

Marital Transitions: Parting the Fearful Waters

By Mary Lambrecht, M.S. LMFT

Dreams and hopes are pathways the Lord uses in marriage to bond a husband and wife together. As the couple looks toward and moves closer to a future event, promise, or even a general anticipation of something, the marriage shifts and adjusts to accommodate these changes. The very nature of a dream suggests positive outcomes for a couple. Examples of positive anticipated dreams might be a pregnancy, buying a home, preparing for a child's graduation, or even packing for a weekend get-away. Even though the outcome of a dream is expected to be positive, doubts, fears, and negativity can erupt between a husband and wife during these stages in a marriage.

Moses experienced these shifts with the Israelites at various stages in their journey to their dream of deliverance from the bondage of the Egyptians into the Promised Land. When the Israelites saw Pharaoh and his army pursuing them, they were so afraid that they asked Moses if he had made a mistake: "have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt?" (Exodus 14:11). They also dwelled on the notion that their past bondage under Pharaoh's rule would have been the better choice: "For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness." (vs.12). Marriages become especially vulnerable to negative and catastrophic thinking patterns when partners allow fear to dominate. Husbands and wives can even fall into the trap of thinking that staying in past destructive lifestyles ("serving the Egyptians") would have been the better choice.

There is abundant guidance in transitory times for married couples illustrated in the following steps that Moses took with the Israelites:

1. *Moses spoke directly against the fear; "Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today" (Exodus 14:13).*

Ask God to replace the power that fear plays in your thoughts, with a quiet heart and mind toward the anticipated event, toward each other, and toward God Himself. Choose to believe the best about each other and that God's plan is good for the two of you; "No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly." (Ps. 84:11).

2. *Moses reminds the people that they do not need to fight the battle over the Egyptians alone: "The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" Exodus 14:14).*

Husbands and wives can literally wear themselves and each other out in working through changes by utilizing human efforts that are devoid of God's guidance.

Put God in the front lines, seek His will in the matter, and He will instruct you and your spouse: “The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord.” (Psalm 37: 23).

3. *The Lord told Moses to “lift up your rod and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it” (vs. 16). As Moses obeyed the Lord, the sea parted, the Israelites “went into the midst of the sea on dry ground,” and the sea swallowed “the chariots, the horsemen, and all the army of Pharaoh.”*

God told Moses specific steps to take (lifting his rod and stretching out his hand) as the Egyptians pursued the Israelites. The result was victory over the oppressor. Fearful waters of change can threaten marital stability. But as a husband and wife seek God’s specific guidance and then move forward in obedience, the oppression around the transitions will lessen.

Keep a quiet heart. Do not be afraid. His dry ground is near.

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