Manny Pacquiao. Thank you Sis. Nikka! Also, I am so grateful to my good friend Captain Alex G. Labor, who submitted real quality writing for this book. Furthermore, more than 30 seafarers of many different ranks have contributed to this book. I do not want to forget the dean of the Martin Bucer Seminary, Titus Vogt, who spent countless hours editing this book. Thank you Titus for such a great help. I owe a special word of thanks, to all of them. Last, but not least, I am more than amazed, and I owe special thanks to Marcy Schönke, who has helped me once again with this book. Thank you, Marcy, this is the fifth book you have helped me with. May Jesus abundantly bless you for all you have done for me and the seafarers! Heaven will prove how much the seafarers have appreciated your work of putting this book into readable English!

Endorsements

How To Be A Successful Seafarer by Rev. Martin Otto is a handy tool for our seafarers whose dreams and aspirations remain steadfast during these extraordinary times. The biblical principles embedded in this practical guide help navigate through the exciting and challenging seas of seafaring.

During this pandemic, I was able to talk with Rev. Martin Otto through video conferencing about his God-given mission. Throughout our inspiring interaction, it was evident that his heart overflows with love and compassion for the seafarers. I know a lot of seafarers who are tough and resilient people. They have overcome the tosses and turns of life, but they did not become a success overnight. They go through tough times that test their strength and solidify their competence. They confront trials and tribulations that reveal their character.

Seafarers, I encourage you to be intentional in reading this book by learning as much as you can and applying the principles in your everyday life. This book will help you clarify your purpose as you endeavor to begin with a clear goal and purpose in mind. You will be reminded that God is with you in every ebb and flow, through all the waves and storms, because He will never leave you nor forsake you. It is my prayer that the Lord will grant you fresh revelations and clear direction so you can attain success for the glory of God.

Sen. Manny Pacquiao

Eight Division World Boxing Champion
The People's Champ from the Philippines

Hi Martin, I cannot help but admire the book, the way it is written and woven into such an encouraging, thought provoking and faith-encouraging literature. I admire how you were able to infuse your book with a Biblical foundation from Scripture, while letting the reader know what others learned from their experiences and personal testimonies.

It is a great book. Thank you for your passion. May this book encourage and help the younger generation of seafarers become not only better at their chosen profession but also better testimonies of Christ-likeness. God bless.

Capt. Alex G. Labor MM

(retired) instructor and author
Manila, Philippines

I am glad and grateful to receive a copy of the book via email on April 1, 2021, from the author Rev. Martin Otto of the Seamen's Christian Friend Society, Germany. During this holy week season, reading this interesting book entitled "*How can I be a **Successful** Seafarer?*", is timely and suitable for reflection and commendation.

This book is undoubtedly a product of the so many years that Rev. Martin has experienced with and personally collected from seafarers worldwide. Rev. Martin Otto functions as God's instrument; communicating with seafarers in any given situation; serving as their adviser, listener, and counselor, all rolled into one; helping them cope with their worries and needs; and contributing to their mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

The **success** concepts confirmed in this book are the simplest and humblest that the author can ponder or think about, but the contents are comprehensive enough and stimulating for seafarers. There is much information given about **success**, coupled with personal stories shared by the seafarers themselves, such as their dreams, difficulties, and challenges, which all come in different forms and intensities.

Many have raised questions about the **success and competency** required to sustain their seafaring career beneficial to themselves, their family, and the maritime industry in general. The stories and testimonies presented in this book are supported and answered by Scripture quotations on good performance, character, success, failures, etc. The Holy Bible provides remarkable advice to all problems in any circumstances. Indeed, this book encourages and inspires everyone to communicate and develop a good relationship with God for **true success** in personal and seafaring lives.

God communicates with us through this book. Indeed, God is Alive! Indeed, it is for HIM, through HIM, and with HIM that **SUCCESS in EVERYTHING** is possible in God's time. Reading this inspirational book and applying it for **success** is a good step in that direction.

Prof. Angelica Baylon Ph.D.

Director, ERO – Maritime Academy of Asia and the Pacific (MAAP)
Manila, Philippines

Every seafarer should read this book. It might mean the difference between a significant and successful life, or a life spent in reaching goals that ultimately do not matter. This insightful book takes a closer look at the

extremely important question of what it might mean to be a successful seafarer and how to become one. Martin approaches this with valuable wisdom gained through his many years of experience in mission and ministry, and also by way of collaborating with seafarers themselves to pass on some of the hard-earned lessons that they have learned through much suffering and many challenges on board their ships, far away from home, friends, and family.

In answering the question of what success is and how to attain it, Martin makes use of recent research, current wisdom, but most importantly, he will point you again and again towards the Bible, and so to Christ. In this way, Martin will teach you not only how to be successful on board, but he will share insights and principles that will help you succeed in all aspects of your life.

Success ultimately can only be defined and found through and with God. In dependence on Him, we succeed. By reading this book, you will know that it all begins with accepting Jesus as your Savior; he who gives you true success, not only for today, but for eternity. I would like to strongly encourage every seafarer, or those involved with seafarers, to read this important book.

Chris Viljoen, Ph.D.

Port Chaplain,

Durban, South-Africa

Christian Seaman's Organization

I loved the book – like myself, you are a very practical Christian, and you have written *The Bible for Seafarers!* Everyone at sea should have access to this book! This book is the perfect complement to *The Seafarer's Mind*. It is a practical guide to life on the ocean and how to make the most of a career that is demanding, stressful, often lonely, and at times extremely challenging. Martin Otto, the world's leading author on matters relating to seafarers, unpacks the world of work on the oceans and all that confronts those who work there. He does not shy away from the challenges, but exposes them head-on so that they are laid bare for all to see. But then he shows how, through living a life as a contemporary Christian in a secular world, the seafarer can live a far richer life, contribute more fully to their work, and be an exemplar for others at sea. Otto challenges seafarers to seek God's word, grow in their Christian walk, share their faith with others, and finish their careers knowing they have served God in word and deed.

This is the one book seafarers need to guide their work, life, and faith. I loved the book and commend it to all at sea.

Professor Ross Dowling AM

Global Cruise Ship Lecturer

Perth, Australia

Dear Martin,

Thank you for this copy of your Book by email which you have obviously felt constrained and guided to write! In it I have read the personal testimonials of real living Seafarers sharing their experiences of their guidance and calling to go to sea and working in this most vital industry for the nations of the world. Indeed, your book is not only timely but relevant in the challenging times we are living. The wise way you present it is: practical, inspirational, and faithful in its biblical and spiritual content, and I believe will be very helpful both mentally and spiritually to many who read it.

Having served in Maritime Ministry at two Nautical Colleges for a considerable part of my chaplaincy work in the U.K., also, for 51 years serving in several countries and sailing as on-board Chaplain too, with; “the men and women who go down to the sea in ships”, I feel that I am reasonably qualified to be given the privilege of endorsing this excellent book.

Rev. William Wilson Mc Crea, MNM

Sailors' Society, Honorary Chaplain

Ashurst, Southampton. / U.K.

I am pleased to endorse the book entitled, “How to be a Successful Seafarer”. I have read the contents and have found it worthwhile reading, both for newcomers and experienced seafarers. It is efficient and answers the “if’s” and “buts” of an individual. The book is unique, and it is also awesome regarding its spiritual guidance.

The reader will be emotionally and spiritually encouraged, and the book is like a stepping-stone or serves as a ladder of success in the future.

It will help our future seafarers and the present seafarers to be obedient and submissive to their senior officers and engineers, and most especially concerning their behavioral-based safety and their social responsibility to their shipmates.

To have a copy and read the contents of the book will improve seafarers' knowledge and skills.

On board, our knowledge and skills are not only what are needed – what matters is our inter-personal-relationships. The book is one tool to educate the seafarers to be cheerful on the inside and outside, have a good attitude towards our shipboard officers and engineers, and to everybody including the stakeholders, ships agents, stevedores, and any personnel going on board to carry on business with the ship.

Thank you and God bless you.

Samuel Daguio Ph.D.

Chief Engineer, former Professor in Maritime Education and training at John B. Lacson University

I highly recommend this book to all who are considering a career at sea. It is a down-to-earth, practical book with many stories which you can relate to. It comes with warnings to avoid certain pitfalls and temptations, and it helps you to navigate your life's expectations and career path. Forewarned is forearmed!

I also highly recommend this book to all volunteers, staff, and board directors who are associated with The Mission to Seafarers worldwide, and all welfare and related organizations seeking to assist and support seafarers around the world.

Rev. Tay Un Hui

Principal Chaplain/CEO

The Mission to Seafarers

Sydney, Australia

Hello Martin,

This book is such a gift! I felt God while reading it. Thank you for sharing it. When I started out on cruise ships, I expected fun and adventures from earning dollars. I come from the Philippines, where working on ships comes as a top-of-mind solution for those who wish to elevate their social and financial status. The scenario onboard can be intense for a new hire. Imagine a highly complex hospitality environment that aims to exceed the expectations of multinational guests. Picture a demanding seven-days-a-week work with long hours of duty. Assume a hookup culture that makes

long-term and meaningful relationships difficult. Now, can you feel how hard it is behind the scenes to operate mega vessels carrying thousands of guests on quick turnaround times?

In a nutshell, working on ships, away from family and loved ones, miles away from home, with strangers, in foreign lands, can cause a lot of heart-breaks, resentments, loneliness, and mental anxieties. It is a hectic job. Sometimes, we even sabotage our Divine birthright to succeed because of our tendencies to overindulge and impress others.

Without a strategy, a support group, and a drive to continuously learn and grow in spirit, it will be difficult to be productive and competent onboard. Martin's book, "How to be a Successful Seafarer," aptly describes the human need for validation. I have read it over and over again and found so much wisdom in understanding the different paradigms that shape a ship's culture. Oftentimes, while reading through all the challenges, fatigue, and distractions, I catch myself wanting to ask for help too. This book is a gentle reminder to do just that. It is an empowering companion to help a seafarer focus on what matters. The book also advances the mission to personal development and spirituality.

In this powerful book, I found a chance to shift my perspectives and improve my life. It provides key messages on leadership and inner transformation, covering mental, emotional, and spiritual health to finish a maritime career strong. The book is a great learning and growing companion while onboard. It is an encouraging and heartfelt approach to guide seafarers on how to genuinely succeed in the maritime world.

Diva Gannaban

Leadership Missionary, Author and Speaker

Life and Wealth Coach, Seafarer

Manila, Philippines

I first personally met the author, Rev. Martin Otto, almost two decades ago, in our office, when I was still new in the shipping industry, and I might say it was indeed a blessing, and God sent me to know more about the man (person) ministering to seafarers and their families.

His books shall continue to be a kind of compass or a lighthouse, not only to the weary and downtrodden, but also a means of obtaining a wealth of inspiration for other seafarers to minister to their co-seafarers.

The continuous journey, and this book, "How to be a Successful Seafarer" shall encourage us to sail on, to never stop navigating, to move

forward, to discover and re-discover the dreams and aspirations we have as we align and re-align them with the challenges and obstacles that come our way. This book will provide us with practical tips and guidelines on how to be victorious and finish exceedingly well.

Let us start navigating by reading it and applying what we are learning on this journey we call Life.

Alfonso “Jong” Pablo, Jr.

Head, Crew and Family Services

Magsaysay Maritime Corporation

Executive Director

Homer Foundation, Inc.

CSR Arm of the Magsaysay Group of Companies,

Manila, Philippines

Amidst this troublesome time, fighting our unseen enemy during the COVID19 pandemic, our seafarers are the most affected. With an extended stay on board ships, even 6-8 months beyond their usual contracts of 8-10 months, this causes undue harm to their well-being: physical, emotional, mental, and above all spiritual.

This inspirational book is very timely for our beloved seafarers because it provides deep hope as they experience tribulations of various kinds at sea. Their lives are always in danger due to the anguish of being away from their loved ones and the physical and mental torture of seeing a horizon with just the sea in view.

It is a story of inspiration and faith, and with great pride I recommend Martin Otto’s *How Can I be a Successful Seafarer*, a book anchored on our Christian faith to lead us to safety and success despite the perils of the ocean and the occupation.

It is not just a good read but a good source of inspiration for our seafaring professionals, to help them find the right values – of competence and a Christian attitude – so they can be the seafarer who is a ‘cut above the rest.’

I hope our seafarers will have time to read this book. I believe it will help them see and accept God’s loving-kindness and inner strength to move forward full speed ahead.

Vice Admiral Robert A Empedrad AFP (Ret)

Administrator, Maritime Industry Authority

Manila, Philippines

I. My dream of becoming a seafarer

This is a very special day! Here I am at the graduation ceremony of our maritime school. All kinds of thoughts are racing through my mind and I am so happy because I have completed my training and exams. I can't believe it. Is it really true? The years have flown by and in a little while I will finally receive the certificate I worked so hard for. Everything is completed except for the board exam, and then I will be fully qualified as a seaman. Finally! I am so proud! My parents and relatives are proud of me too. I have made it. After a few months of searching for a company, I even found a job and was given my first contract at a manning agency. What a blessing, I thought. For a moment, I even started to think about God. Did he help me during all my studies? I am pretty sure he did.

Months later ...

I have started on my first vessel. It is a container ship that sails between Asia and Europe. How exciting everything has been. But now questions have started coming up: What will it be like? Will I have good or bad experiences? Will my employer be satisfied with my work? Will I be able to adjust to life at sea? Will I be able to manage the hard work on board? Will I make friends on the ship? In any case I want to do well, so I am optimistic. There is one thing for sure: I do not want to disappoint anyone. I want to show everyone that I am a capable and trustworthy seafarer. I want to be considered a successful seafarer.

My first trip took me from Singapore to Rotterdam. Everything seemed alright. The people on board gave me a warm welcome, and I felt well enough prepared for my first trip. However, it turned out to be hard to adjust for the first few days. Some of the work was harder than I had imagined. I was tired every night, but happy to have a job. One day I experienced something new: The ship was rolling and pitching so much that it made me feel sick. I even had to vomit. I was seasick. The next morning the weather wasn't any better and I even got a terrible headache. It felt terrible to have to work. My headache didn't get better. I wondered how I would survive that day. While I was suffering from seasickness, I got an order from the bosun² who asked me to help with the painting. I was told to go and help the others who were already working. At dinner, I asked for a pain pill and after soon taking it I felt better. I took the time to sit around with

² Bosun = receives work instructions from the officers and passes the work on to the seafarers on deck.

some of the other colleagues and at around 10.30 p.m. I decided to go to bed. I was excited to see what the next day would have in store for me. Would I get seasick again? Even more importantly: Would I be able to please my superiors? I just hoped and prayed that my work would be good enough so that I could continue working on international cargo ships. I am still dreaming of a good career. I would like to be a captain someday. How long could that take? What kind of energy and discipline will I need in order to achieve my goal? I have many dreams, thoughts, and ideas. What will the future bring? Before I went to bed, I decided to write to my parents. I owe them my heartfelt thanks. They always supported me so much. I want to give something back to them. Hopefully, I will not disappoint them.

Electrical Officer Marc Silliano³, a Filipino by birth, shares his dream of becoming a seafarer. This is what he wrote:

It all started when my parents took me to my grandparents when I was just two years old, after the birth of my younger sister. At such a young age, I could not figure out how they could let me live separated from them. At night I remember how I was always crying and looking for my mother. I remember that when grandpa Teofilo woke up early in the morning, he took me to his farm, and he had to put me on his hip when securing his Carabao because I wanted to be with him all the time. As years passed by, I became more independent and learned to live with my new family, which included grandma Marciana, and my four uncles. One of them became my mentor and he was like a father to me. I called him Ninong, which means godfather. He studied chemical engineering and later became a sales engineer and lived in Manila. His wife and kids were all nice to me and they taught me a lot, especially how to respect others and to know the value of life, to earn a good education, and to look for a better job someday.

At the age of six, I remember grandpa taking me to school. He enrolled me in the nearby primary school as a first-grader. Grandpa was elected as the President of PTA⁴ because of me. He was so proud and happy. At the age of seven, in my second month as a 2nd grader, I came down with a high fever and got a headache. After a few days, my fever got worse. My grandparents did their best, but my condition worsened until my parents took me to a doctor and found out that I had polio. I cannot imagine how, at my young age, I was able to experience this hardship and misery. One night before I fell asleep, I had the feeling that God wanted to talk to me. In my young mind, I knew that there was God, but it was not so clear. At that moment, I made a covenant and a promise to God. I said to him: If you heal me and I

³ Permission granted to print this article.

⁴ PTA = Parent Teacher Association.

become normal again, I will always be your friend and I will someday tell others about your power and love. I will remember you until I am old. Because of my condition, my parents took me home. I was now paralyzed. I felt so sad and alone when I saw children running and playing, I felt jealous and I sometimes cried. But because my family was with me now, I felt secure and satisfied. Every day I felt better because I saw my mother taking care of me and hugging me.

My father gave me crutches and helped me stand on my feet until I was able to use the crutches to walk. I remember one occasion at church when I wanted to take the Lord's Supper. I held one lady by the shoulder and she helped me take the wafer. All people in the church were moved and inspired. I saw that my mother was crying. I told myself, I need to stand on my feet again. One morning, however, I felt good, and when I got up and stood without any crutches, I said to myself, what has happened? I learned to walk without any help or crutches. I thank the Lord for his loving grace and mercy. I was paralyzed for almost half a year, but now, I was able to stand and walk again and become normal. Because my school was close to where my grandparents lived, I wanted to stay with them again just to complete my remaining days in school, in the 2nd grade. The school administrator agreed to let me complete my remaining days since everything was back to normal and even the doctor himself could not explain what had happened. He said that it was like a storm that had just passed. During the 3rd grade, I was moved up to 4th grade because of my excellent performance and God's wisdom which I believed he now gave to me. I still enjoyed being a normal student, so I returned back as a 3rd grader. Then I remembered God, because of Him, everything was back to normal. I felt him all the time. And I said to God: You are my friend now. I continued to stay with my grandparents until the end of high school, before I went to college. My Ninong Doming invited me to stay at his house in Makati City since he had moved his business. He said that I could work during the day and study at night.

He took me to one of the good engineering schools in Manila and enrolled me there. He even bought me a few personal items and treated me like one of his children. At first it was hard to study after work, since I was tired after the whole day, but I needed to attend school. Anyway, I was determined to succeed and find a good job someday. One night I met a friend in our class. His name was Nelson. He was friendly and he told me about Jesus and his loving-kindness in offering us salvation. At first, I was not interested since I was busy with my job and with my school. However, I began attending a local church in Manila.

By His grace, and after five years of hardship and suffering, I completed my Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering.

When I handed my Diploma to my mother, she said to me, "This is worth a million." I cannot forget how happy my family was. After many years, I came home and lived with them now.

At first, it was hard to live with my parents and with my three sisters and two brothers, because for almost two decades I lived apart from them.

But because of my belief, I was able to meet my cousin named Bel, who had the same faith, and he took me to his church.

My parents did not agree with my new religion, since the majority, of people in the Philippines still hold on to the traditional belief that was brought by the Spaniards hundreds of years ago. But I kept my faith and I believed that there was nothing wrong with my new religion. The most important thing now was the relationship I had with God through Jesus.

I became part of the ministry in Bulacan, my hometown. At the prayer meeting, I was with Bro. James and he asked me what my prayer request was. I then remembered my promise to God. I said, please pray for me that I will be able to go around the world and share the gospel of our Lord Jesus. He smiled and said that was a very wonderful prayer request. After a few months of preparation, I took the board examination to be a Ship's Electrician. By God's grace, I passed, and my family was happy and proud. I came back to work at my Ninong Doming in Makati City. In my free time, I sent applications to shipping agencies. At first it was hard since I did not have any experience as a seafarer. But I kept on applying until a company gave me a chance. This was Oriental Shipping. I joined my first vessel in December 1989, our joining port was Piraeus, Greece, since it was a bulk ship and owned by Greeks. My family was very excited. I remember one day before my flight; my father carried my luggage to the house of a relative since it was closer to the road. When I boarded the plane and we started take off, I felt different and I said to myself, this time I will improve my life. When I saw Greece, I felt excited. From the airport, a van picked me up, and I traveled almost 6 hours until I reached the port. I then took a tugboat since the ship was at anchor. At last, I saw my first ship. At a distance, the color of the ship looked brown. When I finally reached the ship, the color brown was truly brown, without any paint. As I boarded the ship by the accommodation ladder, I touched the side of the ship ... it was all rust ... I met the Chief Engineer and Captain, they were both Greeks, but the rest were all Filipinos. My first assignment was Wiper / Electrician with a salary of US\$ 230.

My first assignment on board was to keep the whole engine room clean and to record the amount of fuel in the tanks. And during the overhauling of the generator, I was there in case they needed an assistant. My hours were from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Sometimes they also needed me during emergency jobs, sometimes they asked for assistance. At any given time, you had to work. That is the difference between working on a ship and working on land. When the ship set sail as we left Greece, it began to move up and down. I was in the engine room, in the workshop, sweeping the floor. Suddenly my knees began shaking, and my stomach felt unwell. I felt dizzy, so I left and ran to my cabin. The first place I needed to see was the toilet, and I had to keep on vomiting. My whole body felt cold, so I laid on my bed and rested. I asked

myself, am I really fit for this kind of job? What if I quit and find another job? But every time I thought about all the hardships in my life, I promised myself that, no matter what happens, I will keep moving on. No retreat, no surrender! I also wanted to fulfill my promise and covenant to God, in order to be able to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus, no matter what. The days went by and my body started to adapt to my new home. Now I could eat and get along with the crew. After a week, the weather got colder. I learned why there was a big light bulb hanging over my bed. It served as my heater. I noticed I needed to wear more clothes and three pairs of socks. Both the ship's air conditioning and the heater were out of order.

I remember our Electrical Officer Paul. He was sixty years old, a funny guy. He shared his long-time experience as an electrician with me. For a time, I also went with him to study certain drawings and plans until I became more familiar with the ship's system. A week after leaving Greece, we arrived at our first port in Bulgaria. It was winter then, and that was the first time I saw snow in my whole life. Since we had just joined the ship a week before, the good Captain gave us cash in advance. I remember that I requested only US\$ 50 since my salary was very low. My family received only US\$ 150, which was more than enough to buy a sack of rice and some groceries. During that time, the US dollar was a bit more valuable. I was very delighted and happy. I decided I need to buy a winter jacket, new shoes, and some things to eat. At that time, there was no ISPS⁵ on board and people from the shore could visit the ships and bring a lot of stuff for the crew to buy. You could make a telephone call to your family. You could buy chocolates, t-shirts, jackets, everything from toothpaste to toothbrushes. I spent almost half of my money. That was the first time I went ashore and saw different people with different dialects. I walked on snow that covered the entire road. I told myself, I still like my country. It was terribly cold, and I did not have a winter-jacket. The company did not even issue overalls, no safety shoes, and the only safety shoes I had were from the guy before me. The Chief Engineer as well as the Captain were nice to me. I believed in one of the lyrics of a song, "That God is watching us". I remember that every minute I had a break, I kept myself busy. That was probably the reason that the good Captain and Chief Engineer admired my attitude.

The name of our ship had previously been Bon Luck, which may be the reason why the ship was still sailing. The new name was Laodiki II, a 12.000-ton bulk carrier with electric cranes. It was almost 25 years old at that time. That was probably the reason why most of the equipment was out of order and outdated. After we loaded mineral pellets from Bulgaria, we went to discharge them in Odessa, Russia. At that time, Russia was still communist, and it wasn't easy to go ashore. They inspected our personal money, especially if you had large amounts in dollars. When we visited the seamen's mission,

⁵ ISPS = International ship and port facility security code.

we were surprised that a whole fried chicken was only US\$1. Because of that, the crew members ordered one chicken per person. Later the seamen's club ran short of chicken. I had a chance to send postcards to all of my friends and relatives and buy souvenirs from this great country too, which I had only seen in the movies before. Also, this place was colder than Bulgaria. I believe it was almost 15 degrees below zero Celsius – more than enough to chill you. After a month on board, we received news that we would go to America. I was so excited to see and visit the place I dreamed of, since my uncle was living in L.A., and I planned that if the ship went to the US, I might consider JUMPING SHIP and going to my uncle and looking for a better job. But because God was with me and He did not allow me to make such a plan, I changed my mind. Instead of jumping ship, I decided to finish my contract and share the gospel of our Lord when the time was right. When we arrived in the US, in Beaumont Texas, the weather there was humid like in the Philippines. I thought that this was a very memorable time of my life. I was now in the “Land of the Free, and Home of the Brave”.

A lot of Asians dream of living in a greener pasture. I met many men and women from the Philippines working there. The majority of them were nurses and caregivers. Now I was convinced that true happiness is not only where you are, but for me, it was important who I was with. Especially, if you are with the brethren in the ministry and in the presence of the Lord, your family, and friends. After two months on board, I became familiar with my job. One day while I was doing my daily routine, I saw a motorman named Napoleon, who was holding a hammer and wanted to hit the Chief Engineer. But because Napoleon was my friend with whom I shared God's word, I suddenly grabbed his hand and stopped him. The Chief Engineer was just a few feet away and found out what Napoleon had planned. Immediately the Chief Engineer was alarmed and ran to his office. After that incident, Napoleon was sent home, and I was promoted to be the new motorman.

I don't know if I was happy about my promotion because Napoleon also had a family to support. I learned that one reason why he tried to harm the Chief was that he had family problems and the Chief had given him a warning about not coming to work on time and not taking his job seriously. Even today a lot of seafarers face the same problems if their loved ones do not regularly communicate with them.

During that time, we only relied on letters. In each port, we waited for the agent to board the ship and bring the letters from friends and family. As a motorman, my new assignment was different, I had duty from 12 pm – 4 pm and 12 midnight to 4 am. My new salary was US\$320. Wow, I said to myself I can save some money in case I return to my family. When I received my first salary increase, I thanked the Lord for his lovingkindness and protection. Because of that money, I learned how to prioritize what I needed most, before I would buy something. I thought, when I go home, I will be able to help our church and our dear Pastor.

During my duty with the 3rd Engineer, I learned more things, such as daily routine jobs, taking records of temperatures, and the pressure of equipment, and I was able to understand more about how the ship ran and operated from the mechanical and electrical standpoint. One AB⁶ named Rey became my friend and I was able to share the gospel with him. One question that I cannot forget was: Can God forgive me for all the sins I committed? I opened the Bible and read Isaiah 1:18 to him, “*Come now, let us settle the matter, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.*”

Rey’s life in the Philippines was not easy. He had to board a ship to be able to hide from certain people who had threatened his life because of some matters in connection with real estate property. He might have also done something wrong that he did not even tell me about. But because of God’s presence and conviction, he accepted our Lord Jesus that night as his personal Savior and was able to repent. He cried and asked me that, if I go back home, I should visit his family so that they can also hear the message of salvation through Jesus.

After eleven months, we were told that we were going to disembark in Surat, India. The whole crew was excited and delighted that after almost a year, we could go home and see our families again.

Ramon Sanchez⁷, who now is a Chief Engineer, shares his dream of becoming a seafarer on a ship.

My first sailing job was way back in 1993. I was 20 years old then. I was born in a very poor family. On board my first vessel I believe it was the great testing of my faith. I missed my family, and I missed my church mates, especially the young people at our church. Also, the Bible study which I led in the house of Nina’s family and their neighbor. On my first vessel, I replaced the crew who did not finish their contract because of the foreign engineers on board who were cruel. They were on board permanently, that is why they were tough and cruel. I experienced physical beatings from my 1st engineer. I could not stay longer in the control room and I did not rest while on duty. I said to myself, why did I choose to become a seaman? I cried a lot because of homesickness, the cruelty of my officers, and the seasickness. Thank God for my fellow youth church members and now my wife who constantly sent me letters to encourage me and who prayed for me. But after the experience on my first vessel, God strengthened my faith. And when I began on my second vessel, it became much easier for me. I gave almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of my salary to my mother. The rest of it was for me to spend. The first item I bought was a JVC cassette player in Japan. Of course, I was happy that day because I saw the

⁶ AB = Able Seaman.

⁷ Permission granted to print this article.

fruit of my labor. Being from a poor family, I now became a dollar earner. This was a big change for me. I did not know the word savings. I could buy what I wanted. I always had new things with me: shoes, clothes, watches and, jewelry. When I was on vacation, I always treated my fellow youth members in our church very well, and every time we went to restaurants too. God is so good.

Although I was already familiar with hardships, my first experience on board taught me to deeply trust in God. Only God could give me strength through the reading of his Word and through prayers – both mine and the prayers of others. Suffering from homesickness is a different kind of mental suffering. Missing my loved ones and the fellowship with my church mates drained me emotionally. But thank God, He became my strength and encouragement through his Word. Imagine that before there was internet, we all had to wait for a month or longer for the mail to come through the agent at every port. My first experience also taught me to become strong physically. The hardship that I experienced with my Japanese First Engineer brought me to the highest level of perseverance. On every vessel that I experienced hardships; it became easier for me. I used to compare it to my first experience. On board ship, if you are a rating,⁸ all the physically heavy and dirty work is normally assigned to you.

Then I also promised myself that if I became a senior engineer officer, I would not do the same thing to my ratings. All I can say is, without God, I could not become a senior officer on board. He is the source of knowledge and all wisdom.

⁸ All people working on a ship who are not officers.

2. Earning money for the first time in life

Filipino seafarers power the economy. About 400,000 of the world's 1.6 million seafarers are Filipino, and every year these workers send billions of US\$ back to the Philippines in remittances. You might have left your province where you could earn maybe \$100 a month. Now, at sea, you might be able to earn ten times as much. On average, an OS⁹ earns approximately US\$ 1,000.00 whereas the captain often earns more than US\$ 10,000.00 depending on the kind of ship he is working on. "Overall, the offshore industry enjoys the highest wages. The highest pay a seaman can receive is USD 1,000.00 PER DAY! You need to be a Master Mariner on a Jack-up Barge to earn that."¹⁰ The reality, however, sometimes, is that Filipino seafarers are paid lower salaries than what was promised to them. The big question still remains: How do you spend or use the money when your salary is comparatively more than in your home country?

It is a great feeling to be in a position to support yourself, and even more when you can support the family at home. For this reason, we all need to work and make enough money to be able to pay for our daily necessities, pay all the bills like taxes, rent, gas, electricity, food, water, repairs, and insurance, etc. I still remember when I got my first salary at the shipping agency. It felt great and I still know what I bought from my first salary. I know from experience, that money can create dreams in our lives. However, too much money, or money used in the wrong way, can also become a huge problem. I still remember while I was visiting a Chief Engineer on a Swedish tanker. When we talked about the salary that he received, he made a surprising statement: "I am not happy about going home, because every time I am home there is a fight between family members because they all want to have some money. They know that I have a big salary and they look to me for help." Some people sometimes tend to waste money on many things they do not need, and it is sad to say, some money is used in the wrong way: to buy alcohol and drugs. Some spend it on gambling and cockfighting. I have heard over and over again that money can destroy one's good character. I am sure the opposite can be said too: That a person's good character is shown if that person uses money wisely, for instance, to help poor people and those in need. And unless you have

⁹ OS = ordinary seaman.

¹⁰ <https://www.seamanmemories.com/seamans-salary-per-month-on-international-ships/>

developed a strong, humble character coupled with good habits, more and more money will become more and more of a problem.

For example, if you have a drug addiction (a bad habit) and you get a lot of money, you are likely to take more drugs. Money amplifies bad habits. It amplifies the character. What about Mother Teresa? What happened when she got a lot of money? She used it to serve more orphanages. She used it to carry out her good projects. Here too, money amplifies character. So, we see, it is important to be aware of our existing habits.

If we learn from the Bible, we see that God has a lot to say about money. For instance, we read in the book of Ecclesiastes 5:10: *“Whoever loves money, never has enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with their income. This too is meaningless.”* It clearly shows us that we should not make money our priority in life. Money is needed to support us and our families, and it is often necessary for old age as well. However, if money is our only goal, we soon will see that it is not enough, it will not satisfy us. We all should learn to be thankful to God for what we have. The apostle Paul, in his first letters to Timothy, wrote the following, in chapter 6:10: *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.”*

Money can change our way of thinking and pervert our character. So, we need to carefully watch out for the temptations that come along with money. Therefore, gratitude is a good answer to the temptation that is often so sweet. 1 Chronicles 16:34 says: *“Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.”* When we start to practice being thankful in every situation, we will see that it can give us the peace that we all long for. Gratitude is one of the keys to having a positive and strong character. People who practice gratitude find it easier to overcome the temptation for more money. They are satisfied with the things that God has entrusted to them. They are also happy even if they have a lower income than their neighbor. King David said in the Old Testament, *“Take delight in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust in him, and he will do this”* (Psalms 37:4-5). God knows your situation, he knows exactly what you need. That is why King David asked us to commit our way to the LORD – and he will act. He will give us what we need.

As I said before, money often creates dreams in our lives. For a seafarer it is so easy to be tempted by the thought: If I have a higher rank, I will earn more money and therefore can have a luxurious life. If money is the driving force in your career, you will probably miss out on certain important learning stages in your life. If money is the motivation to climb up the ladder of success – your decisions and actions will most probably become very selfish and egocentric. However, if you ask God for his guidance

and his will to be done in your life, you will experience his care of you in a much better way. God knows our financial needs. He knows that we need to pay for the school fees of our children, he knows that we need to pay for our different kinds of insurance, for our health, for food, etc.

Here is what Melquisidex¹¹ experienced when he became a seafarer and earned money for the first time:

At first I didn't plan on becoming a seafarer. I wanted to be a male nurse and work in the U.S. Unfortunately, I did not meet all of the requirements at a certain university. So, I ended up as a seaman. I reasoned that I would still be earning dollars even if I was not a nurse. As a seafarer, I dreamed of becoming an officer on the ship. Unfortunately, I was not able to take the officer's license exam in 1997 due to the incorrect spelling of my name. While I was collecting information about how to correct my name, and through it was gaining insights and ideas, I became hesitant because the entire correction procedure took six months. The court hearing took three months and then the newspaper publication was three months. (Publication was necessary to complete the process.) The salary difference between ratings and a third officer was just immaterial. It was not big enough to motivate me to be an officer. I think it was only US\$ 300. I did not want to go through the six-month processing and waiting period and spend money on all of it and not be able to earn money. I was impatient. I wanted everything to be done quickly. So, I decided to go back on board and just set my mind to working and earning money to fulfill my dreams. I had also promised my parents to help them to build their dream house before I got married, and then I wanted to support them financially, even after being married. In the past, I had thought highly of myself based on my achievements and accomplishments. I thought everything was done by my power and my hard work. I was very wrong, because it was by the grace and mercy of God who blessed me with divine wisdom and understanding.

Finally, I received a message from third officer Joemar Sumalinog¹². This is his story when he earned his first money:

I was on board a ship way back in 2012. The voyage was only within the Philippines. I boarded the company's smallest general cargo ship. The ship was very old but taught me a lot, especially about the reality of seamen's work and the importance of fellowship with the other crew members. I recall how I used the first salary that I earned on that ship. It was significant and unforgettable. This money helped build our house, as it was used for

¹¹ Permission granted from the seafarer to print his article.

¹² Permission granted to print this article.

renovations. With the rest of the money, I helped my siblings so they could study. It really shaped my mind when I was first earning money on board. I considered investing my money and helping my parents and siblings. I became a more family-oriented person.

Working on ocean-going vessels has a lot of financial temptations for seafarers. Many seafarers dream of having a more luxurious life. Many of them start with a lot of financial burdens like paying off the loans for the house they purchased. Also, for the relatives, it becomes a temptation to ask the seafarer for financial help. There is a joke that says that “*Money is relative. The more money you have the more relatives you have!*” If finances burden the seafarer too much, it will also affect his work performance. People who always worry about things are not free to work and do a good job. Therefore, a seafarer is wise to start with budgeting his salary very well and learning to say no to people outside his own family who ask him for money. Money can be a blessing, but money can also be a problem if the motivation and desires are not good. Can I advise you to pray to God to give you the wisdom to handle your money? God is willing to do that. Please read what King Solomon said in Proverbs 3:5-6: “*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*”

3. I am not sure if the job on a ship is really what I dreamed of

Recently I received an email from a seafarer with the following question:

Good day sir. First, of all, I admire your work in publishing this book I received (The Seafarer's Mind) and thank you for giving me the chance to send you my questions. Sir, should I continue my seafaring career? I mean, my parents chose it for me, they expected me to be a seafarer and I can't let them down. The problem is I am full of doubts, my math is very poor. I lack confidence. Please, help me, sir.

Since I am not a seafarer, I asked two captains I knew, if they had a good answer for my friend. These captains allowed me to send their answers to my seafaring friend. Here are the answers from the captains:

I would advise him not to give up so easily. Being good at something takes time, and it requires hard work and effort. Everything can be developed, and so can confidence. Do not let fear reduce your goal but instead use it to increase your efforts. A seafaring career is not open to everyone. Take good advantage of the current opportunity. It's also good for character development. Take each day as it comes and always do your best. Look for someone to mentor you.

The second seafarer said this:

I hope to answer him based on my experience. My first course was in civil engineering. It was also my parents' desire that I become a seaman. I honored it without doubt or hesitation. God's instruction is to honor our parents and I did. Sometimes, questions crop up when we have to decide something. Thankfully, the Bible gives clear answers. I believe that a wrong decision is a decision made outside of God's will. For example, selfish desires, pride, feelings, etc. It is always best to consult the Bible and the council of others, especially of godly persons.

When the seafarer received the answers from the two captains, he responded enthusiastically:

Thank you very much, Sir Martin. No words can describe how grateful I am to you and the two seafarers who answered my questions. The words that impacted me the most were "It is not you who chose your path, it is God's

will.” Therefore, it is not a wrong decision. I will cherish those words for the rest of my life. Thank you very much and may God bless you and your loved ones a million times, as well as the seafarers. I am proud to be a seaman!

This seafarer was willing to take the advice of experienced seafarers. I am sure that he will learn more during his time in maritime college, and later on board a ship. However, there are other seafarers who have begun to work on ships and later found out that they should have chosen different work. They feel trapped due to the fact that often they were tempted to become seafarers because of the good salary compared to a land job. Once they are working on board a ship, it is hard to leave and find a job again at home. To become a seafarer does not require knowledge and skill alone, it also requires the right character and the right kind of attitude. It often also requires perseverance.

From a bulk carrier that I visited, I received the following email:

Thank you for your email. I read it last night and I felt very privileged to have you guiding me to find my true purpose. Being human, I always have doubts and confusion about what will happen in the future. This is due to the reality that I work on a ship in an arena where I feel belittled and misaligned with my passion as well as my skills.

When I asked him why was this so, he answered:

Well, I feel the ship work is not the right job for me, but I cannot quit because I need to support my family.

This is what Engineer Alfher Hernandez¹³, said when asked about his choice to find a sea-based job.

Poverty motivated me to take a seafaring course. I am the oldest in the family, with four siblings. After I finished my secondary level (16 years old), I stopped for a year and worked as on the grill crew in Jollibee (a famous and the largest fast-food chain in the Philippines) because I was only allowed to continue my studies at the PMMA (Philippine Merchant Marine Academy) at the age of 17. I prayed for that, since this school was the only school in which I did not have to worry about financial assistance. Life at the academy was not easy, but I had no other place to go and there was no turning back.

To make a long story short, I completed my studies and passed the licensure exam of Marine Engineering. I went on board as an engine officer on different vessels – product tanker, crude carrier, bulk carrier, and my last

¹³ Permission given by the seafarer to print his article.

vessel was a very large crude carrier (VLCC) – a one year contract each. Little did I know that God had a better plan for me because life at sea didn't seem to suit me.

I met a nurse who was working in Singapore; she was introduced to me through an ex-colleague on-board (Third officer at that time and a Master Mariner now). We corresponded with each other through letters and phone calls for a year (no Facebook or video communication at that time) and I married her in 2005. After a year of teaching at the maritime training center and university in Manila, I joined my wife in Singapore. With a leap of faith and giving up the “green bucks”, I started working in shipyards until I was allowed to work in Japanese ship management as a Technical Superintendent (with a Third Engineer license only). From zero knowledge in ship management, I continued to persevere and learn as much as I could until now; I explored offshore companies as well, and now I am back to Owner/Ship management.

What was God's great plan for me? In 2009 I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and my great Redeemer! Receiving Christ led me to reach other seafarers for Christ, and I shared the Good News, first to my fleet and then to others as well. It was also a great privilege to know Bro. Martin Otto, and finally meet his wife Sister Monika, and his family, in Singapore last March 2014, as we shared the gospel on one of the offshore vessels in Keppel Shipyard, Singapore. They also met my family as well.

My journey with Jesus Christ was never easy, yet full of joy in many ways. I have no regrets about my decision to join my wife here in Singapore and build our family together – now with three wonderful daughters (the youngest were twins) as a bonus. Indeed, God's Word and His promises are true and working in our lives:

“Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13:5).

And I will end this testimony with a wise man's prayer:

“Two things I ask of you, Lord; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the LORD?’ or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.” (Proverbs 30:7-9)

I also asked Chief Mate Gilbert Garcia¹⁴ if the job is really what he dreamed of. This is what he said:

It is OK to ask yourself the question if the job on a ship is really what you dreamed of, especially when you are in the midst of a situation where doubts are appearing. Or when you are with your superior, or with people of

¹⁴ Permission granted to print this article.

different languages, backgrounds, and beliefs and you do not know how to cope up with them, or what to do, or when you are experiencing seasickness on board. Most of the time you feel alone, and no one seems to understand what you are going through. In this situation, when self-pity sets in, you wonder about the profession you chose.

In my experience as a junior officer and almost ten years in my profession, I asked the Lord, “Lord how long will I be staying and working in this job”? The Lord seemed to say: “Just keep going”. When I heard that gentle voice in my prayer, my thoughts were changed, and I experienced peace overflowing within me.

It is OK to ask questions in general, because it enlightens you and gives you clarity for you to keep going on and doing your best. I have learned that knowing the truth will set you free.

During our training days, before joining our first vessel, we were taught not to ask questions but to follow and just obey – that was part of the learning process. This is also applicable in a day-to-day situation in order to achieve growth and eventual success towards the goal you are pursuing. Since we are talking about success, I’ll share with you what I have experienced so far. Are you ready? First, of all, I believe it is by God’s grace and for His glory.

We have rabbits as pets at home and we play with them. Indeed, chasing two rabbits at the same time is really difficult, and so it is with our goal or chosen profession, or may I say where you are right now.

If you are focused on what you are doing, determined to know about it and learn from it, giving your time and resources as necessary, putting your heart and mind to it, doing it again and again, then excellence will naturally and eventually be the result.

We need to be focused on all things. I was reminded of that 23 years ago when I was a cadet on board. I asked the Lord for my professional license as a 3rd Officer. I made a deal with Him, that I would read the Bible every day and when I got home, I would take my professional exam. Yeah, it was something like, “Lord I will learn from you in your word and then you have to take care of my examination results”. The process began. I enjoyed reading the Bible every day, it strengthened me and filled my heart with joy, peace, and love. My perspective in life was transformed for the better. And I really loved it. When I got home after that vessel assignment, I began reviewing for the professional examination. I asked my friends to lend me their hard copy reviewers, and I read them the whole day, five days a week, for two to three months, as I tried to remember everything. To make a long story short – I passed the professional examination because of the Lord. He is faithful in all He does, and the verse that filled my heart at that time was: “*Delight yourself In the LORD and He will give you the desires of your heart*” (Psalms 37:4).

The following passage summarizes the typical recollections of many seafarers recounting to me their experiences and emotions after many years at sea:

I always dreamed of having a good life. I hoped to have an exciting job with sufficient pay so that I would be able to feed my family and give them everything they needed. I really wanted to take good care of them. Now I think I am at least getting closer to achieving the financial goal. The temptation to earn a lot of money was so strong that I could not resist. In addition to that, I hoped to see more of the world. People told me that once I started working on a ship my financial problems would be solved. But is that true? Yes, I certainly live better than most of the people in my country. But what is the price? Have I given up my freedom? Am I stuck in a floating prison for nine months at a time? Where is the freedom I was seeking? Here I work at least eight hours a day, sometimes more. My dream to see the world did not really come true. We arrive at a port, load, unload our cargo, turn-around, and sometimes sail within hours. There is hardly any time to go ashore. I often have to work overtime, and that makes it very difficult to get away from the ship and visit places of interest. Where are the friends that I used to be with? I really miss them. Is money all that matters? And don't I lose more than I gain by working on a ship? These questions bother me a lot, and actually more questions like that come to my mind. I sometimes get very frustrated. Questions which make me doubt my career choice continually dishearten me: Do I have enough time for my parents? They are getting older, and Dad is not all that healthy. Thinking back about the wonderful times at home really makes me sad. Why did I ever leave home? Why did I give in to the temptation to earn money? Why was money so attractive? Is money all that matters? There is definitely one thing I've learned so far, and that is, money doesn't make you happy. What I really need is enough freedom and time to re-evaluate my life, consider possible alternatives, and reach conclusions. But I cannot quit my job on the ship right now because having just built a house, there are huge bills to be paid. On top of that, the school fees for my children are very high. I feel like I'm caught in a trap. Could that be the case? I sought freedom, financial freedom, and now things look quite the contrary. On the one hand, I would like to go home right away and forget about life on board the ship, but on the other hand, I need the money to pay off my financial obligations. It's not easy to find work which pays as well as my present job. If I were to leave the life of a seafarer, would I ever find employment at home which would support my family and pay off the loans? I doubt it. I would need to obtain enough money to study further or do re-training and would then face the challenge of looking for employment in a new career. However, due to my age, none of this is possible. What should be my next move then? Where should I go? I will have to finish the contract on my ship first. I would really like to have time to sit down and

think about the future. But there's so little time for that. The job really is hard, and I'm tired after a day's work. All I feel like doing is sleeping – I am not in the right frame of mind to plan my life. I am trapped. Who can help me out? I tried drinking several times, but later I realized that alcohol was not the solution at all. It made me feel even more disturbed. I wonder how my wife feels. Does she also feel trapped? Did she also have more expectations and hopes about my career? She has to raise the children all by herself. Her life is also hard, and she has to make so many sacrifices.

4. Problems with my shipmates on board

While I was working on a cruise ship, I was told that a certain seafarer killed another seafarer. It's probably difficult to find out all the details now, and we can only guess why it happened. However, certain factors can lead to huge problems among the staff. Stress, loneliness, little sleep, problems at home, problems with the superiors, etc.

It is no surprise to hear that in the past, on different ships, you had problems with your colleagues. Whether you are working with different cultures or with just one nationality, you can be sure that there are always challenges and problems between people. Problems that need to be solved.

In his book "Beyond Talent" Dr. John C. Maxwell says:

What's important is that you separate legitimate reasons from excuses. An excuse puts the blame on someone or something outside you. Excuses are like exit signs on the road of progress. They take us off track. Know this: it is easier to move from failure to success than from excuses to success. Eliminate excuses. Once you have done that, you can turn your attention to the reasons – and how to overcome them.¹⁵

Let me start this chapter by telling you that, in most cases, it is not helpful to suppress your problems and act as if nothing has happened. You might forget about the problem, but even if you have forgotten how people treated you, in many cases, it will still bother you and your conscience, and your memory will not forget. When you see the people who hurt you again, you will not feel peaceful at all. In cases like these, it sometimes became so bad that people had to look for counseling and, even worse, for psychiatric treatment. Words are very powerful. Words can bless us, motivate, and encourage us, but words can also discourage, hurt, and destroy us. For this reason, the Bible advises us to be careful when using our tongue. Let's look at what the book of James, in the New Testament, has to say, in chapter 3:3-6; *"When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a*

¹⁵ Dr. John C. Maxwell, Beyond Talent 2011, Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, USA, p. 60.

great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell."

We read more in James 1:26; *"If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless."* These two verses show us the power of the spoken word. Therefore, we need to watch what we say if we do not want to hurt people or cause problems in a relationship. Of course, the tongue can also be used for good and, therefore we should look for ways that will help us to use our tongue wisely. One way to learn how is to read the Bible – the great book of wisdom. Here are some more verses to think about. James 3:9-12: *"With the tongue, we praise our Lord and Father, and with it, we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. Can both freshwater and saltwater flow from the same spring? My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water."* Finally, we read in Proverbs 29:20: *"Do you see a man who is hasty in his words? There is more hope for a fool than for him."*

We are advised to think before we speak. And this is all the more important when we work and live closely with people over a period of long time, like on a ship, for six to nine months. Yet there is another area that many do not consider to be difficult or even recognize that it could cause problems. This is the whole aspect of culture. On many ships, there are crews made up of people from two three, four and, sometimes twenty or thirty different cultures, especially on cruise ships. People who have not taken the time and effort to understand the complexity of cultures will believe that all cultures are the same. Yes, they agree that we have different colored skin, and come from different countries, but basically, they believe we all think alike. I have a friend from Asia who was of this opinion. When I started to talk to him about the different cultures, he hardly understood my points.

In cultural anthropology, you distinguish between three main cultures: A guilt society or guilt culture; a shame society or shame culture and honor-shame culture; and a fear society or culture of fear. To make it clearer: In Germany, a country that is to a large degree a guilt culture, it is important not to be guilty. Whereas in Asia, which is a shame-honor society, it is important for people to keep the honor of the family and not to lose face. Since we all come from different cultural backgrounds, it is important to learn how to communicate on ships in a way that everybody will understand. This is what David Hesselgrave wrote in his book "Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally":

The word communication comes from the Latin word *communis* (common). We must establish a “commonness” with someone to have communication. The “commonness” is to be found in mutually shared codes. Human communication is only partially effective even in the most ideal of circumstances. Why? Because the “commonness” between the encoder and decoder is not complete. Differences in enculturation, personality, experiences, interests, short-and long-term memory, and much else always impinge upon the encoding and decoding processes. The result is that respondents seldom, if ever, decode exactly the same message, like the one encoded by the source. Thus, though we speak of such things as “discovering the author’s intent” and “replicating the impact of a message on the original audience” – and in common parlance often say, “I understand” and “I see” – it is well to keep in mind that effective communication is not easily achieved, and miscommunication is not easy to avoid.¹⁶

I hope that we will all gain a better understanding of the culture of other people we meet. On ships especially we should understand each other for the success and safety of the ship. We should act as a team that has a so-called ship’s culture, where not my culture is better than yours or your culture better than mine. On a ship, we must learn a culture that will not offend the other person but will instead help to unite different understandings and opinions.

One of the most common problems nowadays is bullying. Chief Cook Eduardo Campos¹⁷ experienced that as he shares here:

I remember when I was on board in the year 2018. I had a certain Captain that I had worked with on two other ships. We did not have any problems on those two ships as our voyage was regular and had the route and only a short distance from Aviles, Spain to Eemshaven, Netherlands. The problem started when I asked the Captain if we could take on additional provisions, especially fresh provisions, because we had an additional eleven armed guards on board for the trip from Suez Canal to Dubai, UAE. But my Captain declined my request. I explained that we really needed to get more fresh provisions, but he still refused my request. His reason was that they were too expensive to transport. I knew there was no problem with that because the ship chandler could deliver the provisions when the armed guards came on board. Another problem occurred when I asked my Captain to send a message on my behalf, to our company. Unfortunately, the message he sent was not exactly what I had told him. My mistake was that I didn’t write down

¹⁶ David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally* 1991, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA, p. 46.

¹⁷ Permission granted to print this article.

the message, I just told him verbally, and his interpretation of my message was a little twisted.

Problems grew worse when we had a voyage from Singapore to Saudi Arabia and from Saudi to Singapore. Again, we needed armed guards for two consecutive voyages. Since I did not have a messman to serve on board for the additional eleven crew members, it was not easy to do my work. For such cases, if there are additional visitors at the port or armed guards on board, I am entitled to get additional overtime with my payment. But this time, my Captain did not want to give me additional overtime. Instead, he said that he could only give me a fixed eleven hours of work every day, no matter what time I finished my job. I explained to him what was written in my contract, that additional overtime would be paid by the company. Still, he refused. Instead he wanted me to sign my daily time record sheet even without the total time of overtime at the bottom. He charged me with insubordination by not signing the form and violation of company policy. He was also making up stories about complaints from officers about the food I was serving. I asked the officers if they had any complaints, but every one of them told me that it was only Captain's invented story. He even threatened to send me home when we arrived in Singapore. He wrote a warning note, but I did not sign it. I knew that I had the right to refuse and file my own report. I told my Captain that I still was sorry about our misunderstanding. I believed that I was right, and I had no angry feelings about what had happened. I even thanked him for his remarks during our time on our previous vessel when he said that I was the best cook that he ever worked with. After a month, he signed off in Romania, and he was scheduled to rejoin another ship after a three-month vacation. Anyway, that was his last contract, and he did not return to our company. My story is not extraordinary, and I believe it also happens to other seamen. I thank the Lord and praise Him, for in whatever situation I am on board, He is always there. That is why I like this verse so much: *"So, let us not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we do not give up"* (Galatians 6:9 NLT). Thanks again Bro. Martin, for without you I would not be where I am, standing now in my faith.

More about bullying is found in the following article:

Almost 50 percent of seafarers have experienced some form of bullying, harassment or discrimination at sea (Nautilus International)

Working at sea can make seafarers more vulnerable to harassment and bullying. This is due to the prevailing working conditions, the isolation, the tough nature of the profession, and the fear of further victimization, or repercussions if bullying is reported, since victims may be labeled as troublemakers or have their contracts terminated. Action Companies and management can be the primary active agents of change by adopting a zero-

tolerance approach to dealing with bullying and harassment at sea. This can be implemented by:

1. Establishing clear policies and procedures for dealing with harassment and bullying onboard
2. Disseminating the company's policies regarding harassment to everyone on board (in the native language of crew members)
3. Organizing ongoing awareness programs, training sessions, campaigns, videos, conferences, and other media.
4. Establishing channels of reporting and actions to be taken when a complaint is filed.
5. Ensuring privacy and confidentiality in order to encourage disclosure.
6. Establishing clear job roles, expectations, and responsibilities
7. Investing in ongoing training
8. Applying fair and transparent processes for the allocation of tasks, job roles, etc.
9. Educating everyone about early warning signs: when a seafarer looks sad, lonely, scared, isolated, not motivated, low performance, complains of physical symptoms, avoids social interaction, etc.
10. Implementing emotional intelligence programs to encourage self-awareness, social awareness, and conflict resolution. Team-building sessions, inspirational leadership training and, cultural diversity working groups.
11. Organizing activities to encourage social interactions onboard.¹⁸

¹⁸ https://safety4sea.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/UK-Club-Eliminating-ship-board-bullying-and-harassment-2019_05.pdf.

5. Challenges that hinder a successful career

It does not surprise me at all when seafarers say, “I want to be a successful seafarer. I want to be better at my job than my colleagues.” Nowadays, people are hungry for a good reputation, for success, good payment, and a good career. If you are successful, you will gain the kind of reputation that you are striving for, even to the degree that you get promoted, and other companies want to have your practical skills and experience. However, some seafarers do not bother much about success. They are satisfied when their salary is enough to support them and their family. They will not make an effort to get better qualified. They are just happy to have a job when they earn enough to live on, no matter what rank they have. These are the people I always try to encourage to learn more and get better qualified. The better your qualifications are, and the higher your rank is, the easier it will be to find a good job.

In any case, the majority of seafarers would probably like to climb the ladder of success if the circumstances allowed them to. Below you will see a list of stumbling blocks on the way up your career ladder. I have listed six things that might stop you from achieving a successful career, although I am convinced there might be more. Here are the ones I have found to be in the way when you are working hard to be successful:

a) Fatigue¹⁹

On many ships, seafarers suffer from fatigue²⁰ due to stress at work, long hours, especially on cruise ships, where it is normal to work 10-12 hours a day. Once a seafarer suffers from fatigue, there’s no way he can contribute much to the success of the ship. Here is what Joyce Albarico²¹ said about her experience with fatigue:

Working on a ship is like a battlefield. You exhaust your body to the fullest extent – working 10-12 hours a day, seven days a week. Yes, some companies don’t even pay the extra hours you have worked. Seeing all the flaws, plus

¹⁹ <https://sailors-society.org/wellness-at-sea> or: <https://safety4sea.com/cm-wellness-at-sea-training-and-surveys/>.

²⁰ Fatigue can be described as the lack of energy and motivation (both physical and mental). This is different than drowsiness, a term that describes the need to sleep.

²¹ Permission granted to print this article.

having certain toxic workmates make it hard to survive. Still, you always have to see something good in every bad circumstance.

The following is a summary from a Filipino seafarer, Melchor Valerio²², who has been working on cruise ships for many years. He did some sort of personal research and he allowed me to print his findings here:

Physical Fatigue – This is the most common type of fatigue we experience. Physical fatigue is a daily thing for us since we work long hours. Most of us work a minimum of 10 hours a day, which sometimes increases to 15 hours depending on the crew's position and department on board. During the length of our entire contract, we do not have days off. If we have a 9-month contract, then we are expected to work every day for those 9 months. After a long day of work, most of us are physically too exhausted, and all we can think about is going to bed and sleeping. This situation is even harder during rough sea conditions where no matter how much you want to sleep, you just keep on rolling around in your bed.

Emotional Fatigue – This kind of fatigue is closely connected with stress at work, and somehow even affects us mentally. Emotional fatigue often happens when we do not have a pleasant or good working environment. There are even hidden cases of bullying on board. This can come from different people, such as from our supervisors or even from a fellow crew member. Most of the time, the crew being victimized by bullying remains silent about this for fear of losing their job. Not to mention that racial discrimination is rampant on ships, but that is a different topic. Another cause of emotional stress or fatigue is when crew members have a personal family problem at home, especially if it is about their spouse or their children. From my experience, having problems with one's family while on board will put your emotional and mental state on edge. With stress from our job, our superiors, or co-workers, then with the problems at home, if this all builds up, in time it will cause emotional fatigue, which will be like a ticking time bomb waiting to explode.

Emotional fatigue manifests itself either by making a person feel emotionally numb, whereby the crew member somehow does not care anymore about what he hears or sees, and somehow accepts the harsh words that he hears. Another manifestation is the reverse of this, where the crew member has become agitated or irritated and then retaliates, resulting in a violent act. In extreme cases, a crew member starts a fight with a colleague, or even worse, tries to stab his fellow crew member or supervisor. Once, on my ship, a crew member who was being bullied got fed up and emotionally drained, and as a result, he took a glass container and hit his bully on the head. He was sent home and the bully was sent to the hospital.

²² Permission granted to print this article.

Mental Fatigue – This is the partner of emotional fatigue. This is caused by a lot of negative emotions and negative thoughts piling up because the person is already physically tired from work. When the crew member is very tired from a day's work, and stress from the boss or co-worker is added to it, followed by bad news at home, or an argument with the spouse, the person is pushed to his limits. That person is carrying around a multitude of negative emotions such as anger, loneliness, self-pity, and the whole situation results in mental fatigue. When this happens, and the person is mentally exhausted, the defense mechanism of the brain starts up. That person will try to find a means of escape or he will try to divert his mind from having these thoughts. It does not matter whether the escape plan will be good or destructive for the person as long as he finds an escape route. One common escape for emotional and mental fatigue is through drinking alcohol. Drinking until your body and mind become numb and automatically shut down and you fall asleep. The next morning the person finds himself even more tired and sad, and repeats the routine until his body gives up and he becomes sick.

Many shipping companies provide ways to minimize the effects of fatigue on board, since they know that the crew does not have days off. In our company, for example, the management sometimes organizes crew parties. They provide free time equipment and things, such as board games and books, and they even set up a crew store where you can buy products from home. They sometimes organize simple sports events such as darts, table tennis, or chess tournaments. Although these activities are good diversions on a general level, still after these events, the crew will go back to their cabins and everyone is left alone with his or her thoughts and emotions.

Fatigue may affect each crew member differently, depending on the level of stress and the capacity a person has to deal with everything. Such factors include a long day of work, difficult situations on board, emotional factors involving the family, and of course homesickness. These things all trigger different types of fatigue. And this fatigue leads most crew members to desperately seek alternatives. As I mentioned earlier, in order to find relief, some turn to alcohol, while others seek comfort in extramarital affairs to fill up the emptiness, they somehow feel caused by too much emotional fatigue. The sad thing is, when someone is suffering too much from emotional and mental fatigue, he becomes apathetic. Apathy means the lack of emotion or motivation, lack of interest or enthusiasm for a certain thing or anything. The person just shuts down emotionally and is not interested or concerned. He just does not care anymore about anything. This kills the flame of love in his heart: the love for his job, his family, himself, and even the lack of interest in the love of God towards him.

Most crew members do not know how to deal with the real effects of fatigue. Professional counseling is not available on board, and if they seek help through it, it will not reflect well on their career or work records.

Proper rest might help if one is suffering from physical fatigue. This means being disciplined after work and not indulging in unnecessary late-night activities. But with emotional and mental fatigue, things might be different. As a Christian of course, it is a big help to have fellowship on board and have brothers (and sisters) to talk to and pray for you. But some people do not have this possibility. A strong prayer life is very important for someone like me working on board; I need to pray for myself, and I need the continuous prayers of my family for me so that I am protected from the lies of the enemy that tempt everyone to look for ungodly alternative means of escaping emotional and mental fatigue. Non-Christians will look for an escape, but for us believers, we surrender everything to God and trust in His words in the Bible.

b) Temptations and Distractions

When we talk about the never-ending problem of temptations, we first need to make clear that temptations in themselves are not the problem. The problem starts when I give in to a temptation. Martin Luther once said, “You cannot keep a bird from flying over your head, but you can prevent the bird from building a nest on your head.” Temptations will come until the last day of your life. They will also come when you are sick. At this point, I will only mention two areas of temptations. Your mind and the smartphone. For more in-depth information on how to overcome temptations, please see my book “Help, how can I Overcome Temptations?”²³ This book is available through email as a pdf file or as a hard copy from our Seamen’s Center in Intramouros, Manila.²⁴

Above, I mentioned two areas of temptation. The first one is your mind. All temptations start there. In your thoughts, you are tempted to do something, to say something, to buy something, and to act in different ways. Your thoughts propose what to do. So, in order to have the victory over temptations, you need to win the battle in your mind. This is a life-long process. How then can you win the battle in your mind? The best answer I can give you is found in the New Testament in James 4:7: “*Submit yourselves then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*” We need to be very honest with ourselves and realize that if we rely on our own strength, we will never be able to win the battle in our mind. There are billions of people who constantly try to win that battle by making New Year’s resolutions

²³ Martin Otto, Help, how can I Overcome Temptations, RVB Verlag Beese, Hamburg, Germany.

²⁴ Seamen’s Christian Friend Society, Recoletos St., Cor. Magalanes Str., Corp. Plaza Building, 2nd floor, Manila.

every year, saying “Next year will be better, next year I stop smoking, drinking, etc.” Usually, very shortly after making their resolution, they realize that they are not able to overcome their temptations. Many get frustrated. Therefore, dear seafarers, I would like to encourage you to imitate James when he says: “*Submit yourself to God ...*” Matthew puts it this way in chapter 11:28: “*Come unto me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*” Don’t forget that God is our Creator. He knows you better than you know yourself. Jesus sacrificed himself on the cross for our sins so that we can have forgiveness for all of our sins if we humbly confess to him. He wants to show us how to win the battle in our minds. At this point, can I ask you to read the best book ever, which can show us how to fight this battle: The Bible?

So, one way is to submit to God, the other way is to watch and pray. Let’s read what the book of Mark says in chapter 14:38: “*Watch, and pray, so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.*” Here you see a promise from God. When we submit our lives to God, and make the effort to watch and pray, God promises that we will not fall into temptation. Once you see how that works, you will find real freedom and you will thank God for it. We need to win the battle in our minds. Otherwise, we will find it difficult to become successful in our jobs. If we do not win the battle in our minds, and if we give in to temptations, we will get disappointed and frustrated. This kind of discouragement will also have an effect on our jobs.

Peter Francis Medina²⁵, who works on a cargo ship as the third officer, says the following about problems that hinder a successful career:

If there is anything that effectively destroys our performance, as we work on board, it is sin. Of course, this applies to Christian seafarers who are aware that God hates sin. Sin simply disrupts our focus and destroys the purpose of the work we do. I see that in my life as I work on board. You see, when we get tempted, we say to ourselves, “As long as nobody sees and nobody knows, we’re alright.” But when we sin, it is not something that we can hide. We think we are safe, as long as nobody knows, but it has dangerous effects, not only on us, but on the way, we interact with our jobs and even in our relationships. Sin distracts us from accomplishing what God has purposed for us to do on board. It is not easy to struggle against sin or temptations, especially when you are on different vessels. But one fall can make you lose your entire contract. You end up finishing your contract feeling defeated. Many people think that a promotion or rank determines success, so a lot of seafarers try to get on the good side of their officers or engineers.

²⁵ Permission granted to print this article.

But real success is not determined by what we achieve, but rather by whose side we are on. Let us look at what the Bible says about success in the story of Joseph: We read in Genesis 39:2: “*The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master.*” And, also in chapter 39:23: “*The warden paid no attention to anything under Joseph’s care because the LORD was with Joseph and gave him success in whatever he did.*” Joseph’s success was not because He usurped his master’s favor. His success was not because he got on the good side of his employer. His success was because “*the LORD was with him*”. You can stand on the side of your captain or your chief engineer and serve them, you can also stand on the side of sin and be enslaved by it, or you can stand on the side of God and serve Him. You can stand at the top of your dreams, but without God in the picture, it is not a success; it is called forfeiting your soul. So, let us continually walk with God during every contract we have, for we know that His presence alone secures our success and our victory, if we just remain in Him.

Another distraction on our way to being successful is the irresponsible use of electronic gadgets. Nowadays, many people are addicted to play stations, their smartphones and tablets or computers. Many accidents have happened because people weren’t watching the traffic, but instead they were looking at the messages on their smartphones. If you spend a lot of time on your smartphone, it will also influence your daily ability to concentrate at work, thus it will not be helpful in your daily job. You are bound to make mistakes sooner or later, especially when you are doing two things at a time: looking at your smartphone and looking at your work.

According to a new psychological experiment by the Universities of Würzburg and Nottingham Trent, commissioned by Kaspersky Lab, consumers are 26 percent more productive at work without their smartphones. While smartphones help workers stay in touch with colleagues, keep on top of email inboxes, and complete urgent tasks on the move, they make them less productive when working at their desks.

The experiment unearthed a correlation between productivity levels and the distance between participants and their smartphones. When their smartphone was taken away, participant performance improved by 26 percent. The experiment tested the behavior of 95 people between the ages of 19 to 56, in laboratories at the universities of Würzburg and Nottingham-Trent. Care was taken to balance experimental conditions and gender across laboratory sites.²⁶

²⁶ https://usa.kaspersky.com/about/press-releases/2016_kaspersky-lab-study-proves-smartphones-distract-workers-and-decrease-productivity?PID=8200811&AFILIATE=CJ_NAM&utm_source=CJ&utm_medium=affiliate.

This survey focuses on work at the office, but it will most probably bring the same findings on ships. I am convinced that the time will come when companies do not allow their employees to use their smartphones during working hours. In your interest, may I suggest that you do not use your smartphone during working hours if you hope to become more successful.

c) Bad influences

Nobody wants to have friends who lead them where they didn't intend to go. Still, many have friends who aren't good influences on them, their character, their job, or their family. Someone might ask, "How can I find the right friends?" Amazingly, the Bible has a lot to say about good friends, as well as those we shouldn't have. The following verses have something to say about friends:

"Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character" (1 Corinthians 15:33). When you read such a verse, ask yourself, who are your friends? Do your friends have a positive influence on your character? Or do your friends live in such a way that you can't look up to them and say: I want to learn from you. I want to spend more time with you because this will help me in my personal life, my character, my duties, etc.

This is what Joyce Albarico²⁷ experienced on her ship:

After working on a cruise ship for four years, I can say something about friends. The main reason that keeps me going is my family on board. You need to make a careful choice about your friends on board. A few days ago, a colleague of mine was caught taking a bottle of wine from the storeroom. I was surprised to hear about it the next day because I worked with him on the same shift. Still, I was not aware of everything that had gone on. The security officer called me into his office for investigation. Later on, my colleague admitted that one of his friends forced him to take the bottle to their cabin. Now they have to face the consequences.

A Filipina²⁸ who worked on a cruise ship shares here what happened to her because she chose friends who influenced her in a way that made her life more difficult. This is her testimony:

I am Flora Odoño, 38 years old, a mother of three children. Two girls are teenagers, the youngest is a baby boy, however, he is with the LORD now. I

²⁷ Permission granted to print this article.

²⁸ Permission granted to print this article.

am a single mother. I have never been married but now I have a fiancé working on a ship. We are going to get married when he comes home.

I started working on cruise ships at the early age of 21. There I found so much freedom, and I tried all kinds of things, just out of curiosity. I sometimes went to the crew bar and got drunk and then appeared late for work. I had a boyfriend, and without knowing him well, I had an out-of-marriage relationship with him. I came home pregnant. After five months of pregnancy, I received a call from that man to meet him in the city. I thought it was an emergency, so I went by bus for three to four hours. When I got there, he introduced to me the woman next to him, and said that was his wife. I felt numb and shocked. Everything stopped moving around me. The man, the father of my baby, went and ordered some food. When the food was on the table his wife threw the large drink at me, in my face. He did not do anything – he just looked at me. Then they left. At that moment I wanted to cry, but no tears came to my eyes. So, after two hours, I decided to leave the restaurant, thinking about what to do and where to go. I was thinking about how to tell my parents because they had already set a wedding day. At that time, I did not have a relationship with GOD. I heard about him, and I prayed as my siblings taught me to pray. When I was growing up, I used to attend Mass.

I went home in the middle of the night and told my parents what had happened. I didn't have any choice but to tell the truth. Everyone was in grief and felt hatred towards that man. I gave birth to a baby girl. He called up after I gave birth, and he sent some financial support for a year. After that, he stopped the support, and I did not hear anything from him. I came back to work after two years, and then we met again. I returned to him and did the same thing. I had an Indian cabin mate who was a Christian, I told her about my life, and she regularly read out of her Bible to me. She always invited me to attend the fellowship on board, called, "Anchor for the Soul". I couldn't stay with them long at their meetings because I always felt sleepy and tired. But she never stopped inviting me. So, I became friends with the believers and had a great time with them. I felt secure and not alone. Still, I did my thing with the father of my children.

I did not even think about what had happened or what he had done to me. So, what happened was, I got pregnant by him again for the second time. I went home pregnant again. My family said it would be better if I were dead because I brought so much shame and pain to my family. I told the father about my pregnancy on the phone, and he said, "It's not mine". At that moment I closed my eyes and asked GOD, please take away my life. It didn't happen. I then tried to abort the baby. I drank so much medicine hoping that the baby in my womb would die. Still, my womb got bigger, and the baby still was kicking. I gave birth to that baby and the nurse showed me, my baby, how it was sealed with something that looked like plastic. She showed me and she pinched a little part of it to tear the plastic; it looked like a clear food plastic film. I cried so much and asked the LORD: Sorry, forgive me. I

did not hear anything from the father of my children even though we were working for the same cruise ship company.

I came back to work on ship after 6 months of giving birth. I continued attending that fellowship onboard. Then in Malta, I met with sister Margaret. She came to visit our ship and brought so many booklets. They were all about knowing GOD. I got so many booklets. I read them and answered the study questions and sent them back to the address in them, to a man named Martin Otto. I got a reply, with a certificate and a score on my worksheet. I kept studying more Bible courses. Again, I sent those to Martin Otto and received answers. Those booklets helped me find out more about JESUS CHRIST. I prayed to GOD and told him I wanted to meet Pastor Martin in person.

I looked for a full gospel church here in the Philippines. God showed me one. I attended the service there and grew more in faith and learned more about JESUS CHRIST. I encountered so many lies and deceptions on my journey. I had a new boyfriend who used to be a guitarist in the fellowship. I fell into the trap and had a relationship with him. I did the same thing again. I got pregnant and then came the worst part. He left me, and didn't even support my pregnancy till I gave birth. I felt sorry for myself and for my children who suffered as well because of my weakness and tendency to give into sin. Six weeks after I gave birth to a healthy baby boy, a high fever caused him to have lung bronchitis and caused his death. I did not even have a single penny to bury my little child, it was so painful, tragic, and I almost wanted to die as well. I can only praise God that he took me out of that darkness again. The church I belonged to helped me have a deeper relationship with the LORD. I attended the services and took my children there. As time was passed, I got a chance to work on a ship again. I paid all my debts, bought a piece of land, and have a new house.

I experienced God's overflowing grace and provision. God used me to share the Gospel in the fellowship on board in 2017. I met Pastor Martin Otto in Hamburg, Germany, when our ship docked there. This was an answer to my prayers.

Recently I asked Pastor Martin Otto to send a study Bible course to my daughters. My 16-year-old is attending a discipleship course at my church. My second child is doing discipleship with her friends. I believe in GOD ALMIGHTY. His name is JESUS CHRIST. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16).

TO GOD BE ALL THE GLORY AND HONOR.

We can learn so much from other people, but even more from the wisdom found in the Bible. For example, in Proverbs 13:20: *"Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm."* King Solomon, who was the wisest man on earth, made this statement. We will suffer harm if we

have friends who mislead us. We need wise friends who can give us advice, and who can also correct us. If we have such friends, we will surely see success in our work.

Finally, turn to Proverbs 22:24-25: *“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.”* There are many more wonderful verses in the book of Proverbs about having good friends who can lead us and help us become the person we need to be. Just take time the time to study the book of Proverbs. You will surely be blessed by doing so.

d) Loneliness

While I was once visiting different ships at the port of Hamburg, I got a phone call from a seafarer who was sailing on a container ship. He asked me to visit him before his ship left Hamburg. I promised to come right away. When I met him, he said the following:

I am so lonely, I cannot overcome this negative feeling of loneliness. Can you help me? Can you pray for me?

Of course, I prayed for him and we talked for a while before I had to say good-bye. Another seafarer on a cruise ship said:

The present situation right now makes the seafarers even lonelier. We have no shore-leave, we can't go to the crew bar and we also have a very slow internet connection. The ship managers are trying to find ways to keep their crew motivated and happy, but sadly, because of the pandemic, all activities are limited.

I have talked to hundreds of seafarers who admit that they feel lonely on their ships. What is loneliness anyway? Let's have a look at the following explanation:

A lack of close friends and a dearth of broader social contact generally bring the emotional discomfort or distress known as loneliness. It begins with an awareness of a deficiency of relationships. This cognitive awareness plays through our brain with an emotional soundtrack. It makes us sad. We might feel an emptiness. We may be filled with a longing for contact. We feel isolated, distanced from others, deprived. These feelings tear away at our emotional well-being.²⁹

²⁹ <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/articles/200307/the-dangers-loneliness>.

I can well imagine that, if we feel lonely and our thoughts are constantly with our loved ones at home, it will obviously have a negative effect on our job as well. We will not be as focused, and thus more inclined to make mistakes. Loneliness has certain negative effects on our success as seafarers. May I encourage you to look for help and not wait until the contract is finished? One way to overcome the feeling of loneliness is to get more actively involved in communication with friends, family, and colleagues. Feel free to also contact the seamen's missions at the next port. You might have tried that already, so here is another big help which seafarers have reported to me. Take the Bible and turn to God, who has many wonderful promises for you. You matter to God. You are important to God. It pleases him to take care of you. Look at this promise in Isaiah 41:10: *"Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."* You might have never read the Bible, so this is a good opportunity to find out more about this wonderful book and how it can be a blessing to you and your success on ships.

e) Complacency

The Cambridge dictionary explains complacency as follows:

A feeling of calm satisfaction with your own abilities or situation that prevents you from trying harder.³⁰

Another statement is:

What annoys me about these girls is their complacency – they seem to have no desire to expand their horizons.³¹

There may be different reasons for complacency. However, one cannot defend his complacency and say: I am just this way because of my past. We all have plenty of opportunities to learn and overcome complacency. If you had a childhood in which your parents took over responsibilities instead of teaching you to take them on, you will probably find yourself stuck the same habit of not taking on a responsibility, but rather passing it on to others. I would encourage you to learn to take responsibility for yourself, and for others, step by step. Once you have done that and have overcome complacency, you will probably see that you have learned a good lesson

³⁰ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/complacency>.

³¹ <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/complacency>.

which is often followed by success. On a ship, complacency cannot be tolerated, as this is something that sooner or later will cause major problems. If complacency is added to laziness, it might even lead to accidents. Complacency will even affect your career – it should therefore be no surprise that a lazy person will not get the promotion. Complacency and laziness also affect our financial situation, as we can see from Proverbs 10:4-5: “*Lazy hands make for poverty, but diligent hands bring wealth. He who gathers crops in summer is a prudent son but he who sleeps during harvest is a disgraceful son.*” And Proverbs 24:33 says: “*A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest – and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man.*” There is probably no better way to explain it than the Bible does. The sooner you fight complacency the better. I suggest that you observe people who are diligent, and who are disciplined. You will soon discover that you are better off following their examples than following complacency. It is hard to imagine that a complacent and lazy person will ever become successful. At least not on a ship. Finally, this is what Dr. John C. Maxwell says about complacency:

Many people sit back and wait for someone else to step up and take responsibility. Sometimes that is because of weak character – laziness, lack of resolve, and so on. But more often it comes from poor judgment or low self-esteem. People believe that someone else is more qualified or better situated to stand up and make a difference. But the truth is that most of the people who make a difference do so not because they are the best for the job but because they decided to try.³²

“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today” – Abraham Lincoln

f) Lack of confidence

Low self-esteem is characterized by a lack of confidence and feeling bad about oneself. People with low self-esteem often feel unlovable, awkward, or incompetent. This low self-esteem often goes back to childhood. If you have experienced people speaking badly about you, your gifts and talents, you will probably not have any self-confidence now. Joyce Albarico³³ experienced the following:

³² Dr. John C. Maxwell, *Beyond Talent* 2011, Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, USA, p. 248.

³³ Permission granted to print this article.

Sometimes, even though you did your best, it was still not enough. You did all the work, but your manager failed to recognize your efforts. You did very well in your job, but you still got guest complaints because the guests had lost a lot of money at the casino. Yes, you will encounter all of this. Sometimes I asked myself whether even I was doing my best. And then again, I started casting my burdens on God, and praying to him, asking him to recharge my tired body and mind. I always keep in mind that I am greatly blessed, highly favored, and deeply loved by God.

I love to remember a Captain who especially encouraged those seafarers who suffered from low esteem, those who did not like to speak in public. At their team meetings, he gave those seafarers who lacked confidence the chance to say something. He always encouraged them. How then can confidence grow? Confidence only grows in a person if they know that they can trust the person they are working for. Confidence will grow if people are allowed to make mistakes without fearing negative consequences. Therefore, the captain or the management team is vital to developing the confidence of their people on board by trusting them to do their jobs without always criticizing. One excellent example is given us in the Bible, in the book of Hebrews 4:16. Here we read how God invites us to trust him, to approach him with confidence. This is what God says: *“Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”* If this godly pattern would be modeled on the ship, people would not only gain confidence but would also feel encouraged and do the job with proper motives. Their attitude towards their job would change.

6. The need for the right attitude and good character

A Captain who has served many years at sea and is now in a leadership position at a shipping company, wrote the following email:

Dear Rev. Martin, thank you for your mail and for considering writing a book about the character and attitude of seafarers. Seafaring is very crucial in our world, as about 90% of the trade is transported via sea. The seafarers play a very important role, and their character and attitude are very important. Knowledge and skill alone will not be enough.

There have been many problems now because some seafarers have forgotten their obligation before God that they are to do their duties and responsibilities properly. Many fundamental principles of work are being taken for granted, which consequently compromise safety, health, and almost all aspects of life on board. Because of this, devastating impacts have resulted. We have heard of Exxon Valdez, and many others relatively smaller in scale, but indeed considerable accidents have taken place. Many accidents have an irreversible impact, and we all suffer.

The industry constantly provides training and seminars, but the high number of accidents is not reduced much. The people from the industry thought that increased knowledge could alleviate the problem. I believe it will help, but it is not the solution. It has created more problems because seafarers are now faced with increased training, requirements, and procedures on board. It is so overwhelming that the basics and important tasks are forgotten. Sadly, that has resulted in certain accidents.

Following please find a few facts from a website:

In 2018, 46 total losses of vessels were reported around the shipping world, down from 98 12 months earlier ... While this plummet in total losses is encouraging, the number of reported shipping incidents overall (2,698 in 2018) shows a little decline – less than 1% year-on-year. Machinery damage is the major cause, accounting for more than a third of the 26,000+ incidents over the past decade – twice as many as the next highest cause, collisions.³⁴

³⁴ <https://www.agcs.allianz.com/news-and-insights/news/safety-shipping-review-2019.html>.

This is despite various regulatory measures such as SOLAS³⁵ & MARPOL³⁶, designed to help make the seas safer and cleaner, which are being fully implemented. This is despite the full enforcement of STCW³⁷ guidelines to curb substandard seafarers manning the vessels.

This is the nature of shipping. The ocean is the most dangerous workplace on the planet. Commercial seafaring is considered to be the second-most dangerous occupation in the world; deep-sea fishing is the first. Each year, 2,000 seafarers lose their lives. ... So why do 2,000 seafarers die each year, and what can be done to make people safer?³⁸

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) calculates that there are more than 85,000 working vessels (of over 100 gross tonnages) on the seas. Captain Alex Labor³⁹ says:

With the increasing volume of trade, both the number and capacity of ships navigating the seas are constantly increasing, which brings about an increase in the number and severity of accidents, hence making the seas riskier areas. One of the most important problems in the maritime industry is marine accidents due to their severe consequences which include loss of life and property, as well as environmental pollution. Shipping accidents have caused up to 20 times more deaths than average coastal industries. Thus, industry stakeholders are laboriously working to prevent marine accidents.

And as ships get larger and faster, their crews get smaller. Even the biggest ships now operate with crews as small as 13. The shortfall is supposed to be taken up by automation, which is one worry. So many experienced professionals have expressed their concern about overreliance on these clever machines and a generation of computer-savvy officers who fail to look out of the window at the crucial moment. The human element is compounded by multinational crews. On any large ship, a typical crew often comprises a mix of different languages, nationalities, and safety cultures, making the job of keeping the vessel safe all the trickier, and could be problematic and downright dangerous in a real shipboard crisis.

We can learn from many ships that the most modern techniques and good training have their limits if the character and the attitude of the seafarers do not help the ship's day-to-day situation. A ship can be a successful ship

³⁵ SOLAS = Safety of life at sea.

³⁶ MARPOL = International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships.

³⁷ STCW = Standards of training, certification and watchkeeping.

³⁸ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/10/shipping-disasters-we-never-hear-about>.

³⁹ Permission granted to print this article.

in all kinds of situations if they have a team that functions. A team, however, only functions well if the individual seafarer is willing to submit to this team and develop and work on his character and attitude. Today's shipping team needs to be homogeneous and not individualistic. After being at sea for several decades, this is what Capt. Alex G. Labor⁴⁰ says about the character and attitude of seafarers:

Seafaring is not for the shy, intimidated, or fearful. A seafarer needs to possess courage and boldness because the job requires stepping out of one's comfort zone – rather often. Seafarers work with various cultures and must be willing and able to adapt in order to connect and work effectively. This requires a good and positive character. Character is what marks an individual. It is partly a product of his inborn qualities and partly of his circumstances and experiences while growing up. Good character traits such as courage, patience, honesty, integrity, loyalty, etc. build trust and nothing could be more important than this when working on board a ship where a failure of trust could jeopardize a voyage or even the whole ship. A seafarer's character is his identity, and it helps him to perform his role because it affects the way he decides and acts. Thus, we say a person has a strong or a weak character. This is especially very important for a person holding a board position.

Having a good character, however, is not enough. Attitude is also important. Attitudes are the views of a person, whether positive or negative. They represent a person's degree of likes or dislikes towards a given thing or a given situation. Thus, we hear people say that a person has a good work attitude, meaning he loves his work and always does his best on any given task. Attitudes are learned behaviors, which means that the person makes a choice. A seafarer's work ethic or the way he approaches and handles his job on board is dictated by his attitude. A seafarer with a lazy attitude has poor work ethics and will never be able to get an assigned task done well. A lazy Able Seaman may take several days to chip and paint the deck, but a lazy OOW⁴¹ (too lazy to monitor the radar or look out the windows during navigation for example) can cause an accident such as a collision or grounding.

Character is largely shaped by education and the right values, and it takes a long time to change, whereas attitude is largely shaped by experience; a person can choose to change his attitude in a short time. How a seafarer performs his role on board depends on his character and attitude.

Every human being has reasons why he does things. While he makes many decisions every single minute, there are values and principles in life that he follows, and these will affect how he approaches people and handles

⁴⁰ Capt. Alex G. Labor MM (retired) instructor and author – Manila, Philippines.

⁴¹ OOW = Officer on Watch.

situations. Each person is different because he has an identity that makes him a unique individual. All of these qualities a person has are called attitude and character. Character is what identifies a person, while attitude is how that person approaches things. Both are important aspects a seafarer must possess in order to be a good team member on board.

For example, a seafarer might be an excellent navigator but has a very poor attitude towards other officers, because for instance, he does not always get along well with others, or tries to pick a fight, and so he becomes a liability to the team.

Another example: Let us say the ship is in a precarious or dangerous situation (an emergency) and if the Master reacts negatively and panics, things can go from bad to worse. The crew which sees the Master panicking will also start panicking. But if the Master acts positively, the situation may still be dangerous, but at least it can be handled better and stabilized through a good leadership attitude by the Master. A good leader should lead by example and a good leader must have a good character and attitude.

A seafarer with a poor character and attitude will be a negative influence and a liability on board, while a person with good character and the right attitude will be an asset and a positive influence on his fellow crew members.

Captain Terry Lee and his wife Voon⁴², both born in Malaysia, but now residents of Australia, have been long-time friends of mine. This is what they feel is important regarding good character and attitude:

The Captain, along with the Chief Officer, Chief Engineer and, 2nd Engineer (called the Ship Management team) can make life on board either pleasant or like hell. The personality of the Captain will influence the working environment or vibes on the ship. An accommodating and compassionate Captain, along with the ship management team, will make life comfortable for the crew. A loud Captain, on the other hand, will be intimidating, causing fear among the crew, and that will result in a lack of concentration on the job.

Another Captain⁴³ also highlighted the importance of character and attitude. This is what he said:

I believe that attitude will help balance the scale. A person may have good knowledge and skill but without the right attitude and character, a certain task cannot be accomplished correctly. A person may also have the right attitude because of motivation (salary, status, appraisal) but this is

⁴² Permission granted to print this article.

⁴³ Permission granted to print this article.

superficial because if it is removed, the right attitude may also fade away. The right attitude is a character modeled by Christ, a biblically founded conviction believing that we are on board because it is a God-given task, and we must perform it properly. We must maintain discipline, right living, and do everything that will glorify God. Having this understanding will help the industry.

A manager⁴⁴ of a shipping company said the following about character and attitude:

I have brought this matter to you, because a Japanese Crewing Head in our meeting has asked for suggestions and any views on how to solve the problems at his company. In desperation, he asked “Any initiative, anything, please give a suggestion.” There were repeated collision accidents at the company despite imposing stricter procedures. During the investigation, drunkenness was discovered to be one of the root causes of the problem. If seafarers understood that drunkenness was wrong and forbidden, such huge accidents could have been avoided. I hope that, if God willing, you can write a book, it will help seafarers understand how important it is to have the right character and attitude on board. This is a very fundamental concern, and it will create a huge impact on the industry. I will pray for you about it.

And lastly, Captain Kennette C. Clavel⁴⁵ wants to inspire seafarers with these words:

Competence, as defined by ISO⁴⁶ is the ability to apply knowledge and skills to achieve the intended results. Added to this are the right attitude and good character. One can have the best knowledge and skills but if not exercised properly, the result may still be failure.

We have lots of knowledgeable and skilled seafarers on ships – others are even exemplary. However, accidents still happen. According to statistics from the USCG, the human factor is the most common reason for the top-level accidents cited. Awareness or lack of awareness of what is going on in a situation plays a great part in these human error-induced accidents.

I have witnessed many investigations of collision accidents, where the Voyage Data Recorder (VDR) was replayed. Invariably, there were collisions shortly after the detection of a target, as there was no ample time left to avoid the tragic incident. Targets were not being monitored properly. Had proper lookout been exercised, early detection would have been made, and

⁴⁴ Permission granted to print this article.

⁴⁵ Captain Kennette C. Clavel master mariner, vice-president of Ventis Maritime corp., Manila, Philippines.

⁴⁶ International Organization for Standardization.

a maneuver to avoid the target or thing would have been carried out at the right time. Sadly, lives were lost, there was a huge impact on the environment, the company's finances, and countless other repercussions.

There have also been many near misses on board due to poor attitude and character. It can be as simple as intentionally switching off the alarm, where, if not done correctly, could potentially devastate the industry. It is also tempting to be complacent and to be lax or lazy regarding one's duties and responsibilities on board, especially when the task becomes routine. I would also add that if we don't have the right motives, we will tend to neglect the important things in our work, especially if we lose motivation.

I always need to go back to the fundamental principle in life which is found in the Bible. The book of Colossians 3:23 always reminds me of it. It says: "*Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men*". It is my resolve to do my work for our God, and I want to remember that I am a steward of all the things he has entrusted me with, whether I am at sea or on shore.

We see that the above-mentioned concerns are not only felt by this manager and Captain, but many shipping companies also share these concerns. They now see the problems as described in this article:

As the Port State Control Inspection recognized that almost all marine casualties are caused by human faults rather than vessel's defaults, it has put more emphasis on the qualification of ships' crew and the education required. Accordingly, for shipping companies, it is an urgent task to operate an effective crew education system that can meet the standards of international agreements and domestic laws.⁴⁷

Some of today's shipping companies have observed that low morale among seafarers has a high price. Another study

determined the seafarer's morale and its relationship to their work attitude. Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions: 1) What is the seafarers' morale? 2) What is the seafarers' work attitude? 3) Is there a relationship between seafarers' morale and work attitude? The participants of this study were the 42 seafarers who are currently reviewing and/or upgrading at JBLFMU-Molo Training Center. This is a survey on perception. The seafarers were grouped according to age, department, and length of service. The data was then tallied, tabulated, and interpreted, using the frequency count, percentage, and mean scores for descriptive statistics. Pearson's was used to establish if there is a correlation between morale and work

⁴⁷ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264076339_A_Study_on_the_Attitude_of_Seafarers_Education_Training_-_A_Case_Study_on_S_Company_-.

attitude. The study revealed the following findings: 1) As an entire group, the seafarers' morale was "moderately high" when grouped according to age, and length of service, but they had higher morale when they were grouped according to the department. 2) As an entire group, the seafarers' work attitude was "good" when grouped according to age and length of service, but "very good" when they were grouped according to the department. 3) A significant relationship between the seafarers' morale and their work attitude. The following are the conclusions: 1) Age and length of service are not significant factors in the development of seafarers' morale except for the department. 2) Age and length of service are not significant factors in the development of seafarers' work attitudes except for department. 3) Morale and work attitude are related, and imply that the quality of work is dependent on one's morale. Thus, it is recommended that: 1) The results of this study must be shared with the mariners for their awareness, and that they may be able to share the results of this study with their colleagues. 2) Parallel studies of this kind must be replicated to further validate morale and work attitude and its importance to working on board.⁴⁸

Another interesting article we find is this:

STCW 2010 does encourage leadership skills. The industry is taking further initiatives to propose a continuous assessment of behavioral competencies along with technical competencies. A lot more needs to be done in this area, and I would urge that administrations and IMO renew their focus on soft skills in the next revision of STCW. I believe we should start discussions on soft skills competencies as soon as possible for STCW 2025.⁴⁹

It is amazing to see that obviously, in Bible times, the lack of good morale and good work attitudes were already problems. Otherwise, Saint Paul would have not addressed the issue in the book of Titus, chapter 2 verse 7-8: "*Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.*" Amazingly, he speaks of being a model of good works. If a seafarer is a good model, others will want to follow his example and will learn practical ways about how to do the work correctly, with the right attitude and character. Paul also addresses integrity, dignity, and good (sound) speech. This shows that good character has a foundation. If we live with integrity so that people can trust us and believe what we say, and if our speech does not hurt others, then we will make a difference, and people will enjoy our company.

⁴⁸ <https://www.jblfmu.edu.ph/node/495>.

⁴⁹ <https://splash247.com/the-seafarer-of-the-future/>.

Yet there is more to it. We will do our work with a spirit of responsibility, we will accept the work on a ship and try to do our very best, as we know that this will help not only the industry, but in the end, it will help us all.

The Bible has a lot to say about a good character and the right attitude. Please take some time and think about the following Scriptures that mention character and attitude. Try to meditate on these verses. I am convinced that you will profit from them.

Romans 5:3-5: *“More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”*

Philippians 4:8: *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”*

Proverbs 10:9: *“Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.”*

Galatians 5:22-23: *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things, there is no law.”*

Hebrews 4:12: *“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

This last verse from the book of Hebrews is of utmost importance as it shows us, that the Bible is, first, of all, a living book, and secondly, it discerns our thoughts and the intentions of the heart. We might not always be able to bring about order in our mind or thoughts. But this is exactly what the Bible does. So, let me encourage you to allow the Bible to teach you good character and a good attitude. Let the Bible give you a sound mind, with the ability to discern difficult situations in a proper and productive way.

7. How can I develop good character?

We probably all agree that character is a very important quality, but the question remains, how do I develop good character, the kind that helps me live a life which is an encouragement to others, and helps me do my job in a way that others will also be motivated? We all certainly like to be surrounded by people who have good character, and we like to work with such people too. People with good character have a good influence on other people. Dr. John C. Maxwell says:

When it comes to character, each of us must answer the critical question, “Who am I?” That answer often provides the motivation to practice self-discipline. It is fundamental for the identification of core values. And it helps to establish emotional security. Our sense of security – or lack of it – often drives what we do. Character creates a foundation upon which the structure of your talent and your life can build. If there are cracks in that foundation, you cannot build much. That is why you must first develop within before you can achieve much without. But once you build strong character, it does more than provide a platform for your personal success and the maximization of your talent. It also impacts others and allows you to build with them.⁵⁰

Character development takes place at a very early stage in life. It is something that takes place in the family, at school, and of course, also in society, by being with friends. The strongest and best character development we can get is by looking into the Bible, by being influenced by our Creator, by God himself. Rick Warren, the author of *The Purpose-Driven Life* says:

Character development always involves a choice, and temptation provides that opportunity. For instance, God teaches us to love by putting some unloving people around us. It takes no character to love people who are lovely and loving to you. God teaches us real joy during sorrow when we turn to him. Happiness depends on external circumstances, but joy is based on your relationship with God. God develops real peace within us, not by making things go the way we planned, but by allowing times of chaos and confusion. Anyone can be peaceful watching a beautiful sunset or relaxing on vacation. We learn real peace by choosing to trust God in circumstances in which we are tempted to worry or be afraid. Likewise, patience is developed in

⁵⁰ Dr. John C. Maxwell, *Beyond talent* 2011, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, USA, p. 199+201.

circumstances in which we are forced to wait and are tempted to be angry or have a short fuse. God uses the opposite situation of each fruit to allow us a choice. You can't claim to be faithful if you have never had the opportunity to be unfaithful. Integrity is built by defeating the temptation to be dishonest; humility grows when we refuse to be prideful, and endurance develops every time we reject the temptation to give up. Every time you defeat a temptation, you become more like Jesus.⁵¹

There is no doubt that our character will be developed and become stronger every time we overcome temptations. People who run a marathon have to overcome their laziness, tiredness, thirst, and hunger. They even go so far as to spend less time with friends and family, and to run with perseverance, until they reach their goal. One very helpful tool to develop good character is to study Christian ethics. Christian ethics is the biblical teaching that examines which actions, attitudes and personal character traits are approved by God and which are not.

Willingness to accept correction

Do you want to become a wise person? I am pretty sure you do. But are you willing to follow the way that God has determined for receiving wisdom? Do you want to be a basketball champion in the NBA⁵²? I am sure that many would love to be. But would you also be willing to make sacrifices like those NBA players? Would you be willing to be alone and far away from your family because of the games? Would you be willing do a lot of training and have to travel a lot? Would you be willing to discipline your body? Discipline your mind? You might say, yes, I would. Can I remind you that one of the hardest ways to reach the goal of being a champion is to be willing to accept correction from other people? A player can only improve his game if he listens very carefully to what his coach tells him. And if he has listened well, he needs to put into practice what he has heard. This often goes against his convictions. Against his ego-centric way of living.

With our desire to become successful at work, it is very similar. We need to be willing to accept correction. We need to be willing to be life-long learners. This will shape our character and our mind, our attitude and our performance, on board a vessel. Let's take a look at what the wise King Solomon said in Proverbs 15:31-33: *“Whoever heeds life-giving correction will be at home among the wise. Those who disregard discipline despise themselves, but*

⁵¹ Rick Warren, *The purpose driven life* 2002, Purpose driven life Ministries, Quezon City, p. 202.

⁵² NBA = National Basketball Association.

the one who heeds correction gains understanding. Wisdom's instruction is to fear the LORD, and humility comes before honor."

One very interesting statement from the Bible is found in Proverbs 15:32: "Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence." Human beings want to be intelligent. Here is a simple way to learn intelligence – being willing to be instructed and to listen to reproof.

Guard your mind

Do you ever wonder what goes on in your mind? Thousands of thoughts and ideas go through your mind every day. Our mind is probably something like our heart. The most important part of the body is the heart. We can live with one arm, one leg, and with one kidney, but we cannot live without the heart. If the heart is not healthy, we have a big problem. It's the same way with the mind. The mind determines what kind of character you will develop. It's unfortunate that too often people are not aware that their mind is the center of everything. They say thoughts are free, but they forget that the course of one's whole life is determined and directed by one's mind. Your mind determines what kind of life you will lead. King Solomon said in his book, Proverbs, chapter 4 verse 23: "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." We are called to protect our minds, because our minds determine our actions. So, we need to feed our minds with things that will help us build good character and a good attitude. Character and attitude are vitally important for the success in life that you may be striving for. Then how do we feed our minds? Well, the best way I know is by reading the Bible. Why the Bible, you might ask. Because the Bible is the only book that is not manipulated. If you read newspapers, watch TV or listen to what other people say, you can't be sure it's true. People follow their interests, their egos. If you listen to what God says, you will feed your mind with the truth, because God is true. God cannot lie. He longs to lead you into all truth. Hebrews 4:12 tells us: "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." The word of God judges your thoughts and attitudes, and these are extremely important to God. It is not what you do, but why you do it. The word of God is able to tell you which of your thoughts are useful in service to God and men and which are not.

Dr. Pat Gelsinger, the CEO of Intel, the largest chip producing company worldwide, says:

How refreshing to come to the throne of the Father and be united with him in prayer and study of his Word. I have not set down and kept statistics for good versus bad days, but I can assert with confidence that I handle the rough days and situations so much better if I have been in the Word and prepared myself for the day with my God and Father. How different a countenance I carry on those days when I have been to the throne room. My attitude is better, my patience more robust, my tongue more careful, my discernment greater, and my patience increased. This is especially true when I realize my real employer is not Intel, but rather my heavenly Lord and Father. As I have had to struggle with this challenge over the years, I have tried to develop some little habits that help to bring to mind my daily devotion time.⁵³

Samuel Daguio Ph.D.⁵⁴, Chief Engineer and Professor in Maritime Education and training at John B. Lacson University, explained how character development worked in the shipping companies he worked for:

For the last 30 years, I have been working on shore as a mentor (since I stopped sailing) in different maritime education and training schools, including shipping companies, and in In-House Training Centers. The question about how seafarers can develop good character is a million-dollar question.

First and foremost, character development is the procedure and execution of creating a completely rounded, complex, and realistic person. Character development starts from home. Teachers/mentors are only follow-up developers of character after the parents, who are the first teachers.

As a professional Marine Engineer who later became a trainer, I know first-hand about seafaring knowledge and skills. For the last 14 years I have been involved in the development of the Cadetship Training Program. We have received appraisals from onboard regarding behavioral challenges of their Officers, Engineers, and Ratings, from the international shipping company where I served. In our education and training team, we rub our elbows to find a solution since this is a behavioral concern. The team has come up with a study on how to develop a quality seafarer for our foreign shipowners. We have developed the following courses. 1. Values Formation 2. Communication is essential 3. Leadership and Teamwork 4. Situational Awareness. 5. Behavioral Based Safety. The formula is:

⁵³ Dr. Pat Gelsinger, *The juggling Act*, David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, USA, p. 93.

⁵⁴ Permission granted to print this article.

Examples:

$$\text{Quality} = \frac{100 + 100}{100} \times 100 \text{ (good attitude)}$$

$$\text{No Quality} = \frac{100 + 100}{100} \times 0 \text{ (bad attitude)}$$

$$\text{Quality} = \text{Knowledge} + \text{Skill} \times \text{Attitude}$$

Roadblocks

Knowledge - can be learned at college

Skills - can be acquired at a training school

Attitude - no college/school offers that; it is built-in behavior

During the seminar, the seafarers were taught in the following areas:

1. Be Humble. Humility is the starting point for gaining knowledge.
2. Live out your standards and values. Whether it is “love others,” or “do the proper component,” keeping your standards will make a decision easier and more steadfast.
3. Exercise self-discipline
4. Be responsible
5. Above all, fear God

Second Engineer Leumej Mendez⁵⁵, is convinced that these points are important:

We all know that a career at sea is not for everyone. To develop good character, a seafarer must adapt, foster loyalty among his comrades and towards his ship, and he must be able to follow instructions, and in everything be an effective team player. Beyond leadership, a collaborative spirit is vital in order to work effectively on board a ship where there are co-workers of various cultures, responsibilities, and ranks.

On cruise ships where work is often very different from cargo ships, seafarers work an average of 10-12 hours a day. Here is what Alexander Tolentino⁵⁶ says about character development:

Build a circle of good friends. No man is an island.

It will be very difficult for you if you stay by yourself while on board. You need to build a circle of friends who have a positive influence on you. Make

⁵⁵ Permission granted to print this article.

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connections with those who share your interests, teach you new things which are good, and help you become a better person, especially in your relationship to Jesus. Keep away from those who will lead you away from your love to the Lord.

“Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’” (1 Corinthians 15:33)

“One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24)

Be thankful for everything – Having a positive attitude toward things helps us endure our difficult life on board. People who always complain see the glass half empty, while a thankful heart always sees it half full. Things may not go exactly the way we expect, but there are always a million reasons to thank God for. Having a job on board and being able to survive every day is more than enough reason to rejoice in God’s goodness and faithfulness.

Be in constant communication with your family – For most people, the family is the main reason why we work on board. We pay a high price because we are far away from them and we miss out on the memories we could have built together – all these things due to financial reasons. Fortunately, we are living at a time in which technology is more advanced now than compared to about 15 years ago. Get in touch with them whenever possible and make them feel that you are just a call away. Being on board does not diminish your role of being a spouse, a parent, a sibling, etc. Pray for them and encourage them to pray for you. Deal with the realities of family problems immediately and do not try to ignore them. The key to a successful relationship is having open communication even though you are far from them.

Keep yourself busy with good things – Over time, life on a ship may eventually exhaust and drain you. You need to find ways to keep yourself busy and spend your time well, doing something of quality. Try learning new things while on board. There are a good number of online courses that you can easily access. YouTube is an example of a great platform where you can watch videos in order to improve your skills and gain new knowledge. There are also numerous Christian sites where you can grow in your knowledge of Jesus, God, and the Bible. Also try to be involved in sports because they will benefit you physically. Learn to play the guitar. Study other languages. There are a lot of ways to spend your free time which are beneficial rather than wasting it on useless things.

Always do the right thing – There are so many temptations on a ship, and sin is readily available to those who live there. Whether it is drinking, gambling, giving in to peer pressure, pornography, illicit relationships, or other things, you have the power to refuse to give in; you can choose to do what is right. Never think that you are spiritually strong enough alone to withstand the temptations around you. The simplest and most effective way is to keep yourself away from them. Do not go near the water if you don't want to get wet. Never allow sin to enter your life. In everything you do, your primary motive must be to please the Lord. You should not only do things in the right way because other people see you, but rather because it is the right thing to do. God sees our hearts and motives and he will bless us for them.

“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

Finally, Captain Nelson Sotelo⁵⁷, who works in Quality Assurance at a Shipowner Company in Singapore, shares from his experience as somebody who has worked with many different people from various countries. This is what he thinks about character development:

Character gives a positive answer to the question: Can I trust you? It's a million-dollar question for a shipowner who entrusts a multimillion-dollar property to the crew whom he has not met.

In shipping, a person of good character is what seafarers, officers, and shipowners desire to have on board. A good character is simply synonymous with being responsible, dependable, honest, kind, open-minded, respectful, hardworking, helpful, unselfish, understanding, disciplined, obedient, confident, just, decent, and so on. These are essential crew qualities that make any ship management company, shipboard organization, and operation accomplish their objectives successfully. This applies not only to ship officers but to the crew in general. The weakness of not having a good character leads to being undesirable and unreliable, and that results in a terrible reputation on board. Billy Graham once said: “When the character is lost, all is lost.” When a person of poor character falls short or makes mistakes, the level of trust in him diminishes easily. Poor character is like rust on metal that cannot be hidden forever, despite covering it up with high-quality paint. Just like smoke that cannot be hidden, you cannot fake bad or good character.

A track record is a good basis for evaluating one's character. Some companies have a 360-degree feedback system or multi-source assessment in

⁵⁷ Permission granted to print this article.

which employees receive confidential or anonymous comments from stakeholders who work around them. Crewing and recruitment agencies require character references and background checks on anyone they choose to hire. This is because a person of good character will do the right thing even if no one else does, or no one else is looking. A reference also identifies who has good behavior and conduct. It determines how well they will fit in with the team culture and performance standard, both of which lead to good actions appropriate to the particular situation.

We are not born with good character. The Bible says that we are all born sinners with a sinful and selfish nature. A sad observation is that all toddlers are naturally selfish, with their innate, although faulty understanding that everything is “mine”. Furthermore, lying and being selfish come naturally to a child – no one has to teach them to do it. We have to go to great lengths to teach children the value of telling the truth. Sinful behavior comes naturally to those little ones because they are born sinners.

Character is not gained by diploma, position, power or possession. It is not developed overnight, but rather day after day, little by little, out of patient efforts and small choices. How we positively respond to circumstances reflects our character. Our character is set by our core values or principles which are highly important to us. It is established by consistent adherence to our moral values.

Character is nurtured by influences and experiences in life. It is built intentionally. One’s character is defined by who we are when nobody is supervising us. It is a distinctive quality that can be developed and it is by choice. It is the most important measurement of the success of a life well-lived. Our actions define our character just like a tree that is known by its fruit. A good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. In order to know what is good, we need an objective moral value reference point. It’s like a compass used by navigators to show them the true North because it assists sailors to go in the right direction. Everyone needs a moral compass to use as a reference by which they can judge between right and wrong. This compass helps us act on what we have judged and thus we can behave accordingly. The Word of God is the standard.

To develop good character, identify what is important to you and analyze how bad moral character will affect those working with you. Build up integrity by choosing honesty in all your dealings. This means being able to admit it when you don’t know something, owning up to your mistakes, taking responsibility, not being pretentious, not telling lies or making up stories, being dependable, being authentic, and never taking advantage of others.

Small hallmark behaviors of good character include: Being respectful, humble, teachable, and sensitive. Follow orders and company policies. Never destructively criticize the errors of colleagues but rather use them as a guide to improve responses and decisions. Be punctual and respect the

company's time and each other's time. Be useful and offer help without expecting anything in return. Don't think too highly of yourself. Be willing to accept correction and to learn from others. Be responsible, even in simple tasks, and apply biblical lessons from the parable of good stewardship about being faithful in small things.

Your role on board is significant, and how well you perform your job contributes to ship-safe operations and eventually to the ship managers' and shipowners' total success. Our life on board does not revolve around our self-interests. Good character makes work relationships more meaningful. The reason character is so important is that it is the non-negotiable part of who you are. We are all willing to make certain compromises to get ahead in life or to be liked. But our character cannot be compromised. It is what makes every one of us who we are and makes us distinctive.

Associate with men of good character. Find a mentor who cares and who can coach you. Take heed of the good advice and wise counsel of a mentor who has good and sincere intentions. Walk your talk. By constant self-discipline and self-control, you can develop greatness of character which is a life-long legacy that is carved on hearts and not on marble.

8. The blessings of discipline

While I was talking to a friend of mine a few years ago, we talked about many things that we agreed on, but when I mentioned the word discipline, my friend immediately replied, “I do not like that word. It puts me under a lot of pressure. I like being free.” Well, the question is whether freedom is only achieved by not having discipline, or if the opposite is true. I believe that if we practice discipline, we will feel satisfied and glad that we have chosen to live a life of discipline. I found this remarkable statement about discipline on the internet:

Discipline is a concept everyone is aware of, but few truly understand. The most successful people in life exert discipline on a daily basis. It is vital to every living being, and without it, the world around us would be chaos.⁵⁸

It is amazing to see how important people like King Solomon in the Old Testament highlight and stress the importance of discipline. In the book of Proverbs, we can read in chapter 12:1, “*Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.*” It is interesting to note that King Solomon made a connection between discipline and knowledge. How often have we thought that we lacked knowledge in certain areas of life? That verse might be able to give us the incentive to practice more discipline, to study more carefully. As a result, we will obtain more knowledge and start on our way to being more successful and effective. The apostle Paul also talks about discipline. In Saint Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, he says in chapter 9, verse 27: “*I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I should be disqualified.*” This refers to keeping his mouth shut in order not to be a bad example. However, it can also refer to times on a ship where one could brag and show off, only to find out later that keeping one’s mouth shut would have been better.

Surely, we all agree that a person can’t receive a medal or prize in sports unless he is disciplined and works hard while training. In order to be successful, people train their bodies. They train hard, they discipline their body, they watch carefully what they eat, and they have one goal in mind: To win the prize. Yet one more thing is important: The person needs a coach to plan and oversee the training program so that maximum success can be achieved. In the same way, we can all listen to our coach: Jesus

⁵⁸ <https://www.elitedaily.com/life/why-discipline-is-so-important>.

Christ wants to coach us. He lived a disciplined life, and he will show us how we can train our character and be successful in our jobs.

One person who achieved success through discipline is Karen Cacho⁵⁹. This is what she shared in an email:

When I began on a ship, I experienced a very strict Chief engineer. He noticed every single mistake I made and reprimanded me daily as if making it very personal. For me, it was hard, since it was my first time as a fourth engineer then. I did my best and read manuals, always checking the machinery. I was responsible for working overtime when there were problems. Basically, I worked hard. I received all the bad comments and anger from my Chief Engineer. Nevertheless, I continued doing what I could in my responsibilities. Before my Chief Engineer disembarked, he gave me a letter of recommendation for my promotion to a higher rank. So now when I think about it, in the end, all the hard work and discipline paid off.

Another seafarer who was very disciplined is Patrick Laurence Dario⁶⁰. Let's read what he achieved through discipline:

Officially I got my Master's license at the very young age of 27. A huge thank you to those who believed in me. To those who put their trust in me. To those who left and those who stayed. I have sacrificed a lot for this, and I know I will have to sacrifice more in the coming years. When I think of how I got here, I look back. I did not have an idea about what I wanted to do with my life. I just focused on achieving my personal goals. If there is one thing, I can tell you, it is this: Discipline and Consistency are the keys. There will be days you when enjoy your job, and there will be days you feel like you are living in hell. Just keep going. There will be hard decisions you have to make. In the process, you will not have time for your family, partner, friends, or other things you consider important. Despite the hardships, just keep on going. There will be times when you keep going at it and do not see any improvements. Nothing is happening, and nothing makes any sense. Just keep going. Eventually, you will not notice that you are now where you envisioned yourself to be 10 years ago. You may not be sure where you were going, but now you have an idea of how it could be to do this for the rest of your life. None of this would have happened if you had not started in the first place. As many have said before, "The journey is more meaningful than the destination itself". I do not know who said it, but whoever it was, they were right. It all starts with Day One. Until you reach your One Day—just keep at it. After all, the biggest room in life is the room for improvement.

⁵⁹ Permission granted to print this article.

⁶⁰ Permission granted to print this article.

Every day, we get better at things. We may not know it, but we are getting somewhere – little by little. Keep your heads up, young guys!

One thing that we all need to learn is to take advice from other people. Advice is also sometimes found in literature. It is not always easy to take advice, since our pride sometimes gets in the way. We want to be independent of people, we want to show that we know better and have the better solution. But do we? Proverbs 19:20 says: *“Listen to advice and accept discipline, and at the end, you will be counted among the wise.”* On a ship with its many difficult situations, where things are sometimes so hectic, we need a sober mind, we need to have people who are disciplined, who have the wisdom necessary for decision making. Can I encourage you at this point to regularly look into the Bible and ask God for wisdom? He will surely give you wisdom. This is what God has promised: *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you”* (James 1:5). Be willing to take advice from others – forget about your pride and the conviction that you know everything, that you know it better than the other person – seek God’s wisdom, and you will be successful in your work. Finally, let me quote King Solomon again in Proverbs 15:31-32: *“Whoever heeds life-giving correction will be at home among the wise. Those who disregard discipline, despise themselves, but the one who heeds correction gains understanding.”*

Capt. Alex G. Labor⁶¹ says the following about discipline:

Another character trait that a good seafarer must have is discipline. Collin’s Dictionary defines discipline as the quality of being able to behave and work in a controlled way which involves obeying certain rules or standards. Discipline brings stability and structure into a person’s life. It teaches a person to be responsible and respectful. For a seafarer, discipline enables him to exercise self-restraint, allowing him to behave in a controlled manner. Lack of this ability can have disastrous results on board a vessel. The observance of well-defined rules is the basis of society. If there were no discipline, people would do whatever they wanted and make mistakes without putting the consideration of others first and foremost. In any unit or society (and the vessel is in effect a closely-knit small society) it is important to have discipline, and it is never more important than on board a vessel. Without discipline, life on board can become chaotic. Loss of discipline on board creates dangerous situations. Imagine a situation where the Master is unable to muster the crew for an emergency because he has lost discipline, or an officer always sleeps or is drunk while on watch because of poor personal

⁶¹ Permission granted to print this article.

discipline? And from a shipping company's perspective, do you think the company is going to tolerate a person who is consistently late for work or who procrastinates in doing their work?

Character, attitude, work ethic, and discipline are the pillars a seafarer must have. They should be the reason why, despite very rough seas and other difficult conditions at sea, a seafarer must observe his watch or work schedule and do his duty when it calls.

Capt. Rodrigo Failma⁶² adds:

God knows what is best for us. We might experience struggles, trials, difficulties, or any kind of problems and trials. However, as Christians let us accept those tough times because, in the end, it will produce blessings if we do not give up. The Lord disciplines those he loves (Hebrews 12:5-6). The Lord's discipline will produce the best in us. I believe all of us – not only seafarers – should have personal discipline in three main areas:

1. Money – Have self-control in spending money. Be wise in spending your hard-earned salary because not all of the beautiful things you see are what you really need. Budget your income, have savings.

2. Time – There is a time for everything. As a seafarer, you can still be productive and fruitful if you continue studying, preparing to upgrade your skills for a possible promotion. Set aside time for physical fitness and of course, spend quality time with your family.

3. Relationships – Working on a ship is not easy and that is why we need to have good relationships with each other. Self-control is very important in dealing with others who have different personalities and attitudes. Another area is the romantic relationship which requires discipline. In this area, many seafarers have suffered a lot of emotional and mental issues which have led to a broken marriage and a broken family. Thank God we have the Bible to guide us. You can always pray wherever you are, anytime when you need help. Jesus Christ is ready to help you, forgive you, and deliver you from any kind of trouble. Happy sailing!

In his book “Beyond Talent” Dr. John C. Maxwell highlights the importance of self-discipline:

At the most basic level, self-discipline is the ability to do what is right even when you do not feel like doing it. Outstanding leaders and achievers throughout history understood this. The Greek philosopher Plato asserted, “The first and best victory is to conquer self.” The greatest victories are internal ones. Oswald Sanders, the author of the book on leadership that launched my personal journey as a leader, *Spiritual Leadership*, wrote that the

⁶² Permission granted to print this article.

future is with the disciplined. He said that without self-discipline, a leader's other gifts – however great – will never realize their maximum potential. That's true, not only of leaders, but also of anyone who wants to reach his or her potential. Talent alone is never enough. A person must have talent plus character. The battle for self-discipline is won within. The notable mountain climber Sir Edmund Hillary observed, "It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves."⁶³

Dr. John C. Maxwell goes on to ask you this very important question:

How would you rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 when it comes to self-discipline (with 10 being perfect)? Is yours, what you would consider being an acceptable score? How can you improve in this area? Identify specific goals, that will help you. Remember that self-discipline is a lifestyle to be achieved. The more disciplined you are in one area, the more it helps you become disciplined in others. Each victory makes you stronger.⁶⁴

Below you find a few more verses. I hope they will encourage you, and also challenge you. Please take a second to think about what these verses have to say.

"Whoever disregards discipline comes to poverty and shame, but whoever heeds correction is honored." (Proverbs 13:18)

"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later-on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it." (Hebrews 12:11)

"Blessed is the one whom God corrects; so, do not despise the discipline of the Almighty." (Job 5:17)

Discipline is a key to many areas in life in which you want to be successful. Success on the ship, in your studies, but also in the many personal areas of your daily life. If you maintain discipline in business, sports, relationships, and whatever other ways you can imagine, you will see beautiful results. All of us should truly seek a disciplined life. However, the blessings only come after we have become disciplined and not before. May I encourage you to learn from other people who are disciplined? Discipline is one important part of success. If you want to be successful in life, you need to

⁶³ Dr. John C. Maxwell, *Beyond Talent* 2011, Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, USA, p. 196.

⁶⁴ Dr. John C. Maxwell, *Beyond Talent* 2011, Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, USA, p. 209.

have discipline. Otherwise, you will be knocked out by the people who are disciplined. It is helpful to make the decision and declare: I want to learn discipline! If people see that you are disciplined, they will be motivated to learn from you.

9. Be a team player

We are all aware that shipping has changed so much over the last 100 years. Ships have become bigger and faster. Technology has improved significantly, and it is now important to operate these ships in a way that the world's economy can be profitable, and so that people can find suitable jobs on ships where they can work safely in order to be able to feed their families.

Captain Alex G. Labor⁶⁵ says:

The age of sailing ships – with an average speed of 4-6 knots, effectively ended around the 19th century. They were replaced by steam power and later by internal combustion engines such as we have today. From an average speed of 4-6 knots, we now have vessels sailing an average of 12-25 knots and yet the world's oceans and waterways have remained basically the same size. At the same time, the number of ships sailing on them has increased in numbers. The seas are becoming more and more crowded, and the global number of commercial ships continues to grow. The size of the fleet, if measured by weight, has doubled since 2004.

Since the number of ships worldwide has gone up, accidents have also increased. For a number of reasons, one of the main concerns of the shipping industry is to reduce the number of accidents. Companies have increased their safety measures and training, yet the main cause of accidents is still the human factor. Fatigue, drunkenness, lack of professional working attitudes, and other human elements have led to numerous accidents with fatal results. Thus, one of the goals that all companies and ships must pursue is to make sure that a quality team – and not twenty individuals – is leading the ship.

On many ships, I have experienced that seafarers on board stayed on their own, spent time in their cabins and not with other seafarers in the recreation room. This tends to happen more when there is a mixed crew. You see different nationalities with different cultures, and you don't feel at home. The danger is to start saying bad things about the other nationality or culture when you are together with your own people. Gossip is such a temptation, but it will not help at all for team-building which is so important in order to run a ship safely and successfully. Make an effort to keep a friendly attitude when you approach the other seafarers from

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different cultures. This will help improve teamwork on board. Remember that the other person is probably not wrong but just different. Try to understand the differences by talking to the person. You will be surprised that both of you will learn something. If you expand your outlook, you will be known to your managers as communicative, and you will gain the support of the other seafarers whose nationality and religion is different from yours. This is very important in a mixed crew.

I met such a friendly third officer on a cargo ship. He was from Peru and he worked with different nationalities. Whenever he finished work, he was still willing to go the extra mile and help other people in their jobs when they had a problem. When you work together and succeed together, you feel good, and you foster a better working relationship with your colleagues on board. If you communicate well, it will lead to a good team atmosphere on board. Keep in mind that a healthy emotional environment will provide a firm backbone for a successful career. In his book, *Beyond Talent*, John C. Maxwell says:

Teamwork gives you the best opportunity to turn your vision into reality. The greater the vision, the more need there is for a good team. But being willing to engage in teamwork is not the same as actively pursuing a team and becoming part of it. To succeed, you need to get on a team and find your best place in it. That may be as its leader, or it may not.⁶⁶

On the bulk carrier “Good Hope Max”, I met the Captain, and I was able to have an interview with him about teamwork. This is how he views teamwork.

1. Is it important for the success of the ship to work as a team, or should everybody just do the work that he is assigned to do?

Captain: As a leader, I believe that teamwork and cooperation are both essential for a group to work successfully. These are keys to accomplishing tasks promptly, with the least effort expended, while achieving harmonious relationships among crew members.

2. What challenges do you have when you want to work as a team?

Captain: Based on experience, the most common challenges I have encountered when working as a team, are the following:

- Differences in opinion
- Uniqueness in approach to tackling certain tasks

⁶⁶ Dr. John C. Maxwell, *Beyond Talent* 2011, Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, USA, p. 266.

- Strong individualistic personalities
- Mediocrity, pride
- Lack of knowledge

3. What benefits do you have when your crew works well as a team?

Captain: The tasks are done more efficiently and punctually; problems are solved easily and smoothly, and the sense of accomplishment and significance is shared by all members. All of these not only benefit the immediate superiors on the ship but the company as well.

4. What has been your experience so far regarding teamwork on different ships?

Captain: Generally speaking, teamwork can never be omitted if a certain ship wants carry out its mission successfully. At times, it is not easily attained, especially when you are just starting to build relationships with your new crew members, or when, in a situation, everybody is very tired and exhausted. But overall, it is achievable.

5. Is it possible to prevent ship accidents⁶⁷ when you have good teamwork on board?

Captain: Yes, good teamwork is equated with good accident-prevention. You look out for each other when you have good teamwork.

6. How do you train a good team? Does the training start in the Philippines or on the ship?

Captain: Trust and respect are essential to building a good team. This starts at the company itself (in the Philippines). Aside from the training, which is a pre-requisite before going on board, you also lead by example. And eventually, as the relationships progress on board, you tactfully teach and train your crew the things you want them to learn.

7. What do you do when seafarers do not want to work as a team?

Captain: It is not very often that you encounter seafarers who do not want to work or cooperate as a team because mainly, they are there for a job and they know that. But if this does happen, I would usually have a closed-door meeting with the person/s concerned and try to understand their side. Formulate solutions/suggestions together with them and let

⁶⁷ Please see also <https://safety4sea.com/ten-tips-to-avoid-accidents-at-sea/>.

them work on these. In this way, they feel like someone is listening to them and considers them important.

8. From what I heard you say, I can conclude that the ship will be more successful if you have teamwork.

Captain: Yes, that's true. Teamwork is crucial to the successful operations on every ship.

A very experienced seafarer is Chief Engineer Ireneo Pavia⁶⁸. Here is his view on team-work:

It is very important for seafarers on board to be team players. Otherwise, it will cause a great impact on the relationships between each and everyone on board. Everything will be affected, for example, harmony, cooperation, and respect. Trust will be ignored or even rejected. If team players are absent, or there are no team players on board, not even the Captain can do anything to bring proper order on his ship.

An example of having team players on board can be seen when they are performing their respective duties and responsibilities. This is noticeable when they are performing their day-to-day duties or doing maintenance jobs. A simple maintenance job cannot be done properly if no team player will perform the task. If team players are available, every job will be done smoothly according to the task schedule. For instance, in the engine room, with a total crew of seven (engineers & ratings) who will do the job as a team. How can they perform well to complete the job if there are no team players? Some may work correctly while others may hide. This really happens. On many ships there is a negative atmosphere among the crew because some, if not all, are not team players.

Whenever I speak with seafarers about success on board, there is common understanding that teamwork is vital. This is what Muspher Silliano⁶⁹, a chief cook, says about teamwork:

I have been a seafarer for the last 13 years. I started as a mess boy during my first contract on a ship. I believe that it is important to have a good relationship with your fellow seafarers on board. As a new crew member, you must learn to be friendly to your colleagues, since you will spend eight months with them on the same ship. They will be helpful to you and teach you what to do. For me, it is important to have a good relationship with the chief cook because in the galley we are the only two people. We need each other to

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serve the crew and officers well. When provisions come on board, we are the only two who arrange and tidy up the provision storage area. When I became a chief cook, I also learned to have a good relationship with my co-worker, as it is always nice to have an assistant with a smiling face who will help you. In the Bible, in Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 we can read: *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.”* It is really good to have a friend on board because he will be like your brother or even father during times when you need to talk about your problems.

Another seafarer who added to the topic of teamwork is Chief Engineer Rick Villavicencio (PMMA class 2002)⁷⁰. This is what he says:

Working on board is teamwork because one cannot accomplish much alone compared to doing the work as a team. Having men who cooperate with each other and do tasks together creates dynamic results. Stress that is shared brings collaboration and will ease up problems, lessen strains. On a music team, the work is just the same, everyone has their part, and unless each one contributes something, they cannot create a good sound. *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves”* (Philippians 2:3). When this happens, a team is even more creative, and can give more towards what is expected. I experienced how one of my colleagues once brought to my attention how to solve the problem on the drains. This was after several rigid trials on piping (from which our fitter almost collapsed due to fatigue). We had a good result simply by listening to his suggestion. Treating others better brings out joy and an acceptance of someone’s skill, thus also raising the self-esteem and value of both. *“It is like pulling them up as they push you up”* (Pr. Rancho Villavicencio). Never let your ego overcome but rather accept the fact that no man is an island.

It is either “we” or “I”. The outcome sometimes turns out better if we exclude ourselves rather than insisting and trying to make something happen. Creative ideas blended together transform impossibilities into exceptional possibilities. Our burdens become smaller if we make an effort to bring about lighter and brighter moments on board through our attitude, and if to us it doesn’t seem like there is any problem at all. Create as little stress as possible, since life on board really isn’t that easy. The Bible says in Colossians 4:1: *“Masters, give to your servants that which is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven”* (MEV).⁷¹

What is meant by just and fair? Making decisions which are fair and right; allowing adequate time for rest; weighing things out in an unbiased manner; listening to both sides in a conflict; being honest in appraisals;

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⁷¹ Modern English Version.

intentionally motivating people in a positive way; respecting each other's opinions, meeting half-way, adjusting to what is acceptable and right ... These are ways of treating others better. Furthermore, they have a positive impact on both the giver and the receiver.

If the best decisions are made, bright ideas will pop up, humility will predominate regardless of rank. Treating each other equally and respecting each other is the sign of a good horizontal relationship. Those who want to be on top should learn how to be at the bottom. If you are on the management level, just try doing the work of an oiler, a wiper, or even a cadet, and observe how the juniors will take notice and react to what is going on. Learn to respect juniors the same way you respect the CEOs. The way to go up is to go down, and the way to go down is to go up (Rev. Celedonio Ompad). *“For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted”* (Luke 14:11). Working together in sweet harmony is a dream of every seafarer who desires to finish his or her contract and bring abundant life back home. The future lies in how we deal with the people around us. I would like to extend my gratitude to all of the seafarers who have made their workplace a better place to live.

“Individuals play the game, but teams win championships.”

10. Work performance

It will probably come as no surprise to learn that anyone thinking about working as a seafarer needs to have a strong work ethic, tenacity, punctuality, people skills, courage, and diligence. These are all highly desirable attributes in many industries, however, in maritime jobs, they are essential. When people do their jobs effectively, it boosts the morale in the office. Employees who are not motivated to get the job done properly can ruin an entire department. It is important to foster a positive, energetic work environment.

Many seafarers are very happy to be on board and earn money for the family and often for their newly-bought house. They are good and loyal workers; they may have even studied hard, but is that enough in this challenging job as a seafarer? In today's world, companies and maritime schools are looking for good work performance and work ethic with the end goal of being a safe and profitable company that can compete in this ever-changing and challenging global shipping market.

According to APL's Head of Global Marine Operations, Captain Lee Chee Seong⁷², there is a set of qualities that mark the ideal seafarer:

Hunger: Hunger is a key element to success in a seafaring career. Hunger is what makes a candidate go 'all out' – to obtain and retain the job. It's the drive to keep on learning and growing which shapes seafarers.

Boldness: Seafaring is not for the shy, intimidated, or fearful. A seafarer needs to possess courage and boldness because the job requires stepping out of one's comfort zone – quite often.

Adaptability: Seafarers work with various cultures and must be willing and able to adapt in order to connect and work effectively.

Think on Your Feet: A seafarer needs to be independent and able to respond fast and well.

Good Command of English: A good seafarer ought to possess a good command of written and spoken English.

Leadership: Leadership is another valued trait as seafarers must lead people and be able to solve problems. The ability to thrive under pressure is key also.

⁷² <https://seanews.co.uk/features/qualities-seafarers-must-possess-to-be-successful/>.

Effective Team Player: Beyond leadership, a seafarer needs to be a good team player. A collaborative spirit is vital to working effectively on a ship with co-workers of various responsibilities and ranks.

Loyalty: Loyalty is another aspect that Captain Lee values – to the company, to crewmates, to the ship, and to oneself.

Seafarers often sense the pressure of work on the different ships and complain about it. In shipping today, doing routine work, for example, eight hours a day has become seldom. Frequently, the situation on board requires doing overtime, especially since companies have tremendously reduced the number people on the crew. How can seafarers cope with such a situation? I believe one valid point is to show that you are an honest worker. Companies will soon discover your honesty and will appreciate this very much. However, it is also helpful and necessary to have personal goals and a vision while on board. What do you mean by vision you may ask? Isn't it enough to work hard every day? This is what Dr. Peter Tan-chi, pastor of a megachurch in Manila, has to say in his book "Motivate":

Vision gives direction and purpose to our children. The direction is important because it determines the ultimate destination of their life. Thus, it acts as a guide in their decision-making and in prioritizing their activities to achieve their vision. Proverbs 29:18 rightly states that without vision, people perish. Lack of vision is one of the problems facing today's youth. Many of our young people have no vision for their lives. That is why they just live for the moment, to have fun. Without vision, they have no direction and purpose. They live without restraint, wasting their time, and making reckless decisions, not minding the consequences of their decisions. Our choices have consequences. They will impact our future.⁷³

Although Dr. Peter Tan-chi basically addresses children in his book, we can learn from it as well. We need a vision. We need a purpose in life. We also need a vision for our job. If we have a vision, our job will be filled with purpose. Nowadays, companies seek seafarers with a good work performance. Vision is one aspect of it. Having good communication skills is another one. This is what Capt. Alex G. Labor⁷⁴ says:

A seafarer, regardless of rank or job, must possess communication skills. On today's ships with multinational crews, being able to communicate cannot

⁷³ Dr. Peter Tan-chi, *Motivate! 8 secrets of successful parenting 2017*, OMF Literature, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, Philippines, p. 83.

⁷⁴ Permission granted to print this article.

be overemphasized. At present, it is not only ship sizes that are increasing, but also maritime traffic is increasing around the world, and it has become even more important to improve safety and security and to safeguard our environment. When critical decisions need to be made quickly, to protect or enhance any of these factors, good communication between everyone involved in the maritime chain is essential – from the Master to the Ratings, and from vessel to shore and vice versa. It is worthwhile to bear in mind that communication is a two-way process. Someone said that when only one person is speaking, it is called talking, but when two persons are talking it is called communicating. Good communication involves being able to transmit the message and receive and understand the feedback or response. Therefore, a good shipboard leader must not be monopolistic but instead encourage his crew to speak up. The crew must be encouraged to challenge by speaking up so that there will be no gaps in the communication process. It has been proven that some accidents have been caused by miscommunication, or worse, not being able to communicate at all. Conversely, many safe navigations and maneuvers have been carried out because of efficient communication between all parties involved.

Ivan Lowell⁷⁵ works as an Oiler on a cargo ship, and this is what he shares about his understanding of having a good work performance.

Working on board the ship requires us to be competent in many aspects. It can be physically, mentally, and intellectually. But many factors prevent us from working competently and efficiently. These include stress, lack of sleep, homesickness, pressure from senior officers, etc. In order to have a good work performance on board, we should be diligent in learning new things. Read books about your work duties and responsibilities. We should discipline ourselves by going to bed at the proper time. Stress can be relieved by playing games on board with crewmates or having regular exercise. The good news is that everything we face and experience, we can give it all to God.

When asked about his work performance, Jaime Legaspino⁷⁶, a Filipino seafarer, replied:

I will start by saying that without God changing me inside and out, my work performance would also be affected. There are a lot of people who claim you can work very well even without God. Yet, it is very different when you have Him at your side and him living in your life. The sense of purpose is no longer for you to be promoted or get higher wages, but for you to do all things for

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his glory and honor. I don't believe it's right for us to isolate God, only having him as God on Sundays, and not letting him be our God during our working days. You work, not for men, but for God.

Good work performance will give you the chance to do better jobs, work in different positions and work on different ships. However, one criterion towards reaching that goal is whether or not you can communicate well. Communication is a top priority if you want to climb the ladder of success, and if you want to perform well. I would like to encourage you at this point to improve your language skills in both written and oral forms. I was impressed by a captain who gave everybody on board a chance to say what was on their heart during their team meeting. It was also a chance to practice their English and overcome their shyness about speaking in public.

Even the Bible has something to say about this matter. Proverbs 21:5 says: *"The plans of the diligent lead to profit, as surely as haste leads to poverty."* Diligent people are the ones who tend to make an impression on their superiors. If you are willing to do more than your routine work, more than what is your job, you will not only learn something for yourself, but you will also obtain better job opportunities. Of course, everybody understands that there is a limit. Being diligent does not necessarily mean that you always work overtime. Neither does it mean that you just do every possible job. But diligence shows a willingness to work and help and support the team on board. It also involves a willingness to take responsibility for yourself and for others. Dr. John C. Maxwell says: "We live in a culture that overvalues talent and undervalues responsibility." If everybody on the team takes care of his responsibilities and works diligently, I believe the whole team will prosper and the result will be success. Success for you as an individual and for the team as well.

11. The importance of leadership with real concern for seafarers

Years ago, I visited a small general cargo ship with a mixed crew of Germans and people from the Kiribati Islands. When I entered the crew messroom, I met with a sailor and started talking to him. After a while, the Captain came into the crew messroom and immediately said to the sailor, “You stink!” I was somewhat shocked to hear these words from a captain and wondered what kind of relationship the crew would have to the Master who addressed his crew in such an unfriendly manner. On other occasions, I heard the top officers shouting at the crew. When you see this kind of behavior, you wonder how leadership is being performed, and you also wonder how willing seafarers are to follow and learn from such leadership styles. I have witnessed the opposite, when the Master treated the Chief Cook in a friendly way. He went down to the galley and helped the Chief Cook prepare good meals. There are many more occasions where the leadership showed a good spirit of respect and honor towards the seafarers, similar to what the Bible says in Philippians 2:3: “*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves.*” Or in Romans 12:10: “*Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.*”

Sadly, many Captains and Chief Engineers focus on the weak performance of the seafarers on board. So, one may ask, do they lead in a way that will inspire others to learn? Do they lead as examples that others are willing to follow? I would be glad to see companies placing more importance on good leadership training. Knowledge alone will never be enough to lead a ship’s company which averages about twenty people.

Rancho Villavicencio, Executive Director and founder of Seacom’s Maritime Development International, says the following about quality leadership in the context of cross-cultural crews:

Leadership styles across cultures affect the mental health and well-being of our seafarers from all ranks, and all nationalities around the world. This has a great impact on the safety and productivity of our seafarers on board, and consequently, on human and economic costs. Equipping and empowering seafarers worldwide to practice effective leadership across cultures will enhance seafarers’ well-being.

Training in leadership across cultures is crucial to enhancing the well-being of seafarers. According to Dr. John Maxwell, the number one leader-

ship guru, “Leadership is not a position, leadership is influence.” Influencing the ship’s crew of different nationalities and cultures to consider the importance of quality, health, safety, and environmental protection, will add value to seafarers, manning and shipping companies, and other stakeholders. We cannot lead people against their cultures. We need to become flexible and adaptable with people who have different beliefs, customs, ways of thinking, and behavior, both on board and on shore. Our effectiveness as leaders depends on the level of our influence on others. Trust is the rock foundation of leadership. Integrity builds trust. Trust binds and forms the team together. Admiration, not authority is the highest mark of leadership. People follow willingly and cheerfully if they admire and respect our leadership. We have influence when we gain the trust of our people. We develop trust when we connect with people and demonstrate integrity. A leader with integrity not only talks about strong character, competence, and courage but he models it. Abraham Lincoln became one of the greatest presidents of the United States of America. His greatness was his integrity. When he was still working as a cashier in a grocery store, he overcharged a customer by three cents. He walked the long distance of 6 miles just to return that small amount of money. Because he could be trusted with small things, in due time, he was entrusted with something greater: becoming the 16th president of the United States in 1861. Last month, I spoke with the Chief Engineer of a bulk carrier, and he told me the story about having a hard time working with a Captain who lacked integrity. One day he was asked by the ship’s Captain to sell fuel oil, which was against his strong conviction of leading with integrity in the engine department. He refused to follow the master’s order, and this started an ordeal and traumatic experience on board which led to stress and anxiety.

In 2005, I officiated a funeral service of a young and very strict Captain who allegedly had been killed by a cadet, who then jumped overboard after committing the crime. It was triggered by the Captain’s aggressive style of leadership over that cadet. This incident created an emotional and economic impact, both on the families affected, as well as the company.

The industry needs leaders on board with unquestionable integrity. Leaders of character, competence, and courage will have a good influence on the crew in the areas of safety and productivity, contributing to the well-being of everyone. As chaplains and welfare workers, we can make a great difference at sea. We are not just leadership trainers, we are practitioners in our areas of ministry, we lead people to transformation by changing the way they think, feel, and behave. We need to mentor and coach ship officers and crew in leadership, and how to become flexible and adaptable in a multicultural working environment.

When I asked Chief Engineer Ramon Sanchez⁷⁷ about leadership, he sent this article:

I think in order to become a good leader on board the ship, what we need to do is to become friendly to our subordinates but not to the extent that they will not look upon us as their leader. We still need to show them that there is leadership on board. Previously, I experienced that my subordinates didn't seem to follow my orders. They thought we were all friends, and it seemed to them that we were all on the same level. There are still some boundaries to be set. Secondly, I should check on how their family situation back home is. The problems back home might reflect on their performance at work. I have to encourage them and motivate them. Thirdly, I have to show them that I am willing to share my knowledge and experience, and teach them all I have learned, so that they too will become motivated. Fourthly, a leader must understand the conditions of his subordinates. He should not put too much pressure on the Ratings to do the job. But he should make sure that the job that has been given to them is done in the right way. Fifthly, do not shout in anger. In the engine room it is normal to raise your voice because of the noise there, but make sure that you can deliver your message in the right manner. Again, I have to be friendly but firm as we are dealing with different kinds of people and cultures. Lastly, as Christians, we have to show them our lives with Jesus in our hearts. Be a blessing at your workplace.

Another wonderful example of how to be a leader on board is Captain Rogelio Daganta⁷⁸. He shares what he feels is important on board:

In my case, due to my experience, it was easy for me to understand how my crew felt because I experienced their jobs in the past. Since I started my job as a Messman and slowly worked my way up to higher positions, it now helps me as a Captain in dealing with the different problems I encounter, especially when it comes to everyone's responsibilities. I also make sure that the crew can come to me whenever they have questions, especially regarding their families. Being a Captain is a very complex job because you must balance your decisions so you can please everyone. I have embraced a democratic type of leadership. I want everyone to participate in the day-to-day operations of the ship. Respect for one another is the key to having a good relationship with my crew; it does not matter what your position is, you must respect everyone's opinion. You must be straightforward in your decision, especially when you are sailing with a mixed crew.

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I also make sure that every personal problem is discussed in the presence of my officers in a short time, so the problem will be solved right away. One issue that I always discuss during the safety committee meeting is the crew pantry. I always tell them that the pantry must be kept the way it was after Messman time because most of the crew always think that it is the job of the Messman to clean all kitchen utensils. I always tell them this because I experienced this kind of problem when I was a Messman, and I can feel what the Messman feels. I know that most of them are afraid to speak up because they feel that their voice will not be heard by the Captain or Chief Mate. The most important thing to have is good leadership on board. Thus, I like to act as a father to them like Jesus is to all human beings.

Thanks a lot, and God bless.

12. Expectations of the shipping industry, owners and maritime schools

There are always two sides to a coin. Seafarers expect to become competent through training at maritime schools and onboard various ships as well. Seafarers expect their employers to promote them to a higher rank. Seafarers expect to receive good salaries from their companies. However, the question remains: What do ship owners and maritime schools expect of the seafarers they train? Let's have a look at a few of those expectations.

Safe and peaceful seas on a mass global scale

Capt. Shoji Fukuda, head of a leading Ship Management company in Japan, says:

This is my constant challenge and the goal I strive for. Everyone wants to be happy; no one desires a difficult life. The most important thing for us all is to move towards heaven. While here on earth, we must obviously think of our own health and the health of other people as well, but we cannot forget the well-being of all living creatures on this earth, and of plants and our environment.

Seafarers have families waiting for them to return home safely. In management, our desire is that seafarers are able to return home in good physical and mental health. We wish to have good communication between ship and shore. As far as safety matters are concerned, seafarers can protect themselves and their families, and the shipping companies must protect the seafarers and their property. May we all continue to enjoy our lives at sea.

What maritime education and training institutions (METI) expect of the Seafarers they train

A contribution from Prof. Michael Manuel Ph.D.

Maritime Education and Training Institutions of all levels and of different kinds primarily expect that the seafarers who complete their educational offerings will be competent and effective in the respective roles in ship operations for which they are educated and trained. They expect that such competencies and effectiveness will be at the levels required by international legal instruments such as the International Convention on

Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), 1978, as amended. Given that the requirements of this instrument are generally applicable to all ships, good maritime education and training institutions also expect that their students will develop the skills necessary to continue learning so that they can learn quickly on the job and be competent on all the different kinds of vessels they may be employed on. Apart from the technical competencies, it is also expected that seafarers will be able to have the requisite leadership, communication, organizational and social skills that allow them to consistently perform at an optimum level when in an onboard context, which while often multi-cultural, requires a high level of teamwork.

It is noteworthy that the expectations of the International Association of Maritime Universities (IAMU) have been stated clearly recently. IAMU includes 67 members made up of 65 of the most advanced maritime universities in the world involved in educating and training seafarers, and two special members. The association has developed the notion of the “Global Maritime Professional” (GMP) which encapsulates the expectations of the member universities regarding the nature of the future seafaring officer. The following is how they describe the GMP:

An individual who is a professional in the maritime industry and who is equipped with all the relevant technical competencies relevant to their specific operational role in the industry and as required by international requirements with high-level academic skills including logical and critical thinking and who – in addition to their technical competency – exhibits a high level of professionalism and ethical behavior, human relations skills, emotional intelligence and multicultural/diversity awareness and sensitivity. Such an individual exhibits significant leadership skills and is able to optimally work with teams and also take personal initiative. They additionally exhibit a high sense of environmental consciousness and the need for sustainable practices and have an excellent grasp of contemporary issues affecting the maritime industry.⁷⁹

While the IAMU exclusively addresses the officer level of seafaring, of course similar expectations should be normal for ratings at a reduced level of expectation, for example in respect of academic skills. In brief, these can be argued to be the expectations of the best of maritime education and training institutions globally.

⁷⁹ International Association of Maritime Universities (IAMU), *Global Maritime Professional: Body of Knowledge*. Tokyo: International Association of Maritime Universities (IAMU), 2019.

All the curricula of such institutions are geared towards granting the student/seafarer opportunities to be engaged in learning experiences that lead to the ends described. Learning activities to these ends may include lectures, simulator-based training, practical laboratory and workshop sessions, onboard ship training, student exchange programs, sports, and social interaction events, and such things as seminars, debates, clubs, etc. To benefit from these offerings, the METI expects that the student/learner will have a learning disposition, be disciplined and diligent, exhibit an inquiring mindset and be responsive to the learning environment.

According to a British website seafarers should have the following traits:

1. **Fit & Hardworking** – working on board a ship requires a fair amount of stamina and physical fitness. Some vessels are massive in size and require a seafarer to be in top shape in order to work on them. There are stairs that need to be taken to the deck, engine room, etc., also, the temperatures may be uncomfortable at times and a person must have a certain level of tolerance to be able to withstand these. On board the ship, working conditions are also subject to variable weather conditions at sea and the seasons of the countries, the ship is sailing to. Seafarers have to toil hard regardless of the work area = be it on deck, in the engine room, and in the galley. Though they have high-paying jobs, seafarers earn their salaries on board not through a walk in the park but by blood, sweat, and sometimes, tears.
2. **Agility** – A seafarer often encounters unconventional circumstances and may face difficult situations such as bad weather, a technical problem on the ship, equipment failure, an emergency, or even a pirate attack. In such cases, the requirement is to think on your feet, spring into action, and even be creative in dealing with an unusual circumstance. Thus, a sharp mind and quick response is the need of the hour.
3. **Mentally sound** – Seafarers are often away from home for long periods of time. They are in foreign countries and amongst unfamiliar people, often of different nationalities. Also, the job often entails a great deal of stress. This may lead to anxiety, depression, feelings of loneliness, and homesickness. To cope with this, a seafarer must be able to deal with his emotions and positively address these feelings.
4. **Tolerance & Adaptability** – It is not always easy to understand people who are different from you. Seafarers are often in groups that are culturally diverse and though they might not always understand how and why their colleagues are different, they must be tolerant of other cultures and personalities. Also, when a seafarer joins a ship for the first time, he must get a “sense” of the environment and be able to adapt to

the social and professional conditions of the said vessel. Only then will he be able to sustain the length of the voyage.

5. **Leader & Team Player** – While a seafarer must be a go-getter and possess good leadership qualities in order to progress in his career, he must also be able to take instruction and be an effective team player. Grouping up, placing the blame on others, and not taking responsibility for assigned tasks can lead to the downfall of the vessel and the team. It will also lead to unnecessary stress and bad blood among the crew.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ <https://seanews.co.uk/features/qualities-seafarers-must-possess-to-be-successful/>.

13. What role do one's wife and children play in the success of the seafarer?

In the Philippines, people always make a connection between the family of a seafarer and a successful and good life, since it is well-known that jobs at sea pay well. But a seafarer's success is not only the fruit of his hard work, sacrifices, and dedication. Behind the success of a seaman, there is an understanding and dedicated wife.

It is no surprise that a lot has been written about the seafarer's situation, especially on the internet. The following article shows some of the problems seafarers and their families often encounter:

Separation from partner and family has been one of the most significant causes of stress for seafarers, with separation from the family one of the most important 'stress' factors influencing a decision to reduce planned sea service. Drawing on in-depth interviews with seafarers' partners in the UK, China, and India, this paper focuses on the impact of seafaring on family life, with particular attention given to the effects of different conditions of service and the range of company support available to seafarers and their partners. The paper concludes that the negative consequences of seafaring can be minimized by such policies as shorter trips, continuous employment (rather than employment by voyage), and opportunities for partners and families to sail. Whilst these measures may have financial costs, these can be offset by improved retention of seafarers and the avoidance of stress-related illnesses. Indeed, at a time when there is a projected shortfall of well-trained seafarers, such steps may be sound company policy.⁸¹

In the book "The Seafarer's Mind"⁸² you will find a lot of stories about seafarers who missed their wife and their children. Children also miss their father, and the wife wants nothing more than the husband to come home as soon as possible. We can imagine that the loneliness the seafarers go through affects the job they are doing on the ship. However, the question here is whether or not the absence of the children and wife affects the success of the seafarer's work. Furthermore, what can the family at home do to encourage the seafarer, so that his performance at work will improve? One problem I have encountered over the many years working on board

⁸¹ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/248989035_Finding_a_balance_Companies_seafarers_and_family_life.

⁸² Martin Otto, *The Seafarer's Mind* 2020, RVB Verlag Beese, Hamburg, Germany.

ships as a pastor is that seafarers often – but not always – do not enjoy good communication with their wives and children. Many seafarers tell me that they only talk with their wives for a few minutes on the phone. If they talk longer, the wife at home often raises certain issues and concerns that the seafarer on board does not want to discuss for whatever reason. Since the seafarer is already going through a lot of problems on board his ship, he is often reluctant to burden himself more, and therefore he tries to avoid the issues concerning the family. Problems with the wife or children are not dealt with, and therefore the seafarers do not get sufficient help, encouragement, and motivation from the family for their hard job on board. Communication is often on a superficial level. Many seafarers also tell me that they do not speak with their wives and children about the problems they face on board. And if they do not mention problems, it is only logical that they won't get any real meaningful support from the family.

Victoria Magayon, wife of a Filipino Chief Engineer said this about communicating with her husband:

Luckily for me, I have a husband who became my best friend. We are very open to each other; he can open my email, read my text messages, and I can also open and read his. Open communication helps us support one another. Secondly, the most affected area in our marriage is the area of communication. Before, when communication was not as fast and sophisticated as it is today, it was very hard for us, because we had to wait for a long time, for months to receive a letter. It was some kind of torture to think about what my husband might be doing, and where he was. But when the means of communication became sophisticated through cell phones and satellite phones and ship to shore radios, our relationship became stronger, because we could then decide about plans and problems together.⁸³

If the wives at home know about the situation on board the ship and about the problems and difficulties the seafarers are facing, they might be able to help in many ways. They will not only show their understanding, their compassion, but they also might encourage their husbands when they are emotionally down, or when they are depressed. And, most importantly, they can pray specifically for their husbands if they know about the problems that their husbands are going through. Yet there are situations when it seems impossible for the family at home to support the husband and father on board. However, if the family knows more about the seafarer's situation, they can – when the seafarers are home – help, and prepare

⁸³ Martin Otto, *The Seafarer's Mind* 2020, RVB-Verlag Beese, Hamburg, Germany, p. 69.

support for the next contract. Open communication makes a huge difference. The book of Proverbs says this in chapter 25, verse 11: “*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.*”

Another seafarer's wife is Reciel Dapito-Ablona⁸⁴. Here is what she feels is important for the success of the seafarer:

Having a good family life will help seafarers become more motivated and encouraged to be the better version of themselves. Despite the hardships that they encounter on board, it seems their fatigue lessens whenever they see or get to talk with their family through email or social media.

As for me – and this is only my personal conviction, as others might think differently – good and beautiful family life is impossible apart from God. A husband and wife who live according to God's teaching, lead a good life, a life that withstands storms and overcomes the trials they might face. Below are listed a few things that a seafarer's wife can do to contribute to the success of the seafarer's life:

1. Be a suitable helper to your husband. This is how God designed every wife in the marriage relationship. In Genesis 2:18, when God saw that it was not good for Adam to be alone, He made Eve a suitable helper for him.

It's the same in marriage. Every wife is called to be a suitable helper for her husband. A wife must be able to help and listen to her husband in times of stress or exhaustion. As a life companion, a prayer warrior, and someone who speaks life-giving words whenever her spouse feels alone and weak, the wife makes a big impact on the success of a seafarer's life while they are on board or while on vacation.

2. Consult your husband in every decision that you make, even in the small details. Since God's covenant has made you one flesh, both of you must be involved in all aspects of your lives. This is a basic matter, but sometimes because of the distance and time difference, we forget to involve our husbands in the decisions we make, or inform him of what we have decided upon.

Consulting your husband expresses your respect for him. It shows how much you care for your husband and his well-being because you want him to be involved regardless of the situation.

3. Communicate with your husband. It is very important to foster healthy communication and be intentional about spending time with your husband even online. It has to be intentional and not just when that you need something from him, like at every end of the month.

⁸⁴ Permission granted to print this article.

Being able to communicate how much your husband means to you is where your marriage goes from good to great. If you love him, use your words and your actions to communicate and express it.

Melody Mahor-Julian⁸⁵, a former seafarer on cruise ships, adds:

It is not new to me when I hear a story of how hard working on a ship is, whether it is a tanker, cargo, or cruise ship. There is a saying that “There is no easy job”, and it is true. In fact, working on a ship is way more difficult because you sacrifice many things, like being away from loved ones, not to mention your absence during their birthdays, Christmas, New Year, anniversaries and family gatherings. As a seafarer’s wife, I believe that in order for my husband to be successful, there is nothing more effective than being submissive to him. Submitting to my husband means I trust him, I pray for him, I call or message him every time, asking questions such as how is the work on board, is he okay with his colleagues, is he getting better rest, etc. I am giving all the support and love even if we are miles away from each other. I must admit that it is not easy for me to submit because I would say I have a very strong personality and am very independent but as I allow myself to be led by the Holy Spirit of God, he will humble me and teach me to do what is right, and then miracles will follow. The wife needs to submit to her husband because it will help him work better, think better, eat better, sleep better, and make better decisions. A husband who has a submissive wife is a happy husband, it will help him choose what is right because he is grateful to have a better half such as her. A submissive wife also helps the husband to be faithful on board and wherever he goes. He will not look for another woman because God will not allow it to happen to the people who are faithful to Him. In that way, my husband will surely succeed in whatever he does because I and him are one in Spirit and no matter how hard his job is, it will be light and easy because someone he loves is praying for him and supporting him.

Some years ago, my wife and I had the joy of meeting Irene Pavia-Santos⁸⁶, the daughter of Chief Engineer Ireneo Pavia. When I asked her how she supported her father at sea, she sent us this message:

As a daughter of a Filipino seafarer who has been sailing overseas for almost three decades. I grew up having a reality that is quite uncommon in Western countries such as Europe and the US. I grew up being away from my father for at least half of every year. He would miss our birthdays, Christmas, and most of the important holidays. And many times, he would celebrate his

⁸⁵ Permission granted to print this article.

⁸⁶ Permission granted to print this article.

birthday on board with his crewmates in the middle of an endless ocean where satellite calls and internet connection are a luxury.

But throughout his time as a seafarer, he has remained faithful – faithful to his wife, and children, and most especially to God. By God's grace and sovereign will, my father has been consistently responsible, not only in his career but also in our household. Many would describe him as an achiever, a hard worker, and at the same time, a loving man to his family and a genuine believer in Jesus Christ.

All these things would not be at all possible without the unwavering support of his family. We have learned what it takes to build and sustain our relationship with him despite the distance and the irregularities that come with my father's vocation.

One of the most fundamental things we have applied is constant communication between us and my father. As they say, it takes two to tango. Since we were young, my father never stopped reaching out to us. I remember when we would receive voice tapes, photos with handwritten messages on the back, and long handwritten letters about the places he had gone to. My mother would also return those letters, answering all of his "How are you?" questions, and sharing every tale about us, his three children, when we were growing up. There would also be long-distance calls prior to the age of Facebook Messenger and Skype calls. All these practices have easily become a regular thing in our family over all these years. And we can attest to how these have also made our relationships stronger. There was always the desire to keep in touch, and it never diminished. It never became a thing of the past. We have always found ways to communicate, taking advantage of the advancement of technology over time.

As a Bible-believing family, our parents make sure that we pray for one another – always, whether we are together or apart. When our dad is home for a few months, he and our mom initiate a prayer time with the whole family. We start by reading a chapter in the Bible, where I and my two other siblings take turns reading out loud. Then, our parents lead the prayer. So, when my father is sent offshore again, we always pray – whether we are alone or together. We pray that our Lord will continue to keep our father safe and sound, away from harm and danger, and that our father will be blessed with great health, physically and spiritually, and that he will soon come home to us safe and sound. This continues to be our prayer even now when we have our own families.

We also show support towards our father in several other ways during his short vacations back home. We make sure to spend valuable time with him, listen to his recurring series of anecdotes about work and the people he met. We have a good time laughing with him, especially when he cracks his jokes which never get old. We love him for his sense of humor, but most importantly, we are amazed by his magic in bringing the family closer together, especially when he is around. His naturally sweet and caring perso-

nality allows us to have a closer relationship with him. We have known him and built a trusting relationship with him as if he were always around. This is why, even in the smallest things that we can do for him, like skipping work when we need to pick him up at the airport and take him back there when he has to leave again, we know that it is important to return all his sacrifices and hard work with our unwavering support and love, because every ounce of support we give our father can go a long way. And he deserves nothing less.

14. What does success really mean?

Many people today are driven by the desire to be successful. They have seen successful people on TV, and have heard stories of how people became successful. They believe that, by being successful, they can fulfill their life's dreams. As a seafarer, you might think you are successful when you have reached a certain position or a good salary. However, is it so easy to find success only by finding a certain job, achieving a good standard of living, and by receiving a good salary? How do you define success? What do people say? When asked about success, Karen Cacho⁸⁷ defined it in this way:

Success depends on a person's point of view. When can you really call yourself successful? When you become a Captain or Chief Engineer? For me, in order, to finally call myself successful, I have to reach my goals, both the long-term and the short-term goals. Every day I need to manage my crew with respect so they will treat me with respect as well, and so there will be a good working environment for everyone. The little things I do for others make me feel successful.

And what does God say? It is interesting to note that once people talk about a successful life, they seldom think that success can be found through God. They forget that God is the giver of all life. If God has nothing to do with success, then you have to try very hard to reach your goal. Maybe you are in a position where everything is going smoothly. You have friends and relatives who help, and you even get promoted on board. Now life seems to be very positive. However, when an accident suddenly occurs, or sickness strikes, what will you do then? How will you be able to pursue your goals? How will you be successful? I believe a sick person can be successful. A person in a wheelchair can also be successful. Does success only depend on money, diplomas, and a good reputation? How would you define success? If success only depends on good health, promotions, and a good salary, then life will be very miserable if accidents, sickness, and calamities come your way. It would also not be fair, because there are millions of people who don't have the opportunity to get a good job, a good position, or a good salary. The question we might ask at this point is: Are financially poor people unsuccessful? You need to see that we can always view success in two different ways. We can define it by human standards or by God's

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standards. Which one will you choose? Here is the human definition. This is what somebody once said: I believe success is defined by who you are and the person you aspire to be. Success is measured differently for each person. I define success in my life by the goals I accomplish and how I accomplish them. For me to truly succeed, I need to accomplish the goals I set with integrity.

And here is God's definition of success: In the book of Proverbs (16:3) God says: "*Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and he will establish your plans.*" And in another book entitled 1 Kings, chapter 2, verse 3, it says: "*Observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go.*"

Here we see two very different ways of reaching the goal to be successful. One is the human way that trusts fully in human ability, knowledge, and strength. I often hear people say: You only need to have a strong will and pursue your goal. Then you will make it. Others go to specialists to be coached so that they will be even more focused on their goals. And other people do a lot of research and studies at school before they finally start achieving their goals. However, all that depends on one's own strength and efforts. You must do it. Nobody else can help you be successful. You are on your own.

The second approach is to go to God and ask him to be the pilot of your life. This approach is opposite to the human approach since it chooses dependence on God and what he says in the Bible. If God is the Creator of all life, yes, if he is your Creator, he knows best what you need. He knows better how you can be successful, and he also knows how to define success in a way that will benefit you. The encouraging fact is that God even promises success if we only search for him and obey him. That kind of success, however, is not always compatible with human success. God has a real interest in guiding you, giving you a purpose, and providing you with what you need. He knows what is best for you. That is why even King David wrote the following in the book of Psalms 37:4-5: "*Take delight in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this.*" Here we find a typical human problem. People want to be independent. They want to achieve something by themselves. God is so kind to us that he allows us to choose our way, either independently or depending on him. May I encourage you to choose God? He says himself, that he is the Author and Finisher. He will not disappoint you if you only let him guide you.

There are many definitions of success in this world. People usually see success in connection with money, profit, or as a result of something they

have built or produced. However, we need to take a careful look at millions of mothers who train their children to be successful in life. They dedicate all they have to make their children fit for life. Is that not success? I believe it is. How about the fathers who are out at sea? What is their role? They can also have their successful part in the family, if they start communicating more with their wives and children, thus equipping them for life as well. If you serve your family well, you are not only doing them a great service but you are also serving God.

Whether or not you are successful does not depend on your job. If that were the case, it would simply not be fair. God is fair to you. He loves you; he values you, and he wants first of all, for you to find out more about your identity. People today have real difficulties explaining their own identity. They would be happy if they only knew. In his book “Victory over the Darkness”, Neil T. Anderson says something about our identity:

Who are you? It sounds like a simple question. But attempting to answer it soon reveals the complexity of the issue. How would you answer the question if someone asked you “Who are you?” We tend to identify ourselves and each other by what we look like, what we do, and perhaps even by our theological position, our denominational preference, or our role in the church. But is who you are determined by what you do, look like, and believe in? Or is what you do, look like, and believe in determined by who you are? That is an important question, especially as it relates to Christian maturity.⁸⁸

Neil Anderson believes that your hope for growth, meaning, and fulfillment as a Christian is based on understanding who you are, specifically your identity in Christ, as a child of God. Your understanding of who God is and who you are in relationship to Him is the critical foundation for your belief system and your behavior patterns as a Christian. If you have experienced a change in your life because you committed your life to Jesus and asked him to be your Savior, your identification is no longer a problem for you. You can freely enjoy your identification as a child of God. You now have a position in Christ, you are his child. You no longer have to find your identification by what you do or by how you look. If you have found your identification in Christ Jesus alone, that means real success, because it makes you free from always having to please somebody, always having to look good, and always needing to try harder. If you are a child of God, your identification is secure in JESUS. Please see what God says to his children in the letter of 1st John, chapter 3, verse 1: “*See what great love the Father has*

⁸⁸ Neil T. Anderson, *Victory over the darkness* 2013, published by Regal, Ventura, California/USA, p. 7.

lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.”

Finally, the CEO of Intel, Dr. Pat Gelsinger, shares in his book what leads to success:

I could put no single item more firmly in this category than the need to prioritize daily time with God. How often I have gotten myself mired in a long and dreadful day, struggling with issue after issue, feeling nothing could go right and seeing nothing but darker and more ominous clouds on the horizon. Somewhere in that ugly, hurried, and hazy fog of daily activities, I will be picked back to a spiritual consciousness and ask myself if I have been in God’s word that day. Have I had my daily devotions and prayer time? Have I left these issues and concerns at the throne of the Father? Have I sought his help and guidance throughout the day? Am I living with the Holy Spirit as my guide and comforter right now? Time and time again, the answer will be no, I have not been in the word or in prayer. Yet again, I had somehow gotten busy or self-centered enough that I decided that God is not really capable of carrying or helping with these burdens. I can better handle them all by myself. Saint Paul’s cries seem so appropriate: *“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I, myself, who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out”* (Romans 7:15-18).⁸⁹

Below I would like to give you a few examples of successful people from the Bible.

Joshua

Many of us want to become successful. We want to reach certain important goals in life. The only problem is that we often try to reach these goals by our own efforts. We easily get frustrated when we don’t achieve our goals as was planned in our minds. At this point, I suggest that you take a look at Joshua, one of the most successful leaders of Israel in the Old Testament of the Bible. In the book of Joshua, it says the following in chapter 1, verses 7-9: *“Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will*

⁸⁹ Dr. Pat Gelsinger, *The Juggling Act*, Published by David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, USA, p. 92.

be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

As we can see, Joshua emphasized meditating and reading the book of the law – the Bible – regularly. He also stressed the importance of doing what was written in it. The promise that follows is very encouraging: “Then you will be prosperous and successful”. In other words, God promises that if we take the Bible seriously and read it, and act according to what it says, we will be successful.

Joseph

One of the key figures of the Old Testament is Joseph. We read about him in Genesis 39:1-6: “*Now Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an Egyptian who was one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him there. The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. From the time he put him in charge of his household and of all that he owned the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph. The blessing of the LORD was on everything Potiphar had, both in the house and in the field. So Potiphar left everything he had in Joseph’s care; with Joseph in charge, he did not concern himself with anything except the food he ate.”* God views success much differently than we do! Material things are not indicative of success. True success is knowing that God is with you. God was also with Joseph, which made success possible. True success is keeping His vision alive in your heart. True success is not wealth itself but God’s favor, anointing, and the power that works in your life to obtain it. Deuteronomy 8:18 says: “*But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.”*

David

Many of us still remember King David and his famous fight against Goliath in the Old Testament. In the first book of Samuel chapter 17:45-50, it says: “*David said to the Philistine, ‘You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the*

carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands.' As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground. So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand, he struck down the Philistine and killed him."

What was David's success? He came, not in his own power, but he came in the power of God. He fully trusted God for his victory. He knew he was not able to succeed against such an experienced warrior, and therefore he put his full confidence in God. People often want to claim success by themselves. They want their name to be seen. Pride often blocks the way for real success. However, the Bible describes success in a much different way. We need to decide if we want to follow our definition of success or the Bible's definition.

"He holds success in store for the upright, he is a shield to those whose walk is blameless." (Proverbs 2:7)

If I ask you, who was the most successful person in the world? In history? What would be your answer? Gandhi? Napoleon? William Shakespeare? Martin Luther? Abraham Lincoln? Albert Einstein? You might be surprised if, while looking up the most significant leaders in the world, you will find JESUS among the top 100 as the most famous person. Why, might you ask? The answer is very simple: He is the only person who ever sacrificed himself for all human beings. Nobody else in the world appeared for the purpose of saving people from their sins. He was the both the humblest person and most successful person. Why successful? Because it is only JESUS who can forgive our sins and make us into new persons. He is the only one who can bring us back into fellowship with God the Father (John 14:6). Therefore, I would like to encourage you to learn from JESUS. By doing so you will be blessed.

Examples from Seafarers

Captain David Warden-Owen⁹⁰ was a successful captain for several decades. Here is his testimony and his conviction of what success is all about:

⁹⁰ Permission granted to print this article.

I have thought long and hard about “how to be a successful seafarer” and whether I achieved this accolade at the end of a career spanning 50 years. The answer to this question will be different for every individual but for me, as the Master of a cruise ship, the following are essential qualities, and I am listing just five.

1. A strong, capable, and understanding wife. (Prov. 31:10-31)
2. Passionate but with compassion for crew & pax. (Col. 3:12)
3. Strong but fair leadership. (Ps. 32:8; Ps. 37:23-24)
4. Have empathy. (Prov. 24:3-4)
5. Empower people. (Gal. 5:13)

Success not only applies to your work but how you live your life. If the two are things you love, your career is not a job but a vocational calling. Seafaring brings enormous stress to family life, and therefore, first and foremost, a strong and understanding wife is essential.

With modern technology today, with the internet, FaceTime, etc., keeping in touch with the family is much easier than in my day when postal letters and the occasional, prohibitively expensive, phone calls were the only means of contact with home and loved ones.

I loved my work. I was blessed with an exciting, often challenging, but above all memorable and enjoyable career. However, it did not start off like that – far from it! I chose to go to sea possibly because my father had been at sea for several years, but mostly because I loved messing around with boats and yachts. My father was a passionate yachtsman and my younger brother and I grew up listening to boating stories at mealtimes. Both my brother and I became very competitive yacht racers and we still are today.

Having decided on a career at sea, I was fortunate enough to be accepted at HMS Conwy, an officer training school on the Isle of Anglesey. After 2 years at HMS Conway in 1963, I joined my first ship as an apprentice on the “M.V. Iberic”, owned by the Shaw Savill Line. I remember it as if it were yesterday. Climbing the steep gangway on a freezing cold and snowy day was not a memorable start.

The ship was a modern, refrigerated cargo ship on the Australia, New Zealand run. We carried general cargo out and returned home with refrigerated cargo, mainly lamb for New Zealand. First trips can make or break a person and have a significant influence on one’s career.

It was not a happy time for me. I expected that my colleagues would have similar boating interests as myself. Sadly not, and I questioned my choice of career, and besides, I really missed my yacht racing more than ever.

Fast forward 32 years, and after a variety of career changes, I was appointed as Master of the “Cunard Crown Dynasty” heading for Vancouver and Alaska. This was my first experience in Alaska Cruising and I absolutely

loved it. As someone once commented, if you are not emotionally moved after experiencing the rawness and beauty of Alaska, you are not human. As a 'born again' Christian I have never felt closer to God than when I was a 'biscuit toss' away from a calving glacier. The words of Mark Altrogge hymn "You are beautiful beyond description" encapsulates the experience. Especially the chorus –

“And I stand, I stand in awe of you. Holy God
I stand, I stand in awe of you.
Holy God, to whom all praise is due,
I stand in awe of you.”

It was during this time that I met Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers at Seward, our turn-around port. Their spiritual and compassionate support to the crew was so precious and much appreciated. I was personally supported and encouraged in my walk with the Lord. The Sunday morning church service that I was privileged to lead was extremely well attended. Encouraging written comments from passengers about my faith and the services created some consternation amongst the senior shore management.

It was around this time that I was headhunted by Saga Cruising to join them as Master of their recently acquired "Saga Fjord". As in the Bible, "When one door closes, God opens another" and true to his word, that happened.

In 1997 I began as Master of the newly acquired and renamed "Saga Rose".

This was to be a new and exciting ministry for me and my wife. I encouraged and assisted the mainly Filipino crew to develop Christian fellowship meetings. There are too many testimonies to share, but suffice to say that the Saga Rose carried the spirit of God to every corner of the world, and it was my privilege to facilitate and play my part in spreading the good news of the gospel.

In closing, I hope that I carried out my duty as "Master under God" and left a legacy that was worthy of the calling that God chose me for.

"Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity" (Colossians 3:12-14).

One of my friends, whom I have known for many years, is Captain Terry Lee and his wife Voon⁹¹, born in Malaysia, but now living in Australia.

⁹¹ Permission granted to print this article.

Captain Terry commands huge containerhips of 21.000 TEU.⁹² This is his understanding of success:

To be successful, one needs to be firm in decision-making because the safety of your crew is a top priority. Success is also measured by your ability to be a good mentor to your juniors, and a role model, and by their strong desire to emulate you. Also, success means being able to lead a comfortable, meaningful spiritual life, going into retirement.

A seafaring career is not for the faint-hearted because of the long spells spent at sea, being away from loved ones and living in a unique environment. One needs to stay focused and persevere if one wants to be successful in this chosen career. However, the rewards are plentiful. Dreams can be fulfilled if you know how to handle the money that you have earned at sea. Many avenues are available in the maritime industry where you can combine your vast experience obtained at sea, coupled with paper qualifications in order to take up a shore job.

You need to go forward with technology since we have moved from traditional to modern-day navigation. Enhance your training by seeking maritime knowledge and resources. The ladder of success already laid down for you upon choosing this career path is bright as you already know what is in store for you in the future.

Set your target and stay focused on what you aim to achieve. With endurance, hard work, and hands-on experience, success will come your way.

It is interesting to note that dedication and passion play a vital role in achieving one's goal to be successful. Percival L. Ruelo⁹³, experienced this in the following way:

Success requires determination and hard work. In the present situation, life on board can be difficult, especially because the situation is totally new for everyone. How is success really measured? Having a loving and dedicated family is an example for some individuals, but for others, it means status in life and experiencing prominence. I remember when I started sailing, I had only a simple dream, I wanted to be an experienced deckhand and have a decent salary compared to what I was compensated during my cadet years. I didn't even dream of becoming an officer. But through the years and a bit of a push from my company's management, that simple dream evolved into a higher ambition. I realized that I needed to step forward and pursue that goal which motivated me to be who I am today. It was a combination of spiritual, mental, and physical aspects that drove me to acquire this eagerness and excitement, and kept me from being disturbed by the obstacles that

⁹² TEU = Twenty-foot equivalent unit.

⁹³ Permission granted to print this article.

came in my way on the path towards my goal. It does not mean that these hardships didn't bother me as I walked through them. Rather than let them discourage me, I was able to use them as challenges which made me more persistent in focusing on what was lying ahead and on achieving it, whatever or wherever it was. Dedication, passion, and love for what you are doing will occupy a major part of your dreams of becoming what you want to be.

I have always had in mind that the LORD is my Captain and I have always used my spiritual compass to direct my decisions and align them with His, as it says in Proverbs 16:9: *"In their hearts, humans plan their course, but the Lord establishes their step."*

A very good friend of our family is Chief Engineer Cipriano Paragas. He works on LNG⁹⁴ Tankers and stresses the importance of motivation for success, as well as a clearly defined path towards reaching one's goal to being successful:

Each seafarer has his/her own motives for working and attaining success. Here are some common examples of motivation in order to succeed.

1. The future of the family. Having a family of his/her own, being the father or mother of a family, the seafarer is motivated go through hard ship-board and sea life, enduring all the hardships at work just to secure a good future in terms of livelihood for the family. The children are sent to school for education because it is the best inheritance a parent can give to the children, since education cannot be stolen or lent out. As a father-seafarer myself, my wishes and plans for my family's future and a well-prepared retirement are my main motives for continuing to sail, enduring the hardships of a seafarer's life.
2. Family – father, mother, and siblings' future. In the Filipino culture, helping the family improve their living conditions and social stature is a normal thing. And most Filipino seafarers have it in mind to help their family first, before getting married and building a family of his/her own. The desire to improve the social stature of the family means sending the siblings to school for education, so that they can obtain a degree and later find employment. Building a new house for the family or even buying a vehicle such as a car for the family is also a common reason for a Filipino seafarer to continue working on ships, at sea.
3. Girlfriend/Boyfriend. In some cases, an unmarried seafarer is inspired and motivated by a beloved one. Dreams and plans for the future together, worked on by both, make the hard days lighter when the beloved is there, giving inspiration with sincerity and faithfulness to the relationship. This is achieved, especially when communication is maintained even while at sea.

⁹⁴ LNG = Liquefied natural gas.

4. Own self-fulfillment/Ambition. Having certain ambitions for oneself and focusing on them is also a good motivating factor. Nonetheless, the ambition should be “SMART”, i.e., Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-bound.
 - Specific. As a seafarer, just like any individual, in setting a goal or building an ambition – it should be specific. For example, a seafarer may say “I must become an officer.” So, in order to attain that goal, the seafarer should do all the necessary studies and training and exert his/her efforts to train himself/herself in theory and practice, so that he/she can pass the board examinations required for the license of the rank the seafarer is aspiring for. He/she should also maintain good relationships with his colleagues on board, and in the shore-based office, so that recommendations for promotions can be achieved.
 - Measurable. In setting a goal, a seafarer who aspires to become an officer should know which rank he/she wants to obtain, such as Fourth Engineer, Third Engineer, and so on at a given time.
 - Attainable. The goal or ambition should be attainable. The seafarer should know the requirements for attaining that goal. For example, an Engine Rating who wants to become Fourth Engineer-Officer should, first of all, apply to and be employed in a company that employs the rank of Fourth Engineer-Officer on board. (Not all companies employ Fourth Engineers). So, while the Engine Rating-seafarer is on board, he/she should learn all the duties and responsibilities of a Fourth Engineer and must make all the necessary preparations to be a Fourth Engineer. Should there be a requirement/standard the employing company imposes, the seafarer should comply with those requirements.
 - Realistic. The goal or ambition should be realistic in a way that it is within the capabilities of the seafarer. One should know his/her weakness and strengths.
 - Time-bound. The seafarer should set his/her goal within a certain time frame. For example, the seafarer may say “In one year, I should be such and such.” Although we sometimes face uncertain events in the future, we should at least set a time for attaining our ambition or goal.

The above comments are in general for all seafarers from a worldly or secular point-of-view. Now, let me also relate how a God-believing and God-fearing seafarer can be motivated and attain success in his life as a seafarer.

I believe and fear God. That is why I value my life, which I acknowledge as just being lent to me by God, to live and enjoy. My body is also the temple of the Holy Spirit, so I take good care of it, nourishing and nurturing it with nutritious food, observing the proper diet, and not abusing it, having ample

rest, and following healthy lifestyle. No smoking and a disciplined-occasional alcoholic drink. In connection with drinking alcohol, I observe my “4 Corrects or 4 Rights”, i.e., the Correct AMOUNT at the Correct PLACE at the Correct TIME in a Correct WAY.

Having stated the above, I am glad to say that until now, I have remained physically and medically fit, possessing valid documents and without any lawsuit.

Finally, I would like to share something from a website which has a lot of good tips for seafarers. Here are a few points to help you become a successful seafarer.⁹⁵ According to this website, the main criteria for a successful seafarer are:

1. Do not form groups
2. Do not blame others
3. Compliment others often
4. Shun your ego
5. Help your crew members
6. Do not mix professional and personal life.
7. Do not indulge in grapevines, negative gossip, and badmouthing.

⁹⁵ <https://www.marineinsight.com/life-at-sea/7-ways-to-become-a-seafarer-every-one-likes-onboard-ships/>.

15. Where can I go for help?

I can assume that you are very happy about your job on board. You are able to support your family well and even support a few other relatives and friends. Yet, while being away from the family for nine months on average, certain problems might occur. You sometimes wonder where to go and find help during times when you are lonely or when you have a work-related problem, or simply a problem with another seafarer on board. Where can you find real help? Well, here are some suggestions that will hopefully be of help.

Rancho Villavicencio, Executive Director of Seacom's Maritime Development International Inc., encourages you to observe these following five points:

- 1. Quiet Time** – Regularly set aside time to be quiet, without distractions, in order to reflect. Reflecting on positive things nourishes and protects our brain, it releases serotonin which helps regulate our mood and social behavior, appetite, digestion, sleep, and memory. Therefore, it boosts our well-being and happiness.
- 2. Attitude of Gratitude** – Instead of being angry about what you do not have, think about and be thankful for the many blessings that you have on board. According to Dr. Travis Bradberry, “It reduces the stress hormone cortisol by 23%, and improves mood and energy and substantially reduces anxiety.”
- 3. Personal Growth** – Reflect on your strengths and weaknesses, and aim to improve each day. Personal growth and reaching your full potential are the only assurance that your future will offer more and become and better. Achieving your growth-goal releases dopamine, resulting in increased motivation.
- 4. Generosity** – Do not forget to do good and be generous towards those with less, and never be envious of those with more. One study of adults found that the brain's reward center, which turns on when people feel pleasure, was more active when people gave \$10 to charity than when they received \$10.
- 5. Social Connections** – Social connections ease depression. Always find time to connect with your colleagues. Share your good times and bad times together, listen more and speak less, observe confidentiality, show compassion and sincerity, then provide genuine care and support to each other.

According to Harvard's longest study on happiness: "Good and close relationships keep us happier and healthier."⁹⁶

There is a lot to research when it comes to finding help in a particular situation. Here are a few more ways to look for help:

a.) Seek God's Word

I am convinced that we do not have a better source of help and encouragement than from the Bible. George Washington, the first president of the USA said: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without the Bible." Abraham Lincoln stated, "I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man." Theodore Roosevelt made this remarkable statement: "No educated man can afford to be ignorant of the Bible." Many of the American presidents considered the Bible to be of great significance, because they knew they could not govern such a huge and important country without the knowledge and wisdom of God which is found in the Bible.

This is what King Solomon said in the book of Proverbs 21:30: "*There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.*" This verse makes it very clear: No other wisdom from people, scholars, or books can be compared with God's wisdom. God is the ultimate source of wisdom and knowledge, simply because he is the Creator of the universe, the Creator of mankind.

Neil Anderson offers the following good thoughts:

When you align your goals with God's goals and your desires with God's desires, you will rid your life of a lot of anger, anxiety, and depression. Such alignment will be easier when you acknowledge that God's basic goal for your life is character development: Becoming the person God wants you to be. Becoming the person God wants you to be is a godly goal. Nobody and nothing can keep you from being the person God called you to be. But along the way you can be sure to encounter distractions, diversions, disappointments, trials, temptations, and traumas that will disrupt the process. Life's distractions, diversions, disappointments, trials, temptations, and traumas are a means of achieving your supreme goal of Christian maturity.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ https://www.thome.com.sg/news/mental-health-at-sea/?fbclid=IwAR1fshJXwSSFADGIllova0sK5LwW6XRCVF52F5jHJtkTE3JQ_okhXGQeBXQo.

⁹⁷ Dr. Neil T. Anderson, *Victory over the darkness* 2013, Regal Publication, Ventura, California/USA, p. 84.

Finally, if you feel you need to have some answers, or solve problems, or you need to have somebody to talk to – just come to God in prayer. In the book of Matthew, chapter 11:28-29, God encourages you to approach him. *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”*

b.) Seek the advice of others

On board a vessel, you will find the best way to learn is from senior crew members. They have gained a lot of experience from past years of sailing on the oceans. Your officers have already walked in your shoes, so they probably know the answers to most of your questions. Do not be afraid to ask; do not allow your shyness to prevent you from learning. Asking is the best way to learn. People usually feel flattered and are happy to explain and share their experience, especially if some intelligence is applied and the right questions are asked. By asking questions, you also show your superiors that you are willing to learn and be more qualified to do the jobs that are given to you. It may also prove helpful to ask different officers about their experiences. Thus, you will learn more and be able to apply what you have learned.

Another way of learning is to approach friends. Dr. John C. Maxwell says:

I have had the privilege to spend time with many remarkable people, and the natural reward has been the opportunity to learn. In my personal relationships, I have also gravitated toward people from whom I can learn. My closest friends are people who challenge my thinking – and often change it. They lift me up in many ways. And I have found that I often live out something stated by Spanish philosopher and writer Baltasar Gracian, “Make your friends your teachers and mingle the pleasures of conversation with the advantages of instruction.” You can do the same. Cultivate friendships with people who challenge and add value to you and try to do the same for them. It will change your life.⁹⁸

c.) Learn from the Internet

In the past, people learned things in the classroom and through reading books. That has changed a lot since the internet has become available

⁹⁸ Dr. John C. Maxwell, *Beyond Talent 2011*, Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, USA, p. 185.

everywhere. Starting from a very early age at school, children use the internet, and people continue using it as much as they can. For seafarers, it has become easier to learn things in the field of shipping, since they can turn to the internet, even when no classroom or book is available. I'd like to encourage you to take time regularly to sit down and enhance your knowledge about shipping, and everything else that is important for a seafarer. I do not know whether you are a quick learner or if learning is hard for you. You might be discouraged at times because you did not learn as much over a certain period of time as you thought you would. Can I ask you to do two things? First minimize the time you spend on your tablet, smartphone, or laptop. Using it too much can rob you of the concentration you need, if you want to learn something new. Secondly, consider praying regularly when you have to sit down and learn new lessons. God can help you even though you think you will never understand that topic. We have a great God who works miracles. Trust him and pray to him and you will see what happens.

Here is what Jiri Lauro⁹⁹ a Filipino seafarer, who works as an ordinary seaman, said when he was asked where he goes for help:

When I have a problem on board I start to pray and pray until I feel the peace of mind that comes from God. God gives me hope and the assurance that problem will be solved. I just accept the problems, and the reasons behind them, and submit everything to God. I trust him in this challenge and part of my growth. I am convinced that Jesus is my first help, especially when nothing seems to be under my control. He alone is my rescuer. I have experienced how other Christians have given me advice and words from God which gave me hope and perseverance to continue the purpose given by God.

Yet there are also times where you will simply need to discipline yourself. A seafarer on a ship once called it "self-motivation". Self-motivation is essential for you to work on board. A seafarer on a cruise ship said:

There are times when you don't really want to work, but you just have to work. There is no other choice. You wake up after only four hours of sleep. Yes, sometimes that's all you get – four hours of sleep every day.

⁹⁹ Permission granted to print this article.

d.) Helpful websites for seafarers

www.scfs.org

The Seamen's Christian Friend Society has not forgotten you. For over 170 years the SCFS has been tending to the spiritual, physical, and emotional welfare of the seafaring community. Today we have SCFS friends in ports all around the world, holding out a hand of friendship to you, helping address some of your practical needs, and sharing the message of Christ. If you are a Filipino, we also offer you help through our Seamen's Center in Intramouros, Manila.

www.seafarershelp.org

One very helpful website for seafarers is – www.seafarershelp.org. This is a free, confidential multilingual helpline for seafarers and their families available 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. Email: help@seafarerhelp.org Tel. +44 20 7323 2737.

<https://www.seafarerswelfare.org/>

International Seafarers Welfare and Assistance Network (ISWAN): ISWAN is a charity exclusively for the perusal of seafarers aimed at providing a free and confidential service to cater to the problems of individuals. Their service, designated for rendering help, is known as SeafarerHelp. Assistance is available round the clock and throughout the year and includes a wide range of assistance from the issue of poor wages/working conditions, to just being able to talk to someone when in need.

www.icma.as

The ICMA works with 28 NGOs for the welfare of seafarers. Founded in 1969, each of the 28 organizations, represented across various churches and other communities, retain their autonomy. Such extensive association enables a massive representation around the world.

<https://www.missiontoseafarers.org>

The Mission to Seafarers provides help and support to seafarers. They work in over 200 ports in 50 countries, caring for seafarers of all ranks,

nationalities, and beliefs. Through their global network of chaplains, staff, and volunteers they offer practical, emotional, and spiritual support to seafarers through ship visits, drop-in seafarers' centers, and a range of welfare and emergency support services. They are also the new home of the Seafarers Happiness Index.

<https://www.sailors-society.org>

Sailors' Society is an international Christian charity working in ports around the world. Their chaplains help seafarers and their families, from all faiths to none, with welfare and practical support. They visit ships in ports and talk with seafarers.

16. How to finish well

I do not know if you feel like these times are more difficult than the Bible times. Maybe you believe that our times are easier because of all the technical achievements in the last few centuries. Whatever your conviction is, I would like to show you people from Bible times and people from today who finished well. Can I start with St. Paul, who is probably well-known to many of us? We read about him in 2 Timothy 4:7-8: *“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day - and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”* Two main qualities really shine out from Paul’s life in the above-mentioned verses. First, of all, it says that he finished the race. This implies that he was able to finish all the duties that he was given to accomplish. When we look at his life, we can see that he did not have an easy life. The Bible teaches us that he experienced a shipwreck while travelling (Acts 27:41-44). He was also stoned by people who opposed his faith (Acts 14:19-20). He was imprisoned because of preaching the gospel (Acts 23-24). Paul also suffered hunger (2 Corinthians 11:27). Still, despite all these severe problems, Paul finished the race, persevered, and served his Savior Jesus Christ.

Having experienced so many problems, one might believe it is easier to abandon the faith and then a person will live a life without any troubles, pain, or the fear of death. However, Paul kept his faith because he experienced a wonderful dramatic change in his life. He was once a persecutor of Christians, and he even threw them into prison. But when he had a wonderful conversion experience in Damascus, he was so excited about the grace and power of God that he did not mind all the suffering he had to endure. Paul discovered that following Jesus Christ is of far more value than chasing after the world’s riches. One of his most remarkable statements is found in Philippians 3:8-9. These are Paul’s words: *“I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ - the righteousness that comes from God, on the basis, of faith.”*

There are more wonderful reports in the Bible about people who finished their race well. One, for instance, was Stephen. He was stoned by the crowd for boldly speaking up and preaching, rightly accusing Israel of their failure to recognize Jesus as their Messiah, but instead, rejecting and

murdering Him. We find his story in the book of Acts, chapter 7. There are many more people who finished well. You will find their stories in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11.

Seafarers who finished their career well

Many years ago, when I first met Captain Noel Dagaman, I was really touched by his behavior. He was such a humble person. Although he was the captain, people would feel appreciated and respected in his presence. At the beginning of our friendship, I talked with him a lot about having a church on board. This idea of church fascinated Noel Dagaman. He attended the first training course, “Church on the Oceans”, which was conducted in Manila. Then he put into practice what he had learned there. Ever since his training course in 2008, he always started a church on the ships he commanded. I still remember when his contract was finished, and he had to go home. His crew felt very sad and said to me: “Our father has gone home ...” I was amazed to hear these words. They did not say: “Our captain went home”, but “our father”. Noel Dagaman really showed them, through his humility and integrity, what it meant to follow Jesus, and how much peace and joy it would give a person who started following him. By the way, he was also a wonderful example to the shipping industry, that once a Captain shows respect and appreciation for the crew, the crew will want to follow his orders.

I asked also Captain Dagaman¹⁰⁰ to share with us his understanding of finishing well. This is what he said:

Looking back at my younger years, I always admired those persons who, despite hardships and struggles in life, had reached the pinnacle of their career. Working from scratch, going up to the ladder of success is a tremendous task that needs a huge amount of time, energy, resources, and faith!

One of the most admirable persons today, well-known to many, is Manny Pacquiao. The Filipino boxing champ has won many fights in eight boxing divisions. Manny is known to have started from scratch, coming from a poor family in southern Philippines. He has made his way up to be known as a boxing champion in the world, and through discipline and determination, has become an icon in sports.

During one of his interviews, he mentioned that the performance which led him to his successful career didn't only come from his personal skills and ability. He repeatedly mentioned that “God has made him something out of nothing!”. This is a statement that recognizes that there is a supreme and

¹⁰⁰ Permission granted to print this article.

powerful God who develops a person beyond his personal strength and ability. He became a follower of Jesus Christ, faithfully serving Him and the people of the Philippines when he was elected as Senator.

My career as a professional seafarer is about to reach the finish line. The track I run on has not always been “smooth seas and fair winds”. There are various and numerous challenges at work, and personal struggles to deal with as well. “Hard knock” experiences made me realize that my fate is not always at my fingertips, and knowledge is not always at the top of my head.

I had to learn so many lessons. When troubles came, I realized that it was not my self-reliance that counted, but rather dependency on God, who is all-knowing, all-powerful, and who gets you through the difficult times (1 Corinthians 10:13). God rewards you with a positive outcome.

When you learn to depend on God’s grace and trust Him instead of bragging about yourself regarding your achievements, you learn humility, and the peace of God will settle within you. There is a safe and peaceful feeling for a man who is almost done and will soon reach the finish line of his career while he has the hands of God guiding him all along the way. When you cross the finish line, you will realize it is not the material things accumulated, or the achievement earned that counts. It is how you have spent your life here on earth and how God sees it. We enjoy life and all the blessings given to us. But it is only good while it lasts, or during our lifetime here on earth. Sooner or later, we will pass the finish line of our physical lives. We should focus our eyes on what is unseen. “*For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal*” (2 Corinthians 4:18).

Capt. Noel D. Dagaman
Master of M/V Atlas

Another person who finished his course as a seaman well is Pastor Cheol Ho Jung¹⁰¹ from Korea. He worked as 2nd Officer on board Korean ships, and later he started an organization called Ship Missionary Fellowship¹⁰². He now encourages young cadets to live the Christian life with Christian values and a Christian attitude. This is what he wants to share with you:

I am a missionary pastor who longs to spread the good news of Jesus Christ to seafarers on the oceans. I am working for seafarers in order that they might put their faith in Christ and have peace and joy through the Spirit of God. I was a seafarer too, some 30 years ago. When I came on board to work as a marine officer, I had a special experience with a Christian. At the time, even though I also was a born-again Christian, I never encountered the true life of believers in Christ before. This Christian who worked on the ship was very sincere, honest, and his life was full of integrity. Most of all, he was

¹⁰¹ Permission granted to print this article.

¹⁰² <https://www.facebook.com/groups/shipmissionariesph/>.

warm-hearted towards everyone. Even when the seaman's life was rough, he showed me what the true life of a Christian was all about.

One time, one of the Christians sent his testimony to me from the ship. He was employed as a navigator on the vessel. When the ship arrived at the pier, the ship's chief officer gave him 100 dollars. He was told to go ashore with other seafarers of the ship. The Chief Officer gave this order to find out more about the seaman's life. Such liberty was common for other seamen who spent their money to drink with the crew and stay with women, but this is not the way for a Christian.

The cadet was troubled by the embarrassing order. If he refused the Chief Officer's order, he was expected to face a lot of pressure while on board, and it would be a problem to get the right evaluation as a cadet from him. But on the other hand, his religious conscience refused to accept the money. After praying, he finally went back to the Chief Officer, and he returned the money, telling him about his decision. "Sir, I am a Christian who follows the way of Christ. My conviction does not allow me to go on shore for the liberty of alcohol and women." And he added that "I will accept any hard training or deal with anything unreasonable in return for refusing the order." Christians are people who might refuse something wrong from the world; it is because they have special hope from the kingdom of God. Fortunately, he was not persecuted for it, and he was able to continue doing a great job on the ship.

If you would like to finish your course on your ship successfully, I would encourage you to stay close to God through Christ Jesus. Even though life on a ship is severe, lonely, and with many problems, if you stay in a close relationship with God, you will obtain peace and true joy in the Spirit of God. Bon, voyage!

Another seafarer sent us his experience on how he sees faith in his life. This is what Fritzgerald Abarca¹⁰³ said:

Faith is very different from religion. Faith is completely trusting God for our salvation and lives without adding anything to it, while religion is more like a "help yourself salvation" without the complete trust in God. Being a part of a religion before, I have always felt that I had never trusted God for everything. I had done many things for my religion, but I was never satisfied. I was confused about the people in that religion and the way they worshipped God. I tried the things they did, but my life did not get better. I listened to what they said, and I did the things they wanted me to do for God. But it did not change me. I was just confused about the things I had to do in religion. Eventually, I realized that religion is just a traditional and doctrinal thing and sometimes even political. It is very different from the faith that I now

¹⁰³ Permission granted to print this article.

have. In the first place, faith is a lifestyle, not something traditional or doctrinal. Faith creates a unique relationship with God and people who trust in HIM completely. In religion, I felt that I was isolated and confused, but in faith, I put my complete trust in God and became a part of the body of Christ. In faith, I realized that I was a sinner who needed someone to save me from all my sins. Christ died for us on the cross to save us and he wants us to put our genuine faith in him alone, without adding anything. His sacrifice is enough to save us from the wrath of God. Therefore, Faith is a choice for us to trust Jesus for our salvation. This is the best choice I have ever made in my life. Having faith and trusting God completely means abandoning a sinful life and making God's standards our standards.

17. How to finish well – but not only in your job ...

You sometimes might wonder how quickly your life is passing by. First, you enjoyed your childhood. Those years of having total freedom went by so quickly. In your childhood, you did not have to take responsibility for yourself or others. Your parents took care of you. Then the teenage years followed. You went to school, and after several years you worked hard to finish school well. At this point, your parents were happy and proud that you finished school successfully, and now they dreamed of their child getting a well-paid job and obtaining a good reputation. That might also have been your dream. You either studied at university or you started working for a company. For some, it was a good job they enjoyed doing, for others it was only a job to be able to pay for the daily expenses. However, once you had a job, you worked hard to climb up the career ladder, or get promoted, or maybe you even changed companies so you could earn more elsewhere.

The moment you got married, and later when you were expecting a child, you knew that you would have to take on the responsibilities of being a husband and father (or a wife and mother). That might have been in your mid or late twenties. Now the longest period of time would begin: the time between becoming a father or mother and retirement. Often that can be as much as 40 years or more. If you are successful, you probably earn good money, and you are able to improve your standard of living. For those who came from a poor family, it was a huge blessing to be able to support one's family well, send the children to a good school, and take care of one's parents. People look to you and you feel satisfied and proud. You have achieved something that not everybody can.

Once you have gotten married, have children, and have a good job, the question might arise, what is your next goal? What else is there in life? Of course, you will make every provision for the children to be able to go to the best private schools/universities, and you would like them to find good jobs as well. You might now look for a larger house with more space for the family. You also might look for a nice car that you have often dreamed of owning. However, the time might come where you or a close family member gets sick, or even dies. This often takes us by surprise. Are you prepared for this time of suffering? Since we all grow older every single day, the chance that we will get sick becomes even greater. Are we prepared for all that? And how do we prepare for times of suffering? Every-

body hopes that sickness and times of grief will be over quickly, and then life can be enjoyed again. Isn't that so? People don't like to think about difficulties, illness, suffering, or death. As human beings, we only want to remember the beautiful days of our lives. However, the reality is that we will all someday die. Some sooner, some later. Are you prepared to die? And can I ask you a question at this point: Where will you spend eternity after you die?

On ships, I have often asked seafarers where they will go after death. It is strange somehow, but people don't often think about life after death, although death will surely happen to everybody. The most common answer I usually get is: Maybe I will be in heaven maybe in hell. Is that your answer too? I hope not. Why, you might ask. I will try to explain. It is strange for people to say, maybe in heaven maybe in hell. If I asked you today, does your wife love you, and the answer would be maybe, you would not be satisfied. You want to be 100% sure that your wife loves you. If I asked whether you would get your salary at the end of the month, and your Captain said maybe, you would not be satisfied at all. You would want to be sure that your salary would be paid out. If the chief cook on your ship said: Maybe I will give you food today, you might even get angry and say: I want to be sure that food will be on the table after a hard-working day. People always want to be 100% sure. However, when it comes to eternal life, a life that never, never ends, people are satisfied with 50%. Isn't that strange? Maybe yes, or maybe no, that means there is a 50% chance for heaven and a 50% chance for hell. My friend – a 50% chance for hell is far too much! Please think about it. The word “maybe” should never be a satisfactory answer. The word “maybe” should be replaced with the word “sure”. But how can I be sure that I will go to heaven, you might ask. Well, please take a moment and think about the creation. The Bible says in Genesis 1:27: “*So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God, he created them; male and female he created them.*” So here is my second question for you. Do you believe that God created people to go to hell? I am sure that your answer will be no, and you are right. If God created us in his own image, this means that he created us to have fellowship with him. God created us for heaven. He created us so that we would be able to live together with him and enjoy him.

Rick Warren, the author of the bestselling book, “The Purpose-Driven Life”, says:

If you want to know why you were placed on this planet, you must begin with God. You were born by his purpose and for his purpose. The search for the purpose of life has puzzled people for thousands of years. That is because

we typically begin at the wrong starting point – ourselves. Do we ask self-centered questions like what do I want to be? What should I do with my life? What are my goals? My ambitions, my dreams for my future? But focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life's purpose. The Bible says, "It is God who directs the lives of his creatures, everyone's life is in his power." Contrary to what many popular books, movies, and seminars tell you, you won't discover your life's meaning by looking within yourself. You have probably tried that already. You did not create yourself, so there is no way you can tell yourself what you were created for! You must begin with God, your creator. You exist only because God wills that you exist. You were made by God and for God.¹⁰⁴

God created us for him! Here you see what a wonderful God we have. The only problem is that we have turned against God because of our self-centered life, because of our sin. As it says in Isaiah 53:6: "*We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way ...*" Human beings are always seeking their pleasure, what is in their interest, and what is to their profit. People do not seek God. Rather, they first want to have their own desires satisfied. The book of Romans, chapter 3:23 says: "*All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*" In other words: Everybody in this world is a sinner and no-one reaches the standard that God requires. Your sin and my sin separate us from God. So, if we die in this situation without having our sins forgiven, we will not see God. We will not go to heaven. The book of Isaiah 59:2 makes it very clear by saying: "*But your iniquities (sins) have separated you from your God, your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear.*"

Dear Seafarer, we have a holy God, who dwells in a holy heaven. This heaven cannot be polluted by our sins. Only people whose sins are forgiven will reach this wonderful place. So how do we obtain forgiveness of our sins? Well, can I be honest with you? If you want your sins forgiven, there is only one way. The way is Jesus.

Geovanie Daleon¹⁰⁵, a chief cook from the Philippines, experienced how Jesus became the way for him. Here is his life-changing experience:

I had been a Catholic since birth. I had read the Bible from cover to cover on one of my ten-month contracts, but it had no great effect on my life. I was living just the way I liked, according to my plans and preferences. As a seafarer who works long contracts at sea, I lost my way and faith in God

¹⁰⁴ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life* 2002, Purpose Driven Ministries, Quezon City, Philippines, p. 17-18.

¹⁰⁵ Permission granted to print this article.

due to loneliness and isolation, and always trying to rely on my own strength. It was more or less two years ago when I met the port chaplain Volker Lamaack. I bought an electronic Bible, and he gave me a Bible correspondence course (“Ang Tulay”). I read it up to chapter two, but found it boring and unnecessary. I left the booklet on board when I finished my contract. Time passed as normal, and I came back on the same ship (MV “Laura Ann”). When I joined this ship, I was suffering from depression and had an unstable mind, due to marriage and family problems at home. In the crew’s mess room, I found a copy of the correspondence course “Ang Tulay” and tried reading it once more. I read chapter two and found it interesting. I then read one chapter per day. When I reached chapter seven, I learned that the Lord Jesus had been waiting, knocking at my heart for a very long time. That Sunday evening, I completely surrendered my whole life to Jesus Christ, confessed that I was a weak sinner, and strongly placed my faith in him as my only Savior. It was really God’s plan that after one week, I met Martin Otto. I told him the story about my discovery, and how I accepted Jesus in my heart. He gave me a Jesus film, one of his books (Seafarers), another Bible correspondence course, and the book “The Purpose-Driven Life” by Rick Warren. All of these things were a great help to my practical and spiritual life.

In John 14:6 Jesus says: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father, except through me.”* Jesus says that he is the only way to the Father. The only way to heaven. He is also the only one who sacrificed his life for you. That is why we all need a relationship with Jesus Christ. If you want to start a relationship with Jesus and serve Jesus wholeheartedly, and if you want to have your sins forgiven, you can pray a prayer and ask Jesus to forgive your sins, and change you, and take control of your life. Romans 10:9 says: *“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”* What Jesus promises, he will do. You can fully trust him. So here is a prayer that you can pray if you really mean it with all your heart. Please do not pray to impress anybody, and do not pray if you do not really want to. Just pray the following prayer if that is the desire of your heart:

Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned against you. I come to you now and ask you to please forgive all my sins and cleanse me and change me. Please come into my heart and make me a child of God. I want to follow you for the rest of my life. Thank you, Jesus, that you have forgiven me. Thank you for your promises. Amen.

Once you have prayed that prayer, please have a look at what John 1:12 says: *“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave*

the right to become children of God.” If you have prayed that prayer earnestly from your heart, you are now a child of God. As a child of God, you will live with God in heaven for all eternity. Remember when I asked you at the beginning of the chapter, where will you spend eternity? If you have just received Jesus as your Savior, you will surely be in heaven because Jesus lives in you. Please also enjoy the promise in 1 John 5:12: “*Whoever has the Son [Jesus Christ] has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.*” If you have the Son of God in you, you have life. Life eternal. Jesus will never leave you. A new life now starts for you. Your priority is not to live for yourself and your desires only, but to look at how you can please God. God gave you a wonderful promise in Matthew 6:33: “*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*” Seek God first. How do you practically do that in your daily situation? Just start reading the Bible every morning. Start in the New Testament and read 3-4 pages every day. Before reading, pray to God and ask him to help you understand what you are reading. After reading, pray to Jesus and tell him what is on your heart. Your joy, your problems, your desires. Just share everything with Jesus in prayer. HE is now your best friend. He loves communicating with you. In short, I would like to encourage you to do four things:

- **Read your Bible daily.** You might want to start reading in the New Testament. Try to read three or four pages a day. Ask God to help you to understand what you are reading. Try to put into practice what you have learned from your reading.
- **Pray to Jesus every day.** Tell him everything that is on your heart. Feel free to share your burdens and also your joys with God. He loves hearing from you. Thank him for being in your life now, and ask him to guide you day by day.
- **Tell others about your new friend, Jesus,** and what he has done for you. Share what you have experienced with your friends.
- **Attend a Bible-believing church.** Join a church where the Bible is read and taught and practiced every week, and where the Bible is the source, with answers to all of the questions about life. In such a church, you will find fellowship with other like-minded Christian families who also have one goal: To please God and follow him every day. Pray and ask Jesus to help you find the right place of worship, and he will surely guide you. To obtain the best guidance, it is necessary to always seek the leading of the Holy Spirit in everything we do. Always make an effort to find people who are not self-centered, but rather Christ-centered. People who have a desire to please God more than pleasing other people. These are the kind of people who will understand you, who will care for you, and who

may be in a position to give you guidance. If you find such friendships among your colleagues on board ship, it will give you a great opportunity to spend time reading the Bible aloud together, and sharing what you have understood with each other. There are many Port Chaplains who will be delighted to help you with your Bible fellowship group and will give you Bible study books, either in English or your native language.

There is one more question, however, I still want to answer, because this is a question that many seafarers ask. The question is: What will happen if I sin again after receiving Jesus as my Savior? Well, remember I said that when you surrendered your life to Jesus, you became a child of God? A child remains a child. If you look back at your childhood and ask yourself what happened when you did something wrong, did your father reject you? No, you were still the child of your parents. It's the same when you sin: You remain a child of God. Of course, it is important to ask for forgiveness because sin will destroy our relationship with Jesus. Here is one encouraging promise from the Bible. Please read 1 John 1:9: *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness."* And 1 John 2:1 says: *"My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One."*

If you have given your heart to Jesus and asked him to come into your heart, I would be glad to hear from you. Please feel free to contact me by writing to me under this address: M.otto@allianzmission.de.

I would love to pray for you. If you want, please send me your email address and I will send you a free Bible study book. I wish you God's richest blessings on your journey with Jesus. I will also gladly pray for you to be a successful seafarer and a blessing to others. Once again, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. GOD bless you in your family and in your seafaring career!

Resources

Book Resources:

- Rick Warren, *The Purpose-Driven Life*, Purpose-Driven Life Ministries Quezon City, Philippines
- David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-Culturally*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA
- Dr. Peter Tan-Chi, *Motivate! 8 secrets of Successful Parenting*, OMF Literature, Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, Philippines
- Rev. Martin Otto, *The Seafarer's Mind*, RVB Verlag Beese, Hamburg, Germany
- Rev. Martin Otto, *Help, how can I Overcome Temptations?* RVB Verlag Beese, Hamburg, Germany
- Dr. Neil T. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness*, Regal Books, Ventura, California/USA
- Dr. John C. Maxwell, *Beyond Talent*, Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, USA
- Dr. Pat Gelsinger, *The Juggling Act*, David C. Cook, Colorado Springs, USA

Internet Resources:

- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/264076339_A_Study_on_the_Attitude_of_Seafarers_Education_Training_-_A_Case_Study_on_S_Company_-
- <https://www.jblfmu.edu.ph/node/495>
- https://usa.kaspersky.com/about/press-releases/2016_kaspersky-lab-study-proves-smartphones-distract-workers-and-decrease-productivity?PID=8200811&AFFILIATE=CJ_NAM&utm_source=CJ&utm_medium=affiliate
- <https://www.agcs.allianz.com/news-and-insights/news/safety-shipping-review-2019.html>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/articles/200307/the-dangers-loneliness>
- <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/de/worterbuch/englisch/complicity>
- <https://seanews.co.uk/features/qualities-seafarers-must-possess-to-be-successful/>

- <https://sailors-society.org/wellness-at-sea>
- <https://safety4sea.com/cm-wellness-at-sea-training-and-surveys/>
- <https://www.seamanmemories.com/seamans-salary-per-month-on-international-ships/>
- <https://www.elitedaily.com/life/why-discipline-is-so-important>
- <https://splash247.com/the-seafarer-of-the-future/>

Other books and study courses written specifically for seafarers by Martin Otto and Volker Lamaack:

Books:

- Martin Otto, *The Seafarer's Mind*
- Martin Otto, *Help, how can I Overcome Temptation?*
- Martin Otto, *Faith at Sea*
- Martin Otto, *Seafarers a Strategic Missionary Vision*
- Martin Otto, *Church on the Oceans*
- Volker Lamaack, *The Prison at Sea*
- Volker Lamaack, *How to have a Happy Marriage*

Bible study courses:

- Volker Lamaack, *The Bridge – Bible correspondence course*
- Volker Lamaack, *Grace for The Weak – Bible correspondence course*
- Volker Lamaack, *The Only Bridge – Bible course*

All of these books are available through the authors or through our Seamen's Center, in Intramouros, Manila. All books are in English and Tagalog and/or Taglish. All of the books contain seafarers' testimonies and practical lessons gleaned from their experiences.

Other Bible study books and Bible Correspondence Courses:

- <https://emmausinternational.com/>
- **CHURCH ON THE OCEAN:** This training course is conducted four times a year: January, April, July, and October at the Seamen's Centre in Manila. To apply or to obtain further information please contact: Seamen's Christian Friend Society: bayaniaudea@gmail.com

Appendix

Below you will find articles and surveys concerning avoiding accidents at sea:

- Ten ways to reduce the risk of maritime accidents
<https://www.maritime-executive.com/editorials/ten-ways-to-reduce-the-risk-of-maritime-accidents>
- Preventing shipping accidents: Past, present, and future of waterway risk management with Baltic Sea focus
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0925753520301958>
- Accident prevention on board ship at sea and in port
https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/normative-instruments/code-of-practice/WCMS_107798/lang--en/index.htm
- Safety measures that could reduce maritime accidents
<https://www.barrilleauxlaw.com/safety-measures-that-could-reduce-maritime-accidents/>
- Training to prevent marine accidents and deaths
<https://magazines.marinelink.com/Magazines/MaritimeReporter/201406/content/training-prevent-accidents-471735>
- Health and safety and accidents prevention
<https://www.dma.dk/SynRegistrering/Syn/MLCsyn/Sider/Beskyttelseafsundhedogsikkerhedsamtforebyggelseafulykker-.aspx>
- Shipping safety – human error comes in many forms
<https://www.agcs.allianz.com/news-and-insights/expert-risk-articles/human-error-shipping-safety.html>
- Fatigue guidelines – managing and reducing the risk of fatigue at sea
<https://www.amsa.gov.au/vessels-operators/seafarer-safety/fatigue-guidelines-managing-and-reducing-risk-fatigue-sea>
- 10 tips to avoid accidents at sea
<https://safety4sea.com/ten-tips-to-avoid-accidents-at-sea/>
- <https://www.marineinsight.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/A-Guide-to-Professional-and-Personal-Well-Being-of-Seafarers-on-Ships.pdf>
- https://www.thome.com.sg/news/mental-health-at-sea/?fbclid=IwAR1fshJXwSSFADGIlova0sK5LwW6XRCVF52F5jHJtkTE3JQ_okhXGQeBXQo

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