The Saving of a Marriage

A young, ambitious guy at Amoco got a promotion that required a transfer to Cairo. Peter Koestenbaum, founder and chairman of PiB and the Koestenbaum Institute, with a focus on bringing leadership philosophy to business people, tells the story of how that development almost wrecked this young man's marriage.

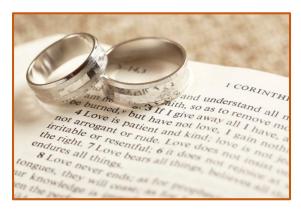The Amoco associate went home to his new wife and young baby and said, "Great news, we're moving to Cairo!"

Appalled, his wife replied, "You're moving alone. I'm going home to my mother."

That was the first test of leadership in that family, Koestenbaum said.

There was no apparent compromise. If he gave up his promotion, he would resent his wife for ruining his career. But if she went along with the move, she would hate him for squashing her ideals for the baby and herself. What to do?

"They had a long discussion, going back to the fundamentals, asking questions such as, Is this my career or ours? Is the baby yours or mine? Are we individuals, or do we operate as a team? What are our values?" Koestenbaum relayed.

The couple ended up going to Cairo, but not before their relationship had been transformed – she understanding that his career was important to her, and he recommitting to his values as a participant in the family.

"What matters," Koestenbaum said, "is not what they ended up choosing, but how. They took the courageous step to redefine from the inside out who they truly were. The *how* is what gives you character. The *what*, which at first appears paramount, is ultimately of no emotional significance."

The process of decision-making, then, made within the framework of culture and values, is very important – not just in a marriage, but also in other organizations and institutions, such as a church, a college, athletics and, certainly, health care.

It is a lesson we learn with experience and wisdom.

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful (Colossians 3:15 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter