



BUILDING BELOW THE WATERLINE

I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you in your commitment to making Christian schooling a part of your family's life. It takes no small effort to find the school that best supports what you want to see happen in the lives of your children—and it also takes no small financial commitment. But, please be assured, you are investing wisely.

I am reminded of a story that Gordon MacDonald tells at the beginning of his book *The Life God Blesses*. He begins, "Once a foolish man built a boat. From

need not give much consideration to the keel, or ballast, or anything that had to do with properly distributing the weight. It was clearly his conclusion that people discuss and comment on what they can see—he had no memory of anyone ever admiring the bottom of a boat. So the foolish man continued to build.

Finally, the day came for the boat's maiden voyage! It was soon evident that the man's earlier observations had been correct, for the club members liked the sails, rigging, teakwood, and brass. He overheard high

draped over the bow, and the shiny teakwood decks were awash in saltwater.

While most boats would have righted themselves after capsizing, this one did not. Why? Its builder, this foolish man, had ignored what was below the waterline, so there was no weight there. A well-designed keel and adequate ballast would have righted the boat, but none of that existed.

Days later, as observers viewed the tattered wreckage that had washed ashore, they were quick to see what was missing,

"The one who values discernment will ask, 'what does this story mean?' and soon discover the answer to the question. And the one who cares little for insight will dismiss the story and likely go out and construct something similar to the foolish man's *Persona*."

—Gordon MacDonald

the beginning, he intended it to be the grandest, most talked-about boat that ever sailed from the harbor of the boat club he belonged to. He was determined to spare no expense or effort."

The little parable goes on to tell how the boat builder began to build the most lavish boat ever, with the most colorful sails, complex rigging, comfortable appointments, and all possible conveniences in the cabin. Its decks would be made of the most beautiful teakwood with custom fittings of polished brass.

The man fantasized as he built. He imagined the admiration and applause of his fellow club members. He began to be obsessed over the things that would show, so he invested even more time and energy into seeing that they would truly draw attention.

One day it occurred to him that, since no one would see the bottom of the boat, he

praise for the boat—and he concluded that he had put the emphasis in the right places. Big gold letters proclaimed the boat's name, *Persona*.

The boat slid smoothly into the water, and its maiden voyage began. Sailing with a small flotilla of other boats, it stood out as the grandest. Later, from a distance, the beautiful boat was a mere speck on the horizon, but a closer look revealed the captain, a proud man who was gripping the rudder with fierce pride in what he had accomplished!

Soon a storm arose—not a full-fledged hurricane but not just a small squall either. There were sudden high wind gusts; bad things quickly began to happen, and the captain began to lose his poise. Too soon the sails were in shreds, the splendid mast was a tangle of splinters, the rigging was unceremoniously

and they commented, "A wise man would never build such a boat, much less sail in it. A man who builds only above the waterline does not realize that he has built less than half a boat."

And so, as you consider your costly efforts at "boat building" with your children, remember that you are investing where it counts. You are building below the waterline, preparing your children to sail in a stormy ocean. God richly blesses such efforts—and later, as you see the big picture, you will know that, whatever it cost, it was worth it all. The price was right!

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