

The Lord Will Make a 'Rehoboth' for You

*If you find
yourself in an anxious season of difficult transition, take
comfort from the
life of Isaac.*

If you had told
me seven years ago that I would resign my comfortable magazine
job in 2010 and
make a shift toward public ministry, I would have asked if you
were smoking an
illegal plant. I liked my paycheck and my benefits. And in
2004 I was trying to
figure out how I would put four kids through college when I
had no extra money
in the bank.

Fast forward to
2010, to the middle of the Great Recession. They say the
economy is showing
signs of improvement, but I don't see this in Florida, where
the foreclosure
rate is still one of the nation's highest. Yet right in the
middle of these
uncertain economic times, while the unemployment rate is
hovering around 10
percent, I sensed God telling me to make a career change.

"We must keep walking by faith, even when we feel trapped in Philistine territory. We must keep trudging ahead. We must go over the next hill. We must turn the next corner. There is a Rehoboth nearby!"

Everything in my
flesh screamed, *No! Please, God! No!* Yet I knew I was facing
one of
those Peter-get-out-of-the-boat-and-walk-on-the-water moments.
Because I have
been in one place for 17 years, the thought of change was
terrifying. I didn't
even want to *look* over the side of the boat, much less stick
my foot in
the waves and try to walk.

But two weeks ago
I put my toes in the water. Like Peter, I have wavered a few
times since then.
The sound of the crashing surf is scary and I've looked back
at the boat more
than once. But I know that I know that I know that this faith-
stretching
exercise is going to end well.

What has carried
me through this season of transition is the comfort I receive
each day from
reading my Bible. I don't read it just because Christians are
supposed to have
a nice devotional life. I read it for survival.

Since the New
Year began I have focused all my reading on the journeys of
Abraham, Isaac and
Jacob, mainly because these patriarchs pioneered this thing we
call faith.
Their life lessons provide a framework for our own adventures
with God.

I read last week
about Isaac's difficult life journey. Things were not easy
after his father's

death. His brother Ishmael was bitter because Abraham gave Isaac the first-born's inheritance. Then a famine came and Isaac had to move his family to Gerar, where hostile Philistines were cramming garbage in the wells that Abraham had dug.

Life in Gerar was not easy. Every time Isaac would dig a new well, the Philistines would claim it as theirs. In one instance, Isaac named his well Esek, which means "contention." Another time he dug a well and called it Sitnah, which means "enmity." What a depressing trend! It seemed like two steps forward and three steps back. He wasn't making any progress.

But then, Isaac journeyed just a bit farther. Genesis 26:22 says, "And he moved away from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he named it Rehoboth, for he said, 'At last the Lord has made room for us, and we will be fruitful in the land. (NASB)'"

It was right after this experience that God appeared to Isaac and reconfirmed to him the promise that He had given his father. The Lord said: "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not fear, for I am with you. I will bless you, and multiply your descendants, for the sake of my servant Abraham" (Gen. 26:24).

All of us will
encounter multiple obstacles on the road toward our promise.
The contentious
wells of Esek and Sitnah tend to drain the life out of us
rather than provide
any refreshing. Their waters are bitter. They are the hard
places where we are
most tempted to quit.

But the lesson
here is simple: We must keep walking by faith, even when we
feel trapped in
Philistine territory. We must keep trudging ahead. We must go
over the next
hill. We must turn the next corner. There is a Rehoboth
nearby!

Many of us have
felt stalled in the dry places. The past few years have not
been easy. You may
feel that the devil has been contending for your family, your
finances, your
ministry or your health. He threw all this discouragement at
you to stop you
from advancing. He wants to keep you in a desert.

Rehoboth means
"broad place," and it refers to the land of inheritance that
only God can give
and that the enemy cannot steal from you. The Philistines did
not contend for
Rehoboth. God kept them away. Rehoboth reminds us of the place
God brought King
David when he announced in Psalm 18:19, "[The Lord] brought me
forth also into a *broad*
place; He rescued me, because He delighted in me."

I want to

prophecy to you: Keep going! Do not camp at the wells of contention! There is a
Rehoboth down the road, and it is not only a place of spiritual fulfillment but
also a garden of intimacy with God. Press into this New Year with faith and
expect the Lord to fulfill His promise.

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