

COURAGE TO BE EXTRAORDINARY

One of my favorite stories is by Richard Bach. It is inspirational in being true to our heart's desire and not quitting when the going gets rough. Here is a review of what you can expect about "soaring" beyond what you've been taught:

Jonathan Livingston Seagull by Richard Bach is a great story about a seagull, Jonathan, who is determined to fly beyond the limits of what seagulls are taught. Seagulls are taught to exist with limited flight. Their main objective is to get food. For Jonathan he loved to fly so much that he often forgot to eat. He wanted to know what was possible in the air that hadn't been tried before by him or other seagulls. Just because flying had always been done the same way over and over again was no reason not to learn other maneuvers in flight.

He practiced low level glides, high speed flying – "From a thousand feet, flapping his wings as hard as he could, he pushed over into a blazing steep dive toward the waves, and learned why seagulls don't make blazing steep power-dives. In just six seconds he was moving seventy miles per hour, the speed at which one's wing goes unstable on the upstroke.

"Time after time it happened. Careful as he was, working at the very peak of his ability, he lost control at high speed...Ten times he tried, and all ten times, as he passed through seventy miles per hour, he burst into a churning mass of feathers, out of control, crashing down into the water." Then he learned how to hold his wings at this speed and felt elated, but it was short-lived as he went to higher levels, 2000, 4000 ft reaching higher speeds of ninety miles per hour. He crashed into a brick-hard sea. The weight of failure was heavy. He thought about ending it all.

His parents were concerned for Jonathan. He was skin and bones – and winter wasn't far away. They wanted him to be like the rest of the flock. After a few more attempts to succeed at flying maneuvers never attempted by Seagulls, Jonathan obeyed his parents and joined the rest of the flock. But it was no use; his passion to learn beyond what was expected was strong. He took off again out to sea flapping his wings as hard as he could and went to heights never before tried. In spite of his hunger, he was happy to be learning.

His victories were short lived. He lost control at experimental speeds. He was feeling sorry for himself and told himself he was limited by nature. He was going to return to the flock. During the flight back deep in thought about giving up his foolishness he noticed

the beauty of the moon and glimmering dark waters. “What is this?” he thought, seagulls don’t fly in the dark. They aren’t meant to fly in the dark. He became exhilarated in this breakthrough. From this point on there was no turning back to being an ordinary Seagull.

Jonathan went on to continue to press himself to higher limits. He soared at the speed of 213 miles per hour. **Now he felt it was no longer necessary to live in ignorance. That it is possible to live as creatures of excellence and intelligence and skill. There is freedom in learning how to fly beyond inherited limitations.**

However, when Jonathan returned to the flock to share the breakthroughs, the Elder told him to “Stand to Center for Shame in the sight of your fellow gulls!” The Elder chastised him for being irresponsible and to be reminded that Seagulls were put in the world to eat and stay alive as long as possible. In spite of Jonathans protest that now gulls could find more meaning, a **higher purpose for living**, the gulls turned their backs upon him.

Jonathan goes on to learn more about flight and speeds. His sorrow is in not being alone, but with the **limiting beliefs** of the flock.

As Jonathan perfects his skills, he is presented with an opportunity to go even higher by fellow seagulls who are Master Teachers. They teach him flying beyond his imagination. He becomes a Master who now teaches other outcast seagulls looking for more meaning to living and greater flying ability. He taught them **“Everything that limits us we have to put aside.”**

One of his students, Fletcher Seagull, is shocked when Jonathan hands over the instruction of students to Fletcher. Jonathan explains that Fletcher doesn’t need him anymore. He says to Fletcher, “You don’t need me any longer. **You need to keep finding yourself, a little more each day**, that real, unlimited Fletcher Seagull...Don’t believe what your eyes are telling you. All they show is limitation. Look with your understanding, find out what you already know, and you’ll see the way to fly.”

After some time Fletcher sighed, and said to the new group of students, “Let’s begin with Level Flight.”

“No limits, Jonathan?” Fletcher Seagull thought. Well, then, the time’s not distant when I’m going to appear out of thin air on your beach, and show you a thing or two about flying?”

It does take courage to be extraordinary. It takes courage to fly where you want to fly; to fly at record breaking speeds; to fly in the face of cynicism from members of your flock; to test untried flight patterns; to fail countless times, to be true to yourself and to rise above flock limitations that you allow to define you. Answer your call to SOAR. The world needs your brilliance.