

The Story of the Sea Lion is based on the book ‘**Desire**’ by **John Eldridge**
The journey we must take to find the life that God offers us.

It All Began

1. Once upon a time there lived a sea lion who had lost the sea. He lived in a country known as the barren lands. It was a dry and dusty place that was really a desert. Only a kind of coarse grass grew there and there were very few trees. It was mostly dust and the wind made one very thirsty. Of course, it must seem strange to you that such a beautiful creature should end up in a desert. How he came to this barren place no one could remember. It all seemed so very long ago. So long ago, in fact, that it appeared he had always been there. How could that be you may ask? He was after all a sea lion. But as you know, once you have lived so long in a certain place, no matter how strange it may seem, you come to finally think of it as home.

Getting On

2. Many years back, there was a time when the sea lion knew he was lost. In those days he would stop every traveler he met to see if they might help him find his way back to the sea. But no one seemed to know the way. On he searched but never finding. After years without success, the sea lion took refuge beneath a solitary tree beside a very small water hole. The tree provided shelter from the burning rays of the sun, which was very fierce in that place. And the water hole, though small and muddy, was wet, in its own kind of way. Here he settled down and got on with life as best he could.

Desire

3. Had you journeyed in those days through those barren lands, you may have seen the sea lion for yourself. Often in the early evening when the heat of the day had gone, he would come and sit upon his favourite rock, a very large outcrop, which allowed him a full view of those lands, as far as the eyes could see. There he would remain for hours into the night, silhouetted against the darkening sky. On nights when the wind shifted to the east, a faint smell of salt air would come to him on the breeze. Then he would smile and close his eyes and imagine himself at the sea once more. As he lay down to sleep, he would dream of a deep blue ocean where he would swim and twirl, diving into the depths and then surfacing feeling the fresh morning sea air on his whiskers. The sea was calling to him.

Disowned Desire

4. The Sea Lion loved his rock, it had become very special to him. But in reality it was not the rock so much itself, but the smell of salt air that came to him on the easterly breeze and the vivid dreams he had of the sea. But as you know the best of dreams cannot go on, and when he awoke in the mornings he was still in the barren lands. Eventually it all became too much for him to bear. He visited his rock only occasionally, telling himself that he was much too busy to waste his precious time sitting on a rock. The truth of it was, that waking up so far from home was becoming unbearable for him. And so, the day finally came when he stopped going to his rock altogether, and he no longer lifted his nose when the sea breeze blew.

Mocking our Desire

5. The Sea Lion was not the only creature in those barren lands, for it was there he met the tortoise. Now the tortoise was an ancient creature, so weather beaten that the sea lion first thought he was a rock. He told the tortoise of his plight in the hope he may help him find the sea again. “Perhaps” the tortoise mused “this is the sea. You must learn to be happy here for it is unlikely you will ever find this sea of yours.” Deep in his old shrivelled heart, the tortoise envied the sea lion and his sea. “But I belong to the sea” said the sea lion “we are made for each other.” “Come closer” beckoned the tortoise “and I will tell you a secret. I am not a tortoise but a sea turtle.” He squinted at the sea lion, to gauge his reaction. The tortoise’s eyes

had become just two slits. "I left the sea many years ago, in search of better things" he said "if you stay with me I will tell you stories of my adventures." The stories told by the ancient tortoise were enchanting and soon cast their spell on the sea lion. As the weeks passed into months, his memory of the sea faded. "The desert" whispered the tortoise "is all that is, or was, or ever will be." When the dry winds cracked his flippers and filled his eyes with dust, the sea lion would retreat to the water hole. And so he remained, living out his days between the water hole and the tree. The sea no longer filled his dreams.

The Divine Thwart

6. It was in May that the winds began to blow. The sea lion had grown used to the wind, and at first he did not pay much heed at all. Years of desert life had taught him to turn his back in the direction from which the winds came and cover his eyes with his flippers, so the sand and dust would not get in them. He knew that eventually the winds would pass. But not this time. Day and night it came, howling across the barren lands. There was nothing to stop its fury. For forty days and nights without abate the winds blew. And then, just as suddenly as it had begun, it stopped. The sea lion lifted himself up to have a look around. He could scarcely believe his eyes. Every single leaf had been stripped from his tree. The branches that remained with only a twig or two upon them, made his tree look like an old scarecrow. And I do not need to tell you that there was no longer any shade in which to take shelter. But worse, oh, much worse indeed, was what the sea lion saw next. The water hole was completely dry.

Restoration and Hope

7. Not only had the sea lion lost his beloved sea, but now the things he treasured most, his substitutes, had been taken from him. He looked at his tree, it seemed to be dead and his waterhole was now reduced to a parched dry cracked mud hole. How could life be so cruel he thought. It was as if some unseen force was set against him, just to make his life miserable. Now that the winds had abated, winter set in. The temperatures dropped to below zero and he had no shelter at all. Many nights his flippers shook with the cold and his eyelids froze together. Strangely, there was no rain at all that winter. There was just enough water melted from the frost to provide him with water to drink.

Then one morning when he awoke he noticed he was not frozen and that the sun had a slight warmth to it. His spirit was warmed as well by this small reprieve. A few days later he noticed to his great surprise, tiny green shoots on the branches of his tree. Could his tree really, really still be alive. And then to his joy the gentle spring rains began to fall and once again his mud hole became a waterhole for him to lie in. The cracks in his flippers began to heal and as he pondered the restoration of his tree and waterhole, he wondered if ever he would return to his beloved sea. He had not thought about his sea for years and it surprised him that he would have such a thought. During that long and harsh time of drought and bitter winter, his heart had begun to let go of the things he treasured most, his tree and waterhole. Something deep within him had shifted. He had begun to lift his eyes above the horizon and wonder if he would return to the sea. He had no idea when, where or how this might happen...but it seemed vaguely possible.

Love Indescribable

8. The sea lion has nothing to say. Can a sea lion know his creator? Can he know the great "I AM." We will have to wait for when all is revealed.

After the Testing

9. During this time after the great storm and the refreshing rains that came, the sea lion pondered all these things in his heart. Why had this apparent time of testing come on him? What was the meaning of it? Why had spring come again to his waterhole? It all seemed so

strange. And then, why had he even thought of the sea again? He scratched his head with his left flipper but it did not help. So he continued his life under his tree, which now produced shade, and his waterhole which gave him some meagre enjoyment. But he felt and sensed that life was not right, and again the thought about returning to the sea came to him. That night in his dreams, a word came to him from the most high; 'homecoming'. He smiled to himself "I will be coming home".

Returned Desire

10. It was three weeks after the wind ceased to blow that the sea lion had a dream. As I told you before, there were other nights in which he had dreamt of the sea. But those were long ago and almost forgotten. Even still, the ocean that filled his dreams this night was oh, so beautiful and clear, so vast and so deep. It was as if he were seeing it for the very first time. The sunlight glittered on its surface, and as he dived, the waters around him shone like an emerald. And if he swam quite deep it turned to jade, cool dark and mysterious. In all his previous dreams of the sea he had never before found himself in the company of other sea lions, but this night he was surrounded by them. All were diving, turning, spinning and twirling. They were playing and encouraged him to join in the fun. Oh, how he hated to wake from that wonderful dream. It was so real to him. The tears running down his face were the first in many years. But he did not even pause to wipe them away, he did not pause for anything at all. He set his face to the east, and began to walk, as best as a sea lion could. "Where are you going?" asked the tortoise. "I'm going to find the sea." he replied, without looking back.

Letting Go

11. The Sea lion found the effort of walking to the sea quite difficult. He began to wonder if what he had heard from the most high was true. Would he be coming home...to his sea... forever? He was thirsty both physically and in his spirit. Now that he was away from the influence of the tortoise, there began to surface within him many emotions which he had previously suppressed. The longing and waiting for his beloved sea made him groan inwardly as he propelled himself forward on his flippers. As he went, he thought of his tree, the shade it gave him and his waterhole. There was no going back now...he had to let it go. It was painful but at the same time it was good.

Home Coming

12. The Sea lion found in letting go of his beloved tree and water hole that he experienced a freedom he had not known before. He winced as he raced across the hot sand on his flippers. The sea was beginning to come into view. It was so exciting after all these years away from his sea, the thought of coming home was almost too much for his heart to bear. He stopped for a moment just to look at it. It had never looked so blue and inviting, even in his dreams. It was what he had been searching for all his life. However, what he did not know was that he had died from the heat on the journey there, and what he was now experiencing was the real thing. The water was clear as crystal as far as his eyes could see. It was so cool and refreshing. He began to notice that everything seemed at least a hundred times better than he had ever experienced before, even in his wildest dreams. He could spin, dive and twirl at great speed without effort, and all his friends were there. It was then he realised he had come home.

(The original story has been adapted and content added.)

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