

“We Were Never Eight, We Were One”

Spoiler Alert: If you haven't seen the movie, this devotion gives away some of the story lines of the movie and book, [The Boys in the Boat](#).

The recent movie, *The Boys in the Boat*, is a true story about the Junior Varsity rowing team at the University of Washington, and their quest for gold at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games. At the height of the Great Depression, “Joe” was living in an abandoned car, after his dad left the home when Joe was just 14 years old. He had no money, only canned food to eat and college tuition for his freshman year as an engineering student due in two weeks. In desperation, Joe responded to an ad for a part-time job that also offered housing. Joe needed both. The part-time job was a recruitment for the collegiate JV rowing team. Even though he had never done this before, Joe threw himself into training for the rowing team. To those of us who know little about the grueling sport of rowing, it takes nearly superhuman stamina, indomitable willpower, and the intellectual capacity necessary to master the technique of the sport. Each team member puts their personal ambitions aside for the good of the team. Joe was not the only one who came from a humble background. Every member of the team either came from humble background or had been humbled by the hard times in which they lived.



A loner by nature, Joe learned to interact with his teammates. He also befriended the team's elderly boatbuilder, who provided the wisdom Joe never received from his own father. The team's coxswain is a headstrong but an experienced rower. The coxswain is the guy with the megaphone, who establishes and adjusts the rowing pace, guides the boat and motivates the rowers in the race. He made the commitment to get to know each individual on the team, knowing what each team member needed to succeed. Success as a rowing team takes harmony, balance, and rhythm.

The University of Washington JV team was surprisingly promoted over the Varsity to attend the Olympic qualifier in Poughkeepsie. They were successful and advanced to Berlin to represent the US in the Olympics. Along the way, they overcame many obstacles leading up to the gold medal race. With Adolph Hitler watching, they defeated Italy and powerhouse Germany for the improbable gold medal.

Now an elderly grandfather, the movie concludes in a flashback to Joe's time on the Washington Huskie rowing team. Joe tells his grandson, “We were never eight. We were one.” That speaks to the harmony, teamwork, relationships, and trust that made the 1936 rowing team successful. I like to think that God is like the coxswain, understanding the value of each person and their contribution to the effort. God encourages us along the way, sets the pace and blends everyone together to accomplish His goals. When we are one with God, we win.

The Bible Says: *For the body is not one member, but many.” (1 Corinthians 12:14). I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.” (1 Corinthians 1:10).*

Questions: When have you played on a team or worked together with others and you put the goals of the team ahead of your own personal goals? Did you work together as one? Did you recognize how God has gifted each of you differently, but when put together, it accomplished the goal?