

Setting Sail for the Promise Land

The moment I spotted that nine foot bull shark swimming down the shoreline on my vacation I knew I'd never see my wedding band again. Not that it was forefront on the minds of the hordes of panicking people splashing about wildly trying to get out of the water, but it's just I personally couldn't help thinking, "I'm not getting back in there to look for it!"

Realistically I should've just saved myself two days of vacation frustration and come to that same conclusion the moment it slid off my finger out there in four foot of water. There was just one thing left to do now, convince my brother Heath.

At first he had shown great brotherly kindness, trouncing about in the surf, searching late into the evening. It seemed unusual, but thoughtful. Things didn't really start smelling fishy until he got up early the next morning to continue his hunt; alone. I had to ask myself, "Is there something unnatural lurking below the surface of his generosity?"

Later my suspicions were further aroused when I noticed he was shunning the Frisbee, and how his sand castles were looking run down and unkempt. When he donned a new eye patch and a rub on Cracker Jack tattoo, I finally laid my suspicions to rest. Heath had contracted the Gold fever! Pirating was boiling in his blood. My own kin was setting sail for my treasure!

As a concerned brother, I knew I must act. I had to find that ring first, Or Heath would keep it for himself. Besides, I was no legal expert, and I still had lingering questions about the legitimacy of my marriage without it.

Thankfully, before I could even rustle up a parrot the wind seemed to lift from Heath's sails, and he gave up the search. Some said it was the bull shark, but I figure it was probably just his wife Mindy who slapped him out of it. Either way- that last day he grabbed his kid's boogie board and began making a spectacle of himself down along the shore with the rest of us pop bellied dads. Secretly I was relieved. I was getting too old for such treachery.

But anyway- All this pirate talk reminds me of my youth; days back when I was sailing under the old skull and crossbones; times best drowned in the black sea of forgetfulness. You see, I can testify that there's no peace at the bottom of a keg of ale, and no joy in double dealing. There's no fulfillment hidden in a chest of hoarded up selfish desire, and rest is sparse for a lad heading to the high seas with a shady assortment of mutinous scallywags.

Thanks to Jesus I've hoisted a new flag now. Heath has too. We're both sailing with the King's royal fleet now. The Lord has since bestowed upon us great honor and laden our ships with much precious cargo, including a fine dependable Christian crew. We've set sail for the promise land and we plan to plot our course through these choppy waters according to His Majesty's Charts; the Bible.

Maybe the real story on my vacation this year is rooted in the love of God. For example, my ten year old Kailey so highly valued the ring which symbolized her parents bond, that she cried when I lost it. That touched me.

Heath's friend Mike, whose family had come along, rushed over to mark the spot for me when I dropped it. He didn't cave with the temptation to be the hero and dive for it himself; he simply stood there unwavering; unselfishly assuming the role as an anchor. For well over an hour he remained still until I finally insisted he relent. This was time taken out of his vacation, and he barely even knew me. That touched me.

Our wives; Angie, Mindy, and Ann managed our huge gaggles of kids cheerfully without making any of us walk the plank. (Though I believe my name may've come up for a vote a couple of times.) They didn't touch me, and that touched me.

Hopefully you're focus is not on the tarnishing treasures of this shipwrecked world, because I can tell you, they'll fade quicker than the whisper that leads you down to a shallow grave.

Why don't you snap out of it like Heath and I did? It's not too late. Give your life to Jesus and set sail for the promise land with us! I'd be honored to serve along side you. In fact, I've been praying that God would remove your eye patch so that you could see clearly. (*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,* **Ephesians 1:18 KJV**).

Oh, and don't worry about me and Angie. I talked to a guy at work whose cousin's hairdresser plays bingo with the receptionist for a bankruptcy lawyer, and he's pretty sure we're probably still married.

-Guy Sheffield 7-26-06