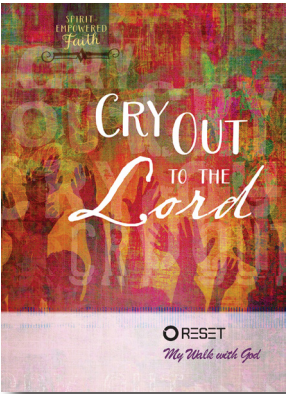


Throw Down Your Staff

This article is from *Cry Out to the Lord*. It is an excerpt from the book, *Wild Goose Chase*, by Mark Batterson.



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Cry Out to the Lord

Living a life of Spirit-empowered adventure will require leaving behind the routine, the humdrum, and the status quo. A life of empowerment may mean turning loose of the things that make sense or fall in line with human standards. A life with the Spirit means we're on a divine exploration, following the path that God has laid down for us even though we oftentimes don't know where we are going when we begin. Sometimes following that path requires great risks, while at other times, it means we respond to the simplest promptings in our heart. Either way, we know that we are living for God's glory because we are choosing to follow His promptings.

Every summer, I take a six-week preaching sabbatical. The reason is simple. It is so easy to get focused on what God wants to do *through* me that I totally neglect what God wants to do *in* me. So, I take off my sandals for six weeks. I go on vacation. I go to church with my family. For several weeks during the summer, I just sit with our congregation, taking notes and singing songs like everyone else. My sabbatical is one way I keep the routine from becoming routine. Yet, it's about more than just taking off my sandals. Let me explain.

Shortly after telling Moses to take off his sandals, God gave Moses one more curious command. He told Moses to throw down his staff.

"Then the LORD said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' 'A staff,' he replied. The LORD said, 'Throw it on the ground.' Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it.





Then the LORD said to him, 'Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.' So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. 'This,' said the LORD, 'is so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you'" (Exodus 4:2–5).

A shepherd's staff was a six-foot-long wooden rod that was curved at one end. It functioned as a walking stick, a weapon, and a prod used to guide the flock. Moses never left home without his staff. That staff symbolized his security. It offered him physical security from wild animals. It provided his financial security—his sheep were his financial portfolio. It was a form of relational security. After all, Moses worked for his father-in-law.

But the staff was more than just a form of security. It was also part of his identity. When Moses looked in the mirror, he saw a shepherd—nothing more, nothing less. I think that's why Moses asked God to send someone else. *"Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?"* (Exodus 3:11). I love the way God answers his question by changing the focus. God says: *"I will be with you"* (Exodus 3:12). That doesn't really seem like an answer to Moses' question, does it? I think it was God's way of saying, *"Who you are isn't the issue; the issue is whose you are!"*



- L4. Rejoicing regularly in my identity as "His Beloved"

LEARN to Encounter Jesus

"This is real love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins" (1 John 4:10).

"There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross serves as a declaration of our immense worth in God's eyes. Imagine that Christ is speaking to you from heaven. Listen to the words that are just for you: *"You are especially valuable to Me. You represent My thoughts, My personality, and what's important to Me. You are important to Me—so important that I laid down My life for you. I saw that you were in danger of being separated from Me for all of eternity, so I acted. I rescued you because I love you and couldn't bear the thought of a relationship without you. That's how I see you: one who is worth My sacrifice."* Now respond to this declaration.

Lord, when I hear Your declaration of my worth to You, I feel _____ . Thank You for reminding me of the truth that my worth can only be declared by the One who created me and died for me.





Has God ever called you to throw something down? Something in which you find your security or put your identity? It's awfully hard to let go, isn't it? It feels like you are jeopardizing your future. It feels like you could lose what is most important to you. That is when you discover who you really are.

I agonize with you because I know how tough it is to throw down a staff. It was so hard to throw down my scholarship at the University of Chicago. It was so hard to leave the security of friends and family and move from Chicago to Washington DC. Yet, the only way you discover a new identity is by letting an old one go. The only way you'll find your security in Christ is by throwing down the human securities we tend to cling to.



L2. Listening to and hearing God for direction and discernment

PRAY and Experience Scripture

"In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self..." (Ephesians 4:22).

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the "staff" that you need to "throw down."

Lord, do I need to throw down:

- *a source of security or provision that's other than You?*
- *a label that I give myself or identity that's other than what You have declared?*
- *a source of security or provision that's other than You?*
- *a habit or behavior that's contrary to Your plan for my life?*
- *some plans or decisions about my future that I have made apart from You?*

Lord, show me what I need to lay aside. Reveal it to me and then show me what You desire for my life.

