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The sea was in front of them, the pharaoh's masters behind them, and the mountains around them. And all this, be it observations, allowed and ordered by God. -C. H. Mackintosh We are so glad you joined us! We are going to meet here as a group of like-minded, broken, wounded, desperate, empty, guilty followers of Jesus Christ, every Tuesday morning at 9:00, on August 6, for the Summer Book Club-style Bible Study. It will be so reassuring! This Bible study is for people like us! We will be 10 God-given strategies in difficult times. We will work our way through all 10 of the Red Sea Regulations, one per week. The comments section will be used for discussion. Thus, take a deep breath and remember this deeper secret of Christian life: when you are in a difficult place, understand that the Lord has either put you there or allowed you to be there, for reasons perhaps known only to Himself at the moment. The same God who led you in will lead you. Robert Morgan, Red Sea Rules still need to get the book? Click here to order or download a copy (less than \$10 for hardcover and less than \$2 for the Kindle version). If you can't join us on Tuesday morning at 9:00, don't worry. Anytime during the week when it's convenient for you, read this week's chapter in the book and related blog. Then join the conversation down in the comments section. Invite a friend to join us! But I will hope constantly and will praise you more and more. My mouth will tell you about your righteous deeds, about your works of salvation all day, for their number has already passed by my knowledge. With the mighty works of God, I am in good condition; I will remind them of your righteousness, only yours. Oh, my God, from your youth, you taught me, and I still proclaim your wonderful deeds. So even to old age and gray hair, oh My God, I will not leave until I proclaim your power to another generation, your strength to all those who come. Your righteousness, Oh God, reaches a high heaven. You who did great things, oh my God, who like you? You who made me see a lot of trouble and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will re-enter me. You will increase my greatness and comfort me again. Psalm 71:14-21 This morning we begin our study of a small book by Robert Morgan called Rules of the Red Sea. The subtitle of the book 10 God-Considering the Strategies of Difficult Times. I have so many friends who have already plunged into a deep, deep well of grief in 2019. I myself am in the final stages of a written book called The Heart That Heals: Healing Brokenness Through the Promises of God. So I know that this is a real problem for many of us, myself included, and I am happy to spend the summer with you diving deep into the Word of God and the Rules of the Red Sea! Just this week I was rereading about the #1 rule, and when I finished, I thought, Oh, I needed it! I've heard it before, but I was to hear it again. We all need to be reminded over and over again. what it means to trust God. I'm not alone here, am I? Think about your own headache and then think about the people that you've been saying this week. Think about the diversity of the fight you heard just this week alone. How many of us are worried about finances? Maybe you have more bills than you have the funds to pay them. Some of you may be out of work, or your husband out of work. We're worried about the future. Some of us are in difficult relationships with friends, family members, or spouses. Is there a parent here who doesn't care about the baby? Maybe it's an adult child who lives a life away from God. Or maybe you're a child concerned about aging parents? I found myself in both of these places today. Maybe you've recently gone through a divorce or you see that as an opportunity on the horizon. What about health problems? Have you received news of a serious illness? For some of us, this chapter of life is a difficult transition period. Maybe you just moved in and you're trying to get set up in a new place. Maybe your good friend just left. Or, like me, maybe your child moved. These are big transitions. Tough times. You may have recently died a loved one, and you are trying to adapt to this huge loss. You know life will never be the same. I have a girlfriend who just this spring lost her 6-year-old daughter (you can read about it here) and another friend who lost her best friend suddenly. Test! We all have them to varying degrees, and we should all learn to trust God with them. One thing I love about Red Sea Rules is that the book breaks down faith into ten identifiable segments. Overall, he summarizes so well some of the basic biblical principles of what it means to trust God, and we need it! Today let's look at the first rule: understand what God means to you to be where you are. The challenge you face is not the result of some colossal cosmic error. Your judgment did not take God by surprise. These difficulties are not something that happened outside God's control or separate from His love. God means for you to be where you are at this appointed time. Rule number one: understand what God means to you to be where you are, it is not that the author of this book came up with himself. It is the principle of faith that we find in all the Word of God. Think of the story we find in the Old Testament book of Exodus. Israelis stand on the shores of the Red Sea. There in front of them stretches what seems to be an endless and impenetrable space of water. Marching to them from the rear of the vengeful army of the Egyptian pharaoh. God's children are stuck! He knows how he takes it, even if at the moment we don't. -J. I. Packer Why are they standing there on the shores of the Red Sea? The Bible tells us that it was God who brought them there. Let's look at what the Bible says Egypt. The story begins Genesis. When the sun set, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and over it came thick and terrible darkness. Then the Lord said to him, Know for sure that your offspring will be in a country that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will suffer for four hundred years. But I will judge the people that they serve and after that they come out with great possessions. Genesis 15:12-14 This is where the history of the Red Sea begins. God told Abraham that his descendants would live in a foreign country. God knew what would happen to them in Egypt. He knew they would become slaves in this country. But this passage also states that God will punish the Egyptians for the way they enslaved His people and that He would save them from the slavery of Egypt. God knows what's going on. His people are securely in his hands. This is the story of the Red Sea in a nutshell. This prophecy made to Abraham, of course, come true. The Israelis are going to Egypt. At first glance life is good for them there. But then things change in the direction of the worst. Egyptians worry about how many Israelis live among them. They are beginning to oppress the Israelites. They enslave them. They're killing their children. But then God raises Moses to lead them out of Egypt. Following the pillar of clouds in the daytime and the pillar of fire at night, God leads them directly to the shores of the Red Sea. On the shores of the Red Sea, Israelis stand scared to death. But it was God who brought them there. It was God who put them in such an unstable position. They are there for God's purpose and for His purposes. This is how God works with His children. The New Testament tells us that we should not be surprised that we will have to face trials and go through difficult times (I Peter 4:12). When we feel overwhelmed by our circumstances, we should not think that God has abandoned us or made a mistake. The Red Sea Rule #1: Understand what God means to you to be where you are. He has a goal, and he has a plan. A verse of memory that goes along with the rule #1 psalm 71:20: You who made me see a lot of trouble and calamity will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will reintroduce me. Psalm 71:20 Whoever made me see a lot of troubles and disasters will revive me again. Isn't that a great statement? God, you made me see a lot of trouble and disaster. That's a pretty bold statement, isn't it? But I know, God, that I can count on you! I know you'll revive me again. Thanks for joining the InstaEncouragements weekly Christian Link Up! We would be very grateful if you grab this IE link up the button, put it on your blog, and link to this post. Have a huge week! If you are new to link-ups, check our LINK-UP IE page for a brief explanation. Let's be sure that we understand what this rule does not mean. You can misunderstand this rule and apply in our lives in a way that is not biblically correct. There are three things that this rule does not mean. First of all, it doesn't mean that everything is fine. Rule #1 does not mean that you should try to tell yourself that everything that happens to you will be wonderful. No, there are evil things that are happening in this world, and we should not play some mental game and try to call evil good. Think of the familiar story of Joseph found in the Old Testament book of Genesis. Joseph's brothers sell him into slavery. It's evil. His brothers are wrong about it. Joseph becomes a slave. There's nothing good or glorious about being a slave. He is then falsely accused of assaulting his master's wife and being thrown into jail, where he sits for at least a couple of years. But God is with Joseph, and amazingly raises him to be second in the team over all of Egypt. It's nice and nice! When his brothers come to Egypt in search of grain to feed their families, it is Joseph who takes care of them. Joseph thinks about everything that happened to him and how God used him to save those who wanted to get rid of him. The book of Genesis concludes with Joseph telling his brothers. So it is not you who sent me here, but God. He made me the father of the pharaoh, and the lord of his entire house and ruler over the whole land of Egypt (Genesis 45:8). Joseph was in Egypt for God's purpose and for his purposes, though God used the evil deeds of his brothers to get him there. To understand what God means to you to be where you are doesn't mean that you pretend that everything is fine. Secondly, it doesn't mean that everything is pleasant. This is another way to misunderstand the #1 rule. If we are where God means to us to be, we might perhaps conclude that we should enjoy everything that happens to us. No, that's not what it means. Think again of psalm 71:20. You who made me see a lot of trouble and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will reintroduce me. This verse doesn't pull punches! God, what I went through wasn't funny! - Robert Morgan, Red Sea Rules. Throughout the psalms, we find statements as we find in Psalm 71:20. Psalm 44 stands out as another example of the raw emotions expressed to God. Oh, my God, we heard with our ears, our fathers told us what you did in your day, in the old days (Psalm 44:1). In the first eight verses of this chapter, the writer talks about how good God was for His people. But you rejected us and disgraced us and did not come out with our armies.... All this came to us, although we have not forgotten you, and we were not false to your covenant (Psalm 44:9, 17). Listen to the excruciating cries of verse 23: Wake up! Why are you sleeping, God? Roose yourself! Don't reject us forever! That's why I love psalms! The honest emotions we all feel To the time there is on full display! (See also Psalm 13, 22, 74, 88 and 89.) God puts these psalms in His Word so that you and I can learn from his children who were before us. To understand what God means to you to be where you are doesn't mean that you have to pretend that everything is good or everything is nice. Thirdly, it also does not mean that everything is clear. That doesn't mean you and I will always know what's going on. We serve God, whose paths are mysterious (Romans 11:33) and whose world passes ALL understanding (Philippians 4:7). Think of Jesus. The disciples pray to God in Acts 4. For indeed in this city have come together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you have anointed, and Herod, and Pontius Pilate, together with the gentiles and peoples of Israel, to do all that your hand and your plan have pre-retaliated to take place. (Action 4:27-28). (See also Acts 2:22-23.) It is not a mistake that Jesus dies on the cross. Jesus is exactly where God means to him to be. The disciples understand this, but only after His resurrection. However, until sunday they do not understand what is happening. All they know is that the person they had pinned all their hopes on is dead. They are completely shocked by what happened to their Master. They don't understand what God is doing! Don't be surprised when the same things happen to you. The author of the Red Sea Rules is good at stating this idea. When you are in a difficult place, understand that the Lord has either put you there or allowed you to be there, for reasons perhaps known only to Himself at the moment. God has his reasons, but He does not promise and must not tell us that they are. So what does the #1 rule mean? It means we say to God, Lord, I don't like what's going on, and I don't understand what's going on. But I believe that I am here in this situation for your purpose and for your purposes. I believe that just as you have brought me into this situation you will lead me. Do you know Ruth's story in the Old Testament? It's one of my favorites! There are only four short chapters in Ruth's book. Ruth lost her husband. She lives in a foreign land. She is poor and finds herself in a situation where it is easy to use. However, and here is the kicker, she is also where God wants her to be! God works behind the scenes and provides it. She is honored to be one of the ancestors of Israel's greatest kings, King David. And the New Testament is even more honored. Today we know Ruth as one of the ancestors of Jesus himself (Matthew 1:5). Ruth went through all her difficulties in God's purpose and for God's purposes. The God who brought her in also led her. Can we just write it down in our magazines today! The God who brought her in also led her. Our God is God who not only restores, but takes our mistakes and follies into His plan for us and brings good out Their. -J. I. Packer Think also in the New Testament about Peter. Peter's example is especially important because Peter got into so much trouble! Remember how Peter makes this great brag to Jesus about how he is never going to deny him? All other disciples can deny him, but not Peter! Right? However, when the pressure is on, Peter caves like everyone else. But this will not take God by surprise, nor does it stop God from fulfilling his goal for Peter. Jesus says to Peter, I prayed for you that your faith would not fail. And when you turn again, strengthen your brothers (22:32). It's a fascinating statement. Jesus knows what Peter is going to do. He knows that Peter is going to turn away and refuse him. Therefore, before he even denies Jesus, Jesus talks to him about what he should do when he turns back. No wonder here! Jesus has a purpose for Peter even after Peter fails terribly. Did you fail miserably? Jesus has a plan! Evil things may have happened that have caused you a lot of suffering. You can have all sorts of questions about why this happened. But rest assured: God has not abandoned you or forgotten you. You are where you are for God's purpose and for His purposes. The same God who led you in will lead you. ... in his good time He can bring me out again, as and when He knows. Let me say that I am here, (1) By God's purpose, (2) In his accord, (3) Under his teaching, (4) For his time. Robert Morgan, Red Sea Rules Read Red Sea Rules: Week 2 here. The Red Sea comes in all shapes and sizes. On what Red Sea are you focused on for this trip? Why is life so hard? Why are there still problems? Why do we face these red seas? Be honest, how did you initially react to your own Red Sea experience, whatever it was? How can the adoption of the Rule #1 to your answer? Can I give you a call to remember Psalm 71:20 with me this week? You who made me see a lot of trouble and calamities will revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will reintroduce me. Psalm 71:20 parts of this post are quoted from www.efcbemidji.org www.efcbemidji.org

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