



## prepare enrich

by David and Jill Brown, People Resources Team

"I wish we'd had this kind of help years ago. We've been stuck on this bad track for so long, our ruts are too deep to climb out."

How many times have we at PRT heard this? We've certainly seen the results among Navigator staff who finally ask for help after years of going it alone. Some are jolted into action when the word "divorce" pops up during yet another conflict. Others come face-to-face with how their unhealthy marriage affects their ministry. Sometimes their supervisor tells them, "You need to get help. Now." But all those years of hurt mean they arrive with lots of scars and little hope.

This is why we created our marriage mentoring program. We want to see every engaged or newly married staff couple going strong under the loving supervision of an older mentor couple. Instead of waiting 20 or 30 years, it's much easier to change direction when you first get the uneasy sense you might be on the wrong track. And you're more likely to ask for help if you know someone near at hand is both willing and trained to give it.

## PREPARE ENRICH®

"The most important thing I learned from our mentors," one young husband said, "is how to fight fair." His wife looked at him. "And how to really, really connect," he added. She smiled and gave him a thumbs up.

They were right. Those are probably the two most important skills practiced by people with healthy marriages. To help engaged or married couples gain these and other skills, we train our mentors to use a tool called Prepare-Enrich. After the couple finishes their separate online assessments, the results are sent to the mentors. Then the two couples meet as many times as necessary, working their way through subjects like finances, physical relationship, and why your partner's annoying habits are God's design. The combination of this material and the mentors' life example is unbeatable.

Each March and October, PRT holds an all-day workshop to train marriage mentors. The seminars are open to anyone, but scholarships to cover the \$175 registration are reserved for Navigator staff. We can also do this training by Skype.

As for those with ruts "too deep to climb out," don't give up! It takes work, but Prepare-Enrich has helped many couples who once believed this about themselves. Some are now part of our network of marriage mentors. Each time they help another couple, they delight in seeing how our redeemer God uses their past struggles for good.

*We want to see every engaged or newly married staff couple going strong under the loving supervision of an older mentor couple.*

# upfront

real talk about real stuff . . . upfront

THE NAVIGATORS®

Summer 2015 • Volume 9, Issue 2

*Being in war together may be what keeps us from being at war with each other.*

## in war . . . together

marriages healed in battling our common enemy

by Francis Chan



Francis and Lisa Chan

How long do you think your marriage will last? Will you make it another five years? Ten? Fifty?

I think we can all agree that it's not going to last very long — not in light of eternity.

Eternity changes how we love. It would be unloving to get my wife and kids so focused on this life that they are unprepared for the next. Some Christians emphasize marriage so much that it might lead some to believe the goal of Christianity is to have a happy marriage, and God becomes a means to that end. I hear many Christians thank God for their families more than they thank him for the cross. Obviously God wants us to love our families, but let's be careful.

### Which Passage Would Jesus Quote?

Don't get me wrong, I love being married. After twenty years, I love my wife Lisa more than ever. One of the keys to our marriage, however, has been to keep marriage in its proper place. While God commands us to value marriage, he also is clear that we must not over-value it. After all, we are on a mission during our brief time on earth. That's why Paul says,

Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that. This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none. (1 Corinthians 7:27–29)

Paul who wrote Ephesians 5 also wrote 1 Corinthians 7. The one who said "husbands love your wives as Christ loved the church" also wrote "let those who have wives live as though they had none." We need to find the healthy tension of obeying both passages. And let's not forget the words of Jesus: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:25–26).

Our tendency, when teaching on marriage, is to dismiss some of these passages with a sentence or two, and then quickly return to Ephesians 5. But is that okay? Or could it be that God wants us to emphasize all of these passages equally? Give them equal "air time"? Which passages would Jesus quote if he performed a wedding ceremony this weekend?

It's understandable that we spend a lot of time teaching through Ephesians 5. After all, families are falling apart. Divorces are happening at an alarming rate. There is a crisis in the church. Husbands are neglecting their wives and vice versa. At first thought, it may even seem dangerous to teach certain passages. Human



©istock.com/Steve Debenport

Would you like to meet with a PRT member at the National Staff Conference? Come by the PRT booth or email [Diane.Sevcik@navigator.org](mailto:Diane.Sevcik@navigator.org)





## are you willing?

by Brad Hillman  
People Resources Team Director

Over the years, Jeanette and I have attended a lot of marriage workshops and seminars. We've also read enough books and articles on marriage to fill a library. I figured I'd heard all there was to say on the subject.



So I was surprised and intrigued to read Francis Chan's article, which you'll find reprinted in this issue of *UpFront*. He brings a fresh and challenging perspective about marriage and the kingdom of God. Whether you're single, engaged, or married for decades, I think this article will invite you to embrace God's agenda and understand how marriage (or singleness) fits into His plan. And if this stimulates your interest, consider attending the marriage workshop led by the Chans at the National Staff Conference.

During the conference, our whole team will be available to meet and interact with you about marriage or any other topic on your mind. Our desire and top priority is to help you experience the gospel personally and then "...stand with generation after generation in awe of God's work; each one tells stories of His mighty acts." (Psalm 145:4 MSG)



wisdom tells us to skip passages that warn us that our families can distract us from kingdom work. But preaching the "whole counsel of God's word" means we value, trust, and teach the whole Bible.

### Don't Get It Backwards

Because divorce runs so rampant even in the church, it makes sense that we tend to overcompensate by emphasizing marriage more than Scripture does. But by doing so, we may be hurting marriages rather than mending them. Couples become self-centered, rather than mission-focused. Singles who once radically served Jesus now spend their days merely improving and enjoying their marriage. Either that, or they quarrel incessantly and spend their days in counseling and despair. Either way, they become virtually worthless for kingdom purposes. Can you think of any couples that serve Jesus more faithfully now that they're married? It doesn't have to be this way. This is why Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 7. "I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:35).

The goal is "undivided devotion to the Lord." Meditate on those words. Remember that the Bible is not a book about marriage; it is a book about God. The best thing we can do with our brief lives is to devote ourselves to him and his mission. This is the goal. And marriage can actually help us achieve this goal. That's why Paul encourages marriage for those who are tempted sexually. A healthy marriage helps to prevent temptations that would destroy our effectiveness. But remember that the goal is to be completely devoted to God. Marriage can be used as a means of improving our devotion to Jesus. Let's not get it backwards and think of him as the means of improving our marriages.

The Bible is not a book about marriage, it is a book about God.

Lisa once described our marriage as a long episode of "The Amazing Race." If you've never seen the show, it's a competition where a person chooses a partner and

then races around the world against other couples. Her point was that she and I view our lives much like the contestants on that show. Like Paul, we see our lives on earth like a race (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). We don't have time to fight, nor to settle down. We are in pursuit of a prize. We are trying to make as many disciples as possible (Matthew 28:18-20), at as much depth as possible. There will be plenty of time to celebrate after we cross the finish line. For now, we just keep running.

### Enter the Battlefield Together

The Bible teaches that we are in a real war with a real enemy (2 Corinthians 10:3-4; Ephesians 6:10-20). God has given us a mission, so we cannot allow ourselves to "get entangled in civilian pursuits" (2 Timothy 2:3-4).

Picture a nice house with a white picket fence and your happy family lounging inside. Now imagine a full-scale war unfolding just a few blocks away. Your friends and neighbors are fighting for their lives while you are remodeling your kitchen and hanging your new big screen TV. You have contractors installing better windows so you can tune out all of the noise.

It is a pretty pathetic picture, but it's an appropriate comparison for the lives that are offered to so many Christian couples. They are ignoring Jesus's mission in hopes of enjoying this life. But don't fall for it. Real life is found in the battle. Right now, we have many brothers and sisters being tortured overseas because of their faith. Let's pray for them and be encouraged by their example to enter the fight.

Being in war together may be what keeps us from being at war with each other. Rather than neglecting the battle to work on your marriage, maybe the best thing for your marriage is to enter the battlefield together.

Francis and his wife are co-authors of *You and Me Forever: Marriage in Light of Eternity*.

Article from *DesiringGod.org*. Used with Francis Chan's permission.

**You and Me Forever**  
Marriage in Light of Eternity Workshop

Francis and Lisa Chan  
National Staff Conference, Orlando, FL



Visit the PRT booth  
at the National Staff Conference  
for a chance to win this LG PA77U  
LED Projector and Magic Remote.

(Visit our booth for more details - \$749.99 suggested retail)



*Couples become self-centered, rather than mission-focused. Singles who once radically served Jesus now spend their days merely improving and enjoying their marriage.*



2015/16 PRT SEMINARS  
IN COLORADO SPRINGS

Personal Contribution Assessment  
October 22-24, 2015  
January 2016

Listening and Healing Prayer Seminar  
October 22-24, 2015 (Grants Pass, OR)

Sabbatical Orientation Workshop  
February 2-5, 2016

Relational Healing Seminar  
February 11 & 12, 2016

For more information call  
(719) 594-2555.

*UpFront* is the newsletter of The Navigators' People Resources Team, copyright © 2015 by The Navigators, P.O. Box 6000, Colorado Springs, CO 80934; (719) 594-2555. Brad Hillman, PRT director (brad.hillman@navigator.org); Jill Brown, editor; Cynthia Hagen, publisher (cynthia.hagen@navigator.org); Steve Learned, designer (steve@zignguy.com). All Scripture quotations from the New International Version (NIV) unless otherwise indicated.