




THE **S**UL FACTOR



SHELLEY MAURICE - MAIER



ABIDING BOOKS

## CONTENTS

Foreword: A Voyage of Discovery .....	1
1. My Maiden Voyage	
<i>The Need for Vigilance and a Compass</i> .....	11
2. The Wrong Course	
<i>Resetting My Compass</i> .....	19
3. The Great Rescue	
<i>A New Course</i> .....	31
4. An Anchor for the Soul	
<i>Behaviors Are Tied to Thoughts</i> .....	41
5. Taking the Wind out of Fear's Sails	
<i>With God, All Things Are Possible</i> .....	51
6. Sunken Treasure	
<i>Focusing on God Fills My Heart</i> .....	65
7. Swimming against the Tide	
<i>What You Expect, You Will Realize</i> .....	77

8. Controlling the Rudder	
<i>The Tongue Sets the Course of Your Life</i> .....	89
9. Steering by a True Compass	
<i>It May be Our Truth, But Is It the Truth?</i> .....	101
10. Sailing Upright	
<i>Proper Maintenance Makes for a Seaworthy Ship</i> .....	107
11. Storms and Treacherous Shoals	
<i>The Fullness of God's Love Is Revealed in Suffering</i> .....	119
12. At the Helm	
<i>Who's in Control?</i> .....	131
Epilogue: The Ultimate Quest	
<i>Glorifying God Is the Soul's True Purpose</i> .....	141



# My Maiden Voyage

## The Need for Vigilance and a Compass

*"I can see that our voyage is going to be disastrous  
And bring great loss to ship and cargo,  
and to our own lives, also."*

—ACTS 27:10, THE APOSTLE PAUL

I marveled at the grace and confidence of the seagulls hovering just above me, within arm's reach, just outside of the wheelhouse. The sunlight and sea air were so captivating! When the flock landed on deck, pecking morsels of bait out of Mark's hand, I was thrilled to the core of my being. Surveying the blue expanse of water out beyond our vessel, I did some deep knee bends, then leaned down to rummage through my sea bag for an emery board, intent on sinking into the captain's chair to file my nails. I was having so much fun, in fact, that my mind wandered off course—and my *body* soon followed.

Suddenly our boat pitched. I lost balance and fell to the floor. Before I could get back on my feet, the boat lurched forward again. Mark rushed in behind me, shouting.

“Reverse throttle! Reverse the engine!”

Stunned, I sat frozen where I’d fallen. Mark catapulted over me and thrust back the throttle. Too late! We’d run aground on a shoal more than a mile out from shore. I resorted to a “Mayday” prayer: “*Father in heaven, please help us!*”

“What’s the tide doing?” Mark asked in a strained voice.

“The tide?” I asked. “What do you mean, ‘the tide?’”

“Where’s the tide book?” he continued, earnestly. “I need to know if the tide is coming in or going out.”

My stomach sank. Mark had asked me to study the tide book, but the water had been so rough I’d just thrown it in a drawer and forgotten about it. Now I fumbled around in the drawer, in desperate search of it, and placed it in Mark’s hands.

“Why is it so important to know what the tide is doing right now?” I asked. “It’s early morning—and the sun won’t set until after ten o’clock tonight. We have enough food to last awhile, and *someone* will come along and help us, right?”

“Look,” Mark answered curtly, searching through the book. “There’s at least a twenty-foot tidal variance every twelve hours this time of year. This is a wooden boat. She

has run aground, and that will most likely split open some of her major seams. Our bilge pump isn't big enough to handle taking on much water. We have no skiff or dry suits. We have a nine-foot displacement hull, which means that if the tide is going out, we will eventually keel over. Then, when the tide comes in, we'll rapidly fill up with water. I don't know how much time we have, so if the tide is going out I'll need to cut down the mast and use it to shore up the hull. I don't even know if I brought an ax. *Now do you understand?*"

Mortified and becoming really frightened, I said, "Maybe we should call the Coast Guard to come help us."

"No! I won't call out a Mayday. I've skippered large ships for a living. I'd rather drown than be disgraced over grounding this little thirty-six-foot boat."

I silently prayed more *prayers of desperation*. Mark found the page containing the information he needed. The tide, it seemed, was coming *in* now. Relieved, Mark headed into the hold to review the damages. Returning a few minutes later, he reported that several seams in her hull had opened and that our small bilge pump was already overwhelmed. We'd have to start hauling up water from the hold in order to keep it from flooding the engine—and our boat from sinking!

We bailed from below decks for more than an hour. Fortunately, we kept the water level in the hold below our

shins until the rising tide could finally set us afloat. One of us bailed and the other stood at the wheel as we slowly made our way back to dry dock at Wrangle, where at last we could caulk the split seams and repair the broken propeller.

### MORE THAN A LESSON ON FISHING

Just two days before our near-disaster I still felt eager to do things women at thirty-four years of age weren't usually expected to do. On this five-day voyage up Alaska's inside passage my husband of three years was going to teach me how to *pot fish* for spotted shrimp and how to navigate a boat. When we left Ketchikan he'd promised to teach me the ropes as we went along and asked me to familiarize myself with the tide book, navigational charts, and the workings of the radio, compass, and depth-finder.

On the second day of our voyage a storm hit. I hadn't had time to acquire sea legs yet, and the rolling and pitching made me deathly nauseous. Besides, I had no desire to read about the things Mark had told me to study. I felt too sick and too scared. I prayed to God He would get us safely across Queen Charlotte Sound, and He did.

I got a good night's sleep and awoke the next morning feeling much better. After breakfast Mark told me to stand watch and steer the *F/V Silkie* at an idle toward a small island about three miles ahead off her bow. He warned me

there were shoals well out from shore, which could make for a treacherous passage. Although the island was an excellent visual landmark, I would have to depend on the *exact* compass heading in order to stay on course. Even the slightest variation could cause us to go aground.

“No problem,” I’d said. Mark confidently left me at the wheel while he stepped onto the back deck to chop up frozen crabmeat for the bait jars.

About thirty minutes later, when the diesel engine had warmed up sufficiently, Mark poked his head into the wheelhouse and told me to push the throttle forward until we were making about six knots per hour. With little effort on my part, the throttle glided forward. The engine immediately responded and the sea began to slap noisily against the hull as we moved on a straight course to the island, until my irreverence for keeping vigil over the correct compass setting caused our vessel to go aground. *Do Scylla and Charybdis sound familiar?*

I see my maiden voyage on the *F/V Silkie* as a metaphor for most of my Christian experience. For many years after I accepted God’s offer of Salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ, I continually veered off course, then prayed that God would rescue me.

I knew that I was on a spiritual journey as a Christian. And, as I traveled along, I eventually learned life-enhancing principles that helped keep me on course and get me past

the “shoals” along the way. Applying those principles to my life taught me more about God and helped me experience hope and healing on my journey. They gave me the spiritual concepts and content that led to my first book, *The Sampler*.

I came to see God was trying to teach me even more. While I sought to plot a course through life by focusing on my personal goals, God wanted me to start navigating by the *new compass* He’d given me as a gift at my new birth. Only by submitting my soul more fully to God could I follow the course that would ultimately transform me into the image of Jesus Himself. Although I was a sincere and believing Christian, I had yet to understand that until I intentionally, vigilantly, and continually surrendered my soul to God, I would never realize His greater purpose for my life. These days, I no longer consider myself to be on a journey. Now I know I’m on a *quest*. *What is the difference?*

On a journey we can choose just to sit back and enjoy the scenery until we reach our destination, much as I was trying to do on my *maiden voyage*. On a journey, we can rest on our oars and drift a bit, or even file our nails. Though we risk running aground now and then with such a careless approach to our destination, we hope that God will rescue us. I’m sure I drifted forward in my spiritual life in this manner for too many years.

I now think God wants more *for* us and *from* us. I

believe He intends for us to live the Christian life with every part of our being *fully engaged* in pursuing Him and His will for us. When our journey becomes a quest, we want to expend a constant, conscious, concentrated effort to reach God's intended destination for our life. *What does this take?* It requires that we understand the role the soul—our thoughts, will, and emotions—plays in making us more like Christ. Ultimately it's our responsibility to take charge of our soul by consciously, intentionally submitting it to God's Word, so that we might become healthier human beings, capable of doing His will.

*When our journey becomes a quest,  
we want to expend a constant, conscious, concentrated effort  
to reach God's intended destination for our life.*

In the last decade I've come to see the extent to which Scripture and modern medical research on the mind/body/Spirit connection agree on the role our soul plays in promoting good health. I've applied mind/body/Spirit principles in my own life and used them in my professional practice, coming to realize they are natural partners in both physical healing and inner Sanctification. God's purposes, as revealed in Scripture, are our "compass settings." When we use our will, mind, and

emotions to allow Him to navigate our souls in the direction of His purposes, we eventually arrive at them. Not doing so causes us to go off course, run ourselves aground, and leaves us stranded on the rocks—bailing! Actually, it is not our will alone, but *God working in us to will and to do* (Philippians 2:13). As Larry Osborne puts it:

If I'm a genuine Christ follower, I have available within me the same Holy Spirit, who instructed, guided, and empowered Jesus and the early disciples. And that means my spiritual growth isn't so much the result of my hard work, intellect, and rigid self-discipline (all of which I could boast about). Instead, it's the direct result of my willingness to listen and yield to the Spirit's inner promptings as He works to guide and change me from the inside out. (excerpted from *Contrarian's Guide to Knowing God*)

Sanctification is a lifelong process that requires us to be willing to study God's Word, ask *Him* how we are to serve Him, and then obey His directions. We can't do that if we haphazardly drift along or insist on steering our own course instead of letting God take the helm.