

Welcome to the Ready Room

✖ The thing I miss most about being a pilot in the Marines is the Ready Room, where we gathered before and after our flights.

It smelled of sweaty flight suits, and occasionally, coarse humor blued the air while our inflated egos competed, but I loved it nonetheless.

Then came the day I had to let it all go. I hadn't grown up in the church, so when I met Christ in a bunker in Vietnam, my life had to change.

Being a fighter pilot had been my dream since childhood, and here I was living it. But one morning as I sat reading the Bible, I struggled to understand what Paul was saying in Romans 8:15: "You received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (NIV).

Then it hit me like a wall—a wall of grace. I finally had a Father I could count on, One who would always be there for me and love me outrageously.

It is nearly impossible to describe the impact of that truth. When you enter the world as an illegitimate child, grow up with an alcoholic mom and succession of seven stepfathers, that is a transforming revelation!

But God wasn't through shaking up my categories. The next thing I heard was the Lord firmly saying: Ted, if you ever fly again, you will fly without Me. I have called you to care for My people, especially those who don't know they are mine.

My flying days were over, and I knew it. The question was, could I let go? It wouldn't be easy, but I soon learned the hard way that God was serious about what He had said to me.

After I entered the ministry, I was talked into co-piloting a

plane chartered by the church I served. When we lost one engine and couldn't get the landing gear down, I told the young pilot just to land it "gear up."

In combat flying that was nothing unusual. But when I saw all the blood drain from his face, I knew I had better find a way to get the gear down. We did and landed safely.

The pilot was muttering to himself about how he had never been on a flight with so many emergencies. Then I told him what God had said to me. That's when he yelled, "Jonah!" and threw the flight manual at me.

It's been a struggle learning to yield to God's best for my life. A story in John 21 has helped me to learn to let go.

Peter and his friends have fished all night and caught nothing. Christ calls out to the men from the shore, "Friends, have you caught anything?"

Then came one of the greatest miracles of the New Testament—a group of fishermen told the truth! This is incredible because fishermen make golfers look honest.

Christ, whom the men haven't yet recognized, tells them where to place their nets, and they start hauling in a truckload of fish. Peter claws away at pulling in this blessing, then suddenly freezes: "Wait a minute, it's Jesus!"

At that moment he finds himself in the dilemma all strong-willed men will face at some point: Do I hold on to what I want, or do I leap off the boat and go for the One who gave it to me?

Peter jumped overboard. He let go. I am sure as he swam ashore he must have wrestled with his decision: I'm hungry. I've fished all night. It doesn't make any sense to let go of the fish, but I am going for Jesus.

Once he pulled his sorry, soggy self ashore, he makes an

amazing discovery. He was going to be enjoying fillet of sole prepared by the Savior of his soul.

Whenever we let go and wholeheartedly decide to obey Jesus, we discover that we get Jesus, and, in the process, find that He restores the years and things that have been taken from us through our addictions, our mistakes, the wounds and failures of others—you name it! But we have to let go.

You see, if we let go, we can have it all! I think the only thing I deeply fear now is coming to the end of my days and finding out that my fears, pride or just plain old stubbornness held me back from God's best. Held me back to the place I might find myself saying, "I wonder what would have happened if I had...?"

In our church's building expansion, they constructed a room for me to meet with the prayer and service teams, a band of committed people. They named it, "The Ready Room." I smile every time I enter. I am so thankful I let go.

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