

Your Red Sea Calling

If God told you to leave everything and everyone you love behind and move to the Red Sea, would you go?

A new friend asked me that question several years ago when our families took a weekend trip together. Our sons and daughters were schoolmates and had bonded, and it seemed this couple had quite a bit in common with me and my husband.

As the wife and I chatted one afternoon, she posed a series of questions raised in a bestselling book she and her husband often referred to over the years to spark conversation.* There were no right or wrong answers, but your responses helped others get to know you. The questions were fun and eye opening, and one in particular—the one I just shared—struck me as profound. When my friend asked it, I repeated it:

If God told me to leave everything and everyone I love behind and move to the Red Sea, would I go?

My friend said she had asked a man she was dating years

*Gregory Stock, PhD, *The Book of Questions* (New York: Workman Publishing Co., 1987).

ago this question and when he answered yes, she knew he was the one for her. They've been married for more than a decade. When she directed the question to me, I answered yes too. She, on the other hand, admitted that she wasn't sure what she would do; it would be a difficult choice.

Her honesty was compelling. It's easy to say yes, we would give up something we haven't yet been asked to sacrifice, or yes, we will always be faithful to God when that faith hasn't yet been tested.

Think about the apostle Peter, who never fathomed he would be ashamed of Jesus, and yet he denied knowing him three times (John 18:15–27). Think about the rich man who wanted to go to heaven, but not if it was going to cost him all that he had toiled for and accomplished here on earth (Matt. 19:16–24). I began asking myself if I were really any different. Are any of us any different?

Later that day, when this new friend and I were alone, our conversation veered to my career as a writer and how I routinely sacrifice time with friends and family to finish a writing project and to travel on occasion to promote my work. I told her how hard it was to leave my children, even for a couple of days, and how I take them along as often as possible. She listened and nodded, then mentioned our Red Sea discussion. Now, she said, she understood why I had answered yes.

“This is your Red Sea experience—your writing career.”

I hadn't considered it in that light until she had that epiphany, but suddenly I agreed. Writing is my passion; it's a gift I've had since childhood. And yet, to write well and

be sure that I'm excellently serving as God's vessel requires sacrifice, obedience, and time away to be quiet and still. I board airplanes more frequently than I would otherwise and spend more time on weekends spreading the good news that I believe God has inspired me to write in my works of fiction and nonfiction. If I don't write it and speak it, how will my gift be used to God's glory?

I recalled my dialogue with my friend a few weeks after that weekend getaway, when I picked up a book about the spiritual laws of success. Of course, most of us want to be successful, but God wants us to define "success" through his lens—not solely focused on material gain and professional accolades. God's measure of success is determined in the context of the number of lives we've touched with his love, often by meeting people's needs, whether as basic as food and shelter or as personal as friendship and social interaction. He measures success by noting how our walk with Christ has helped transform someone else's life.

With those tenets of success lodged in my mind, I read the bio of the woman who had penned the book and realized that her work was a "Red Sea experience" too. She had sacrificed something or experienced something that led her to share her knowledge on those pages. Rather than hoard the wisdom she had gleaned, she had decided to share her pain and victorious recovery to encourage others to persevere through challenges and claim their joy.

Sacrifice and calling often go hand in hand. Consider the life of voting rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer, or of Mother Teresa or Coretta Scott King. But this isn't really

surprising. Wasn't sacrifice what God did when he sent us Jesus, and what Jesus did when he died for our sins? That same responsibility rests on the shoulders of each of us who write, sing, nurse, teach, care for children, intercede through prayer, or dedicate some other gift or calling to God.

Our Red Seas may not require us to literally relocate to another part of the world or even travel across our town. In our hearts, however, it's important to be prepared to go wherever God is leading.

Am I prepared? Will my answer always be yes?

I ask myself this occasionally, and like my friend, I don't always readily comply. When I find myself wavering, I view that as a signal to draw closer to God and ask him to bolster my faith and trust. I review biblical passages and devotional readings that remind me that he is with me wherever I go.

This question, if taken seriously, can help us determine where we are in our journeys of faith. It can be a good self-evaluation tool to help us focus on the big picture — God's omnipotent point of view rather than our human-sized vision of what we should be doing and where we should go.

What is your Red Sea calling? Are you ready to travel there with God? If you're not yet sure of your answer, ask God to show you why and to give you the courage to soon say yes.

Learning to Listen

Grab a journal or piece of paper and answer this question: *What is the one thing I would do, with or without pay, if I forced myself to stop making excuses?*

That, my friend, may be your passion, and this passion could be where God is calling you to serve. Ask God today to give you clarity on his vision for your life and the courage to pursue it. Don't be afraid; remember that wherever God leads you, he also journeys with you.

Scripture

John 12:23–26: Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.”