

The Inlet Of Transition

Jack and Trisha Frost

I grew up in Florida living a few blocks from the Atlantic Ocean and even closer to the river known as the Intracoastal Waterway. Every day was spent on the water, surfing or fishing. I loved to wade the oyster beds in the river fishing for trout, spot-tail bass, flounder, and snook. But it was the ocean that captivated my heart most. The river seemed so limited, while the ocean, so boundless.



Growing up in a troubled family, it was the sea that became my source of comfort and rest. By the age of 23, I stayed at sea a week or more at a time, 50 miles from land, captain of commercial snapper and grouper fishing boats. The wonders I've seen in the deep blue: the whales, 15-ft. sharks, 30-lb. snappers, 400-lb. groupers, blue marlins, and the serenity of a still calm night with the stars in heaven revealing God's glory. The open ocean, with gulfstream blue waters, captivated me! It became the passion of my soul! I lived for the sea and was willing to die for it, as some of my friends did during the 50- to 60-mph winds and 20-foot high seas that winter storms produced!

A river, flowing towards the vast wonders of the ocean blue, must first pass through the churning, often dangerous currents of the inlet mouth. The "river of God" is entering into this inlet of transition. It is beginning to flow out from the confined area, where the riverbanks hold back the rushing waters, into an open sea, where our vision is unlimited and God's glory revealed beyond our wildest dreams. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him" (1Corinthians 2:9).

As long as you are steering your vessel on the river, initially it seems much safer than the ocean. The waters aren't too deep. You can still see shore and easily get off the boat when you are uncomfortable with things. There are not as many risks involved in the river, but you can never be at complete rest because you cannot leave the helm unattended. Your eyes are on every sandbar and your mind strives to calculate the channel around the next bend, or you may run aground. It takes a watchful eye to navigate, for the river can be laden with much traffic and commerce. Sometimes you get fogged in and have to throw anchor and wait things out in fear of some impatient navigator, whose vision is limited, running you down. The dangers of the inlet can be more frightening. Currents are strong. Hidden sandbars shift from week to week. Fishing vessels often clog the inlet mouth. The tide may be too low to cross the sandbars. The river can be a busy, restless place where you rarely find a moment's peace.

When a sailor breaks out of the restricted area of the river and inlet and into the open sea, an unexplainable inner joy fills his soul. Ah, the open expanse of the deep blue sea! That is where God reveals His deepest wonders. That is where you experience perfect peace. After crossing the sandbars, the vessel is put on auto-pilot and steers the course on its own, for rarely does another vessel impede your way. You walk up on the bow and gaze at the horizon and feel a heaviness lift from your soul. You're leaving behind

the distractions, noise, and pressures of life. Soon, land is far behind and you find that you are the only vessel in sight. All of the voices that disquieted your mind before and sapped your strength, no longer seem significant. The crew hardly speaks to one another. It is an unspoken, understood thing. Each is experiencing the euphoria that comes when a sailor or fisherman loses sight of land and all its diversions and has the open sea before him. It is now only you, the sea, and the Creator of this awesome, natural cathedral. Your soul has found its place of rest. You are free from the chains that bind! You have been created for this place, this moment of deep communion. "Those who go down to the sea in ships, who do business on great waters; they have seen the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep" (Psalm 107:23, 24).

For my wife and me, the river of God has taken our lives and ministry from a dry riverbed to a small, gently flowing stream and turned our life into a rushing torrent. Our hearts have been captivated by the Father's love. In return, we are more fervently and passionately in love with Him. God's graces and gifts are being released through us. There are fresh visions and revelations. Others, seeing the wild ride we are on, are being drawn to climb aboard the vessel with us as we navigate the river together downstream towards the boundless sea of the Father's love. Yet, there have been many dangers on this river, and we've run aground more than once. Our vision seems to easily get fogged. We often get so preoccupied with staying within the flow of the channel and meeting all the needs of those on the journey with us that we lose sight of the place of rest in the ocean of the Father's love. How our souls long to cross over the inlet of transition and to constantly rest in the Father's love. Oswald Chambers understood our journey well: "The greatest competition to your devotion to Jesus is your service to Him!"

Whom did God have more trouble with -- Nineveh, or the man of God through whom He wanted to speak the message of repentance and forgiveness? I believe it was Jonah and the motives of his heart! (see p. 7). When the man of God got his heart attitude right, the city of Nineveh was more than willing to repent. Where did God take Jonah in order to help him clearly hear His voice and change the focus of Jonah's heart? The sea! Revival in our cities should not be a problem when the motives of the hearts of God's leaders are purified in the ocean of the Father's love.

We, especially pastors and leaders, are in the inlet of transition today. We've had quite an exciting ride on the river of God, but He is taking us into deeper waters where greater wonders and glory exist. But first we must journey through the bumpy and often dangerous swirling currents of the inlet of transition. The greatest danger point of any pregnancy and new birth is the moment of transition, as the baby enters into the narrow passageway of the birth canal. As we complete this transitional period, we will break forth through the inlet into the open ocean and its wondrous depths. We will begin to experience, in greater ways than we have known in the river, "the breadth and length and height and depth" of the Father's love and enter into His rest. In this vast expanse of His love, with no effort or striving on our part, our unconscious motivations will be purified in His love and revival will break forth in many cities. "The fruit of righteousness will be peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever. My people will live in peaceful dwelling places, in secure homes, in undisturbed places of rest... How blessed you will be, sowing your seed by every stream..." (Isaiah 32:17 – 19).

How Do We Make It Through The Transition Safely?

First, inlets are often rough, so make sure everything is in its proper place or it may fall overboard or break. It is in the inlet of transition that God most targets our unconscious areas of pride, self-love, self-reliance, and counterfeit affections. Areas of fleshly wisdom that God's grace previously covered will be exposed in greater degrees. Over and over, we may find our own ideas, opinions, and subjectivity overflowing. Even a strong will can lie hidden behind even the most gentle of voices. These "presumptuous sins" must be brought to the light and dealt with before we break forth into the ocean and find deeper rest in the Father's love. (Psalm 19:12 – 14)

Secondly, traversing an inlet requires your greatest focus. Nothing brings our spirit man into focus more quickly than prolonged prayer and fasting. This is perhaps the greatest time in history when Christians' most intense battlegrounds, especially leaders, will be in the realm of the soul. "Is it a fast like this which I choose, a day for a man to humble himself... to loosen the bonds of wickedness... and break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58:5, 6) This will be a year when greater grace will be given in the realm of prayer and fasting. "Fasting burns out our selfishness. It is the foundry in which we are purified. Its fires refine our faith; its flames separate the base impurities from our true character in Christ; its hot blasts purify our hearts" (Lee Bueno). "I personally believe there are some things that are in the will of God that He wants us to have, but we will never attain them unless we combine fastings with prayer" (Derek Prince).

Thirdly, safely crossing rough inlets requires a quiet confidence and dependence upon skills learned in past experiences at sea. There can be no fear, or you panic at the crisis moment. I speak daily to many ministers from around the world who are in the midst of the river of God. Many are tired and weary. This is the place where dependence upon the Father is easily lost as the weariness leads to anxieties and insecurities and faith diminishes. My wife and I are in the best place we have ever been, relationally and spiritually, yet we hear God calling us into a deeper rest. Therefore, we plan on taking three months this year where we minister to no one and aren't preparing for the next sermon. We just want to grow more secure in resting in our Father's love and spend time playing with Him as His little children. We know it will be preparation for us entering into deeper realms of glory that lie ahead. (Hebrews 4:9 – 11)

Fourthly, in the inlet of transition, we must learn to "wait" on God. In rougher inlets, you have to sit and wait on the larger swells to pass and look for an opening when you can get safely across the bar. I've seen impatient captains try to rush through and the swells lift the vessel high and then it falls, slamming their propellers into the sand. They are left helpless, without power, the journey aborted as they are towed back to port. When we wait extended periods on God, He acts on our behalf. Every few months I try to enter into solitude and just sit all day and wait for God to come and renew my strength. He reveals His wonders during these seasons of waiting. If we act without waiting on God, then He waits on us to enter His rest before He acts. It is in the waiting that our strength is renewed and God's power increases. (Isaiah 30:18; 40:29 – 31; 64:4)

Charles Swindoll best described the posture that Father is calling us to in the inlet of transition:

SIMPLICITY

SOLITUDE

SILENCE

SUBMISSION

This year is a time of preparation for the outpouring of His wondrous love to a lost world. We are to simplify our lives and ministries by spending seasons separating ourselves from all the voices of need for the purpose of waiting on the Father. Waiting is a sign of absolute dependence and submission. There is no more valuable time spent in the day than the time spent waiting on God! This is the position where we experience the displacement of self by the enthronement of God. This is the place of humility where God is all and self becomes nothing. Our hearts are being prepared for the boundless ocean of His love that lies ahead!

In the Father's love,

Jack & Trisha Frost

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