

My Unexpected

BY BECKY THOMAS

I never expected to be single at age 40, but the scriptures helped me find strength and draw closer to God.



I recently studied the account of the children of Israel being led to the promised land. I could feel their despair as they approached the borders of the Red Sea, wondering where they could possibly go from there.

Turning 40 and still single, I believed that I too was standing on the shore, determined not to turn back, the path ahead of me uncertain. The feeling was all too familiar. I had felt it when I graduated single from college and again when I was still single at 30. Now at 40, I was still counting.

As I read, I realized we can't always imagine what the Lord can or will do for us. The children of Israel certainly didn't. They "lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore

afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord" (Exodus 14:10).

The Lord heard their pleas. "Lift thou up thy rod," He instructed their prophet and leader, Moses, "and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea" (Exodus 14:16). As the Israelites walked to safety, "the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left" (Exodus 14:22).

This route the children of Israel were asked to take was an unforeseen route. It was a path no one had ever taken before. But through it, the Lord made the seemingly impossible possible.

My life has also taken an unexpected route, as have the lives of many others—perhaps those who are single

BACKGROUND PHOTOGRAPH BY DIGITAL VISION; INSET: MOSES PARTING THE RED SEA, BY ROBERT T. BARRETT; PHOTOGRAPH OF WOMAN BY FRANK HEIMRICH, POSED BY MODEL

Route

parents; those who are divorced, widowed, childless, or disabled; or those who have experienced any of life's other unanticipated scenarios.

I have found that the unexpected route is not a lesser route. The scriptures tell of some of the Lord's most faithful servants making their way through uncommon paths. For example, Zacharias and Elisabeth were both "well stricken in years" (Luke 1:7) when they had their first child. Before Joseph of Egypt became leader to his brothers, as had been prophesied, he was enslaved and sold at their hands (see Genesis 37). Widowed Ruth supported her mother-in-law and

herself, eventually marrying again and becoming a forebearer to Jesus Christ (see Ruth 1–4).

Not all are asked to take an unexpected route, and I don't know all the reasons I have been directed to this particular path. But even though I still have moments of despair when my heart longs for the love of my life to be at my side, I have experienced great joy while pressing forward on this course. I've become acquainted with God as I've turned to Him and found answers and meaning in my day-to-day life. To learn of His love, His life, His care, His concern, and His tender mercies is the greatest life experience I could ask for. ■



SEEING DIVINE PATTERN AND PURPOSE

"Daily hope is vital, since the 'Winter Quarters' of our lives are not immediately adjacent to our promised land. . . . An arduous trek still awaits, but hope spurs weary disciples on. Those with true hope often see their personal circumstances shaken, like kaleidoscopes, again and again. Yet with the 'eye of faith,' they still see divine pattern and purpose."

Elder Neal A. Maxwell (1926–2004), "Brightness of Hope," *Ensign*, Nov. 1994, 36.