

Handling The Unexpected – Feb. 2023

LWCC Marriage Ministries Email For February 2023

Well, what a week or so it has been.

As I sit in Gore (following the devastation caused by the weather in the North Island over the past few days), and prepare this communication, I have found myself looking back and thinking about some of the catastrophic events that have occurred, and I have lived through during my lifetime. In 1956 in Greymouth, in 1966 in Lower Hutt, and again in 1969 in New Plymouth it was severe flooding: In April 1968 I was part of the rescue effort of the Wahine Disaster in Wellington Harbour. More latterly most of you receiving this, survived, like us, one of the biggest series of earthquakes the world has known.

And now the aftermath of a cyclone, that has, and will in the days ahead, have some degree of impact on us all. And, like us, I'm sure some of you have been getting in touch with family and friends in the affected regions, to see how they are faring, and let them know we are thinking of them.

It's certainly got me to thinking. Dangerous, I know!

My first thought:

We just have no idea what's around the corner: undoubtedly, severe weather events; the unexpected loss of a job: the sudden passing of someone we're close to: family drama or crisis of one sort or another: the serious falling out of long-held friendships: major changes in business fortunes and direction: the need to shift from one suburb or city or church to another:..... Such events can tend to hit you without much warning, they can be VERY stressful, and they can be hugely impacting upon our marriage relationship.

My second thought:

What can we do NOW to lessen the impact, should anything hit us unexpectedly down the track! In the days leading up to Cyclone Gabriel there were a lot of messages coming out in the media encouraging people to prepare – what evacuation plans to you have in place; what emergency supplies do you have; make sure all your devices are charged up; and so on. As alluded to in our last communication, because of the sudden change in Ronnie's health following her surgery last May, in recent months, we had to do some soul-searching and reappraising, and I really have to say we could have been – we should have been – better prepared. So, what can we be doing now to better prepare us for whatever life may throw our way. I want to suggest three things.

- First, consider how well you are able to communicate together on intimate and spiritual issues. A lot of couples we talk to, love one another – there's no question of that – but have had difficulty for years when it comes to sharing together on the more intimate and personal things of their faith and intimacy; two things that really impact on our marriage relationship. So often we find that each of them want something very different than what they are experiencing, but find it so difficult to make the changes, and break through their insecurities, that unfortunately, all too quickly, they settle back to the status quo. If this is you, can we encourage you not to leave it there. Use this communication to begin a conversation; eg "Is this us", "How do you feel about this issue", "How do you think we could go about changing where we're at with this." As we outlined at the Marriage Date Night last

year, this is our main purpose for these emails – to give you material that will help to open up more intimate and open conversations, and in turn take you to new levels in your marriage. So, if this is you, can we encourage you to have the conversation, and if it's hard, seek help. Don't be embarrassed – look at the bigger picture. 'We want to build our relationship. What do we need to do to take us to the next level.'

- Second, individually, and together, keep your relationship with the Lord as sweet as you can possibly make it. Like number one, if you find it difficult to talk together about such things, do what it takes to break through and learn to talk together about how you might be able to encourage one another in this. If we want things to change, it costs. Primarily it costs us in making time to ensure we have, and keep, the best possible relationship with our Lord. It costs us in time to develop the kind of relationship with each other that allows us to speak together openly about where we are at, and what we can do to better support one another in pursuit of something more. Keep in mind what the theme of this email is about: "what can we be doing now to better prepare us for whatever life may throw our way".

- Thirdly, invest more time now in each other. Apart from the conversations suggested above, for example, when was the last time you went out together on a date? Make Date Time a weekly, or at the worst, a fortnightly priority. Regular, prioritised Date Time has such an impact in the lives of every couple we see. If you have struggled in this area, can we put out a challenge – for the next three months, get your diaries or your calendar out and prioritise some time, either weekly or fortnightly to have a date. When you have your date, whether you go out or stay at home, set some boundaries; ie. No technology, No talking about kids or work. In our next email, I am going to concentrate on sharing a whole bunch of ideas for being creative with Date Time, so watch out for that in a month's time.

Unfortunately, the hurley burley of life tends to cause us to get too familiar, and to drift along taking one another for granted. Sometimes, the demands of life put so much pressure on us, that it is very hard to adequately juggle all the balls in our world. And the one thing that suffers more than anything is our marriage relationship. So, in summing up my musings following all that has transpired in the North this past week, *'What can we do NOW to lessen the impact, should anything hit US unexpectedly down the track!'* Take some time to talk and consider the three areas I mention above; a) in being focused, and having those serious conversations about the more intimate aspects of our relationship; b) prioritising our personal walk with The Lord, and being able to be more open and encouraging with one another in this; and c) investing focused time with each other on a regular basis.

As always, if in sharing together around this communication brings up stuff that is challenging for you both, please reach out. Our heart is to see couples endeavouring to stretch and grow in their relationship, and most of the time there are simple practical tips we can share with you that will help you make progress, and implement effective change. We are here for you.

Rich Blessings, from Your Marriage Team:

Stan and Ronnie

John and Karen.