

Cowabunga!

Our theme for the Couple's Retreat this year is Riding the Waves. We believe this is most apropos with all the waves of discontent, anger, selfishness, immorality and throwaway marriages in our society today. We have found our Christchurch Couple's Retreat to be a respite in a sea of havoc. Truly our Lord has provided in His Church a safe haven for marriages. Christ promised, "...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). Although we cannot escape our culture, we can do more than survive - we may, through Christ, overcome and "ride the waves." I remember, in my youth, the thrill of standing on a surfboard as the waves crashed toward the shore and not only balancing, but also guiding and enjoying the ride. Everyone who surfs falls, but the victor is the one who gets back up and rides the wave to the shore. In the 1960s the term used when you have enthusiastically conquered and rode the wave was "cowabunga!" My prayer is that weak marriages will be strengthened, strong marriages will become stronger and mediocre marriages will become enriched. May the couples ride home with the cry of "cowabunga!"

Let's take a biblical view of waves:

1. God has the ability to control the waves.

God said, "*Fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?*" (Jeremiah 5:22). Let the seas roar, they cannot go one foot beyond the shoreline unless the Lord directs them. Do you feel overwhelmed and feel as though you have been hit with a spiritual, physical or emotional tsunami?

Charles Allen, the late wordsmith, said, "There is no sadder word in the English language than the word hopeless." He may be right! Hopeless carries with it finality and an acceptance of failure. As long as God is on the throne, no circumstance should be looked at as hopeless! Not being in control of circumstances often causes us to panic.

Two Scotsmen had a friendly argument. One said, "The verse that gives me great comfort is: *What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*" (Psalm 56:3). His friend said, "This one gives me greater comfort yet, *...I will trust, and not be afraid...*" (Isaiah 12:2). Both of these verses promise great comfort. If we are full of trust first, we will not be afraid. If we have a lapse of faith, we may recover yet, by trusting after fear hits us. Either way, when our sea is troubled, trust Him. Ask Christ to calm your troubled sea, "*But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!*" (Matthew 8:27)

2. Turbulence accompanies the place where two seas meet.

"And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmovable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves" (Acts 27:41). I have witnessed the convergence where two mighty rivers meet as they both feed the ocean. The water foamed, sprayed as the two mighty forces formed a downwelling.

When a man and a woman marry, two rivers of life from two different families meet and at this critical point there is turbulence. Your husband will never be like your father and your wife will never do things like your mother. Accept the differences and realize when you marry in the will of God we are commanded to adjust, *“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh”* (Ephesians 5:31). Don’t say you cannot, for the Scripture says, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”* (Philippians 4:13). When the big wave comes in, don’t just lament and go under for the third time, stand up and ride that wave! *“And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath...”* (Deuteronomy 28:13).

3. Waves do not disturb our Lord.

Let me share with you two verses that give me an immense amount of serenity, *“And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full. And he was in the hinder part of the ship, asleep on a pillow: and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish?”* (Mark 4:37, 38). As the storm crashed and the billows rolled, our Lord in calmness slept. He was not worried, He was not fretting. Do you believe your marital storm is too much for our Lord to handle? Do you believe your inevitable lot is watching your marriage go under?

Once a ship was at sea caught in a horrendous storm. The people were asked to stay below for safety. As the ship rocked back and forth and careened from side to side, the passengers became increasingly unnerved. Finally, one of the passengers said, “I’ll be right back,” as he ascended the steep ladder to the deck. His purpose was to approach the captain and inquire of their safety. The man never got beyond the final rung of the ladder, because when he just barely opened to hatch to exit, he viewed the most comforting sight! He saw the fearless face of the captain majestically holding the helm in his calloused hands without a worried line on his face. He took it all in with a deep sigh, then descended the ladder and said to his fellow passengers and said, “We have nothing to worry about, I have just seen the face of the captain and all is well!”

The Lord is not worried about your marriage. Just rest in Him. *“...In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength...”* (Isaiah 30:15).

4. God will allow us to conquer the waves.

“But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.” (Matthew 14:24). Can you not feel the agony of the disciples? They were not only in a storm, but they were in the middle of the sea. There was no other way out but through. At the very moment of chaos, the disciples see Jesus walking to them on the water. Peter then requested a brave thing, *“And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said*

unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:28-31). Notice our Lord did not rebuke Peter for wanting to walk over the waves; He rebuked Him for his doubts. This is actually encouraging to those who today are bouncing up and down on the waves - God would have you vacate the "boat life" and walk with Him on the water. Let us take our spouse and go for a supernatural stroll. The very waves that can sink your boat are the very waves that will buoy you to the top. The key is taking your marriage to Jesus. He walks over the waves and will give you the ride of a lifetime. Cowabunga!

-Pastor Pope-