

I know that it makes sense, based on the time of year it is, that football season should be in full swing, but it just doesn't seem quite right. As a young boy, I loved playing football and in the small town that I grew up in there weren't enough kids to play usually, so anyone who showed up at the Huff's lot after school got to participate. So, there I am, probable around 10 years old, playing with kids almost twice my age. Now let's be honest, I was no more than a glorified obstacle for the bigger kids to run around and it got boring. I would beg my teammates to throw me the ball and eventually out of desperation they did. As it happens, I was a decent receiver, thanks to my dad's hard tosses in our front yard which taught me not to fear the ball. So, my new job was to **Go Deep** and when the opportunity presented itself the ball would be thrown to me.

To this day, I love the words **Go Deep**. It brings back good memories of feeling like I belonged. It brings back thoughts of being patient and waiting for the right moment to make something happen. As

people of faith we to have to **go deep** sometime too. When we stay in shallow waters, we never learn to trust in God. We may not understand at the time, but there are times when we have to **go deep** to save ourselves or experience a more fulfilling life.

The Israelites were trapped between the Egyptian Army and the sea. If they were to survive they had to **go deep**. So, Moses led them into the “midst of the sea” and God divided it and gave them dry land to walk across. They escaped to the other side, then God caused the sea to close on their pursuers. They had been liberated from their oppressors, all because they were willing to follow Moses and **go deep**.

This is just one great moment in history where people had to cross the sea for their salvation. Our own country was discovered by men and women who were willing to cross the Atlantic Ocean. There were the adventurers like Magellan and Columbus who crossed the ocean and discovered new worlds. There was Admiral Byrd, who reached the North Pole and Neil Armstrong, who crossed the Sea of Tranquility and landed on the moon. Or what about George Washington, who crossed the Delaware?

By the beginning of December 1776, there were only 3,400 men under Washington's command and he decided to leave New Jersey altogether. After securing every boat from the Jersey side for miles around he crossed the Delaware into Pennsylvania. Washington was aggressive by nature, and knew his men needed something to boost their morale. He decided to strike at Trenton, New Jersey, a town held by 3 regiments of Hessians under the command of a Colonel Rall. The plan was to re-cross the Delaware in three spots. Washington would cross in the vicinity of McKonkee's Ferry with 2,400 men, General Ewing would cross further south to cut off any retreat, and a Colonel Cadwalader would cross even further south to guard against any reinforcements coming from that direction.

Washington started them across on Christmas night and by 3:00 AM they were on the Jersey side. The crossing took 9 hours due to the extra artillery taken along, and the horrible weather. The Marblehead, Massachusetts men saved the day for Washington with their expert seamanship. It was another hour before the column got underway for Trenton, nine cold and snowy miles away. The sun would be up by the

time Trenton was reached, denying the attackers complete surprise, but it was too late to turn back.

At 7:45 AM the Americans reached the town and launched a spirited attack. Their attack was nothing short of miraculous. It was a lightning fast strike. Since their gunpowder had gotten wet they had to fix their bayonets. They hit the Hessians with such speed and fury, the mercenaries could hardly get a defense together. The battle lasted all of 90 minutes and ended in a complete Hessian defeat.

When the smoke cleared, the Hessians had 22 dead and 1,000 captured. Colonel Rall was mortally wounded, and died 36 hours later, after getting assurances from Washington that his captured men would be treated with honor and dignity. The Patriots lost 2 dead and 2 wounded. There had also been two men lost the night before in the crossing. Four hundred Hessians had escaped due to the failure of Ewing and Cadwalader to get their men across the Delaware. Some officers wanted to pursue the Hessians, but Washington took the advice of a council of war he called together who advised against it. They had beaten the mighty Hessians. (pause)

The crossing of the Delaware was a turning point for the revolution. Because Washington and his army had made the crossing it boosted their morale and gave new spirit to the freedom they were fighting for. As a result, many of the “part-time” soldiers were motivated to renew their enlistments. This was a crucial point in Washington’s career, one where he had **gone deep**. (pause)

After Moses and the Israelites had crossed the sea they looked back, only to see the Egyptian army totally consumed by the water. Their powerful chariots had gotten stuck in the mud and they were unable to cross. The powerful, oppressor was destroyed. Their superior technology and weapons were no match for the people of faith.

When we encounter deep waters or some other obstacle often our instinct is to turn back or give up. But just as God told the people of Israel to “go forward” God is also telling us to go forward as well. Sometimes our comfort zone is hanging on to the past, living in familiar surroundings. Going forward overwhelms us, so we keep everything the same resisting change and opportunity. Had the people of Israel not

gone forward they would have surely perished at the hands of the superior Egyptian army or been taken back into slavery.

Unlike Washington, who used boats to cross the Delaware, Moses and his people moved ahead only on faith. Their crossing depended on complete faith in God and trust in Moses to lead them. This story is a call to faith, to trust in the power of God over the power of those things that stop us from taking action.

We all have seas to cross. Some are starting new jobs. Others are beginning a new year of school. Still others are starting retirement and some are moving out of the old homestead and into smaller surroundings. Some of are trying to overcome addictions and illnesses. There are many obstacles, many uncharted waters ahead. The question that you have to ask yourself is will you move forward, or will you stay frozen in time, falling prey to difficult circumstances?

When rough waters lie ahead we often panic and get anxious. We don't like to wait. Feelings of aloneness and fear consume us. Dr. Keith Wagner tells the story of him and his wife getting ready to board a ferry to cross over to an island in Ohio of all places. He says, my wife noticed

several sailboats sitting in the channel. The sight got my immediate attention as one who loves to sail. Their sails were down and they were inching along. It was extremely warm with little wind. I have experienced the dreadful conditions myself of being onboard a sailboat, going ever so slowly, the sun beating on your body. All you want to do is get to your destination, or at least pick up speed and feel the wind in your face. The sailboats, however could only wait. It wasn't quite time for the drawbridge to open. After a period of being "dead in the water" though, the bridge opened and the sailors moved on." (pause)

Moses told his people that "The Lord will fight for you, but you have to be still." Sometimes following the Lord requires not only trust but patience. The bridge will open, the way will be clear, but some waiting is required. As a kid, I had to **go deep** quite a few times until I finally got a chance to catch the ball. And the crossing of the Delaware and surprising the Hessians wasn't the only battle Washington would have to fight. The Israelites too would face many other hardships and obstacles. But this time they **went deep, very deep**, and from then on,

“The people were in reverent awe before God and trusted in God and his servant Moses.” Amen.