

Now fear
and panic
were the order
of the day.

a point of no return

by Brad Hillman
People Resources Team Director

He wasn't quite sure where it began or just how he got here, but he did know he'd reached a point of no return. The denials, the misrepresentations, the hiddenness had all been discovered, and now . . . well, now fear and panic were the order of the day. Everything would crumble around him. Life. Ministry. Family. Kids. Donors.

No going back. It was over.

Like most Christian organizations and churches, The Navigators supported this view for years. When sexual sin was admitted or exposed, that staff member might as well turn in his badge. Many older staff can relate stories of times when we were guilty of "shooting our wounded."

Maybe the decision to dismiss those staff came out of self-righteousness. But for the most part, I think we just didn't know what to do. Staff in this situation were quickly dismissed, donors received an obscure letter of explanation, and the staff (along with spouse and family) were often cut off from friends, community, healing and hope.

For The Navigators, this was a very efficient process. One problem, though . . . it wasn't Biblical! Around the year 2001, the PRT began to ask questions.

- ⊕ Is there anything God cannot restore?
- ⊕ If God can redeem anything, and we want to have the mind of Christ, why do we dismiss staff for sexual misconduct?
- ⊕ How can we help the fallen to be healed and restored?
- ⊕ How can we keep "fallen" staff and also maintain the integrity of the organization and of the Gospel?

After exploration, prayer, reading and study, we concluded, ***There is nothing a person can do that God cannot redeem . . . if the person is willing to repent.*** While the process promised to be messy and challenging and inexact in many ways, the PRT committed to offering a restoration process for those willing to receive help. The NLT reviewed the plan and agreed.

Galatians 6:1 says we are to restore others gently and watch out that we also are not tempted. In the PRT's Restoration Process, this begins with a three-part foundation: a Christian counselor, a Restoration Team, and a PRT Advisor.

The Christian counselor helps the fallen staff understand the lies and underlying issues that led to their sinful behaviors. From there, the counselor invites them to a lifestyle that more deeply reflects the nature and character of God. The counselor is also a valuable resource to help the spouse work through issues of broken trust, shame and forgiveness. Through staying in communication with the Restoration Team, the counselor will ultimately have a voice in whether the individual has truly been restored.

The Restoration Team consists of three or four couples or singles who meet regularly with the fallen staff and, for couples, the spouse. Their basic purpose is to



Brad Hillman



this is the Gospel!

by Cynthia Hagen
People Resources Team

Almost ten years ago, the mission agency I worked for allowed me to spend nine months interning with The Navigators' PRT.

I'm still here.



And I still think highly of my old organization. Very highly. But two things about the PRT astonished me and won my heart.

First, two women spent two hours with me weekly, developing me and helping me grow in intimacy with Jesus. I hadn't received such care, attention and time since I was a student.

Also, during my internship, a staff couple came for restoration. They had struggled with what evangelicals and mission agencies considered "the mother of all sins," and I watched as they were given love, grace, care, and countless hours to restore them to God and ministry. I had truly never seen this kind of care. I wasn't sure what to make of it.

Since then, I've served in several restoration situations. What do I think ten years later? This is the Gospel! God can and does restore. The fruit of restoration is sweet in quality and extensive in quantity. It transforms hearts and nations.



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no return

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"be Jesus" by bringing grace and truth for the purpose of healing the individual or couple. Team members are coached to seek the heart of the fallen person and their spouse, speaking the truth in love from a position of humility.

The PRT Advisor helps the Restoration Team stay on track.

Over time, teams can drift from their purpose toward one of two extremes. They might minimize or even deny the sin. Or they make the fallen staff "pay" for what they did, serving up shame and rejection, losing focus on the truth that while we cannot minimize sin, Someone has already been crucified for this. Both extremes are equally destructive, and the PRT Advisor tries to catch and correct any such drift in its early stages.

Restoration is not guaranteed or automatic. For the team, restoration calls for a commitment to deliberate involvement and friendship with the individual, spouse and family. It requires pursuing another person's heart with grace, truth and humility. It also demands a seriousness about sin and its consequences, a vision for steps that would help the fallen person, and an ultimate goal of desiring Christ to be glorified.

For the individual, restoration begins with a willingness to submit to the Lord and to this process. In the book *Rebuilding Your Broken World*, written after his own failure and restoration, Gordon McDonald says, "There are no words to describe the inner anguish of knowing that you have offended and disappointed God, you have violated your own integrity, and you have betrayed people that you deeply love and care for."

Repentance is at the core of the restoration process. It's hard and painful work to leave sinful ways and begin again to walk in the light of the Gospel. The Restoration Team does not bring judgment, but sin always has consequences. The fallen person must be willing to give up hiddenness and submit to the authority of God and the team. Signing up for the process is a consent for surgery.

What is the goal? Not just to stop the sinful behavior or achieve a "clean slate" for six months, but to have a heart that has been changed from the inside out.

A good Restoration Team will also seek to discern the motivation for restoration. "If the driving force in the restoration process is for the individual to return to ministry, it's likely that true repentance is not happening. The driving force must be a complete restoration to a right relationship with the Lord." (*Restoring the Fallen*, Wilson & Friesen, page 168.)

For most staff who read this issue of *UpFront*, the articles should be informative and encouraging. But possibly for someone it will be confrontive. Maybe you've been living in hiddenness, believing that disclosure would lead to a point of no return. Most restorations involve sexual sin, but the process also applies to anything that significantly hinders your ability to be a minister of the Gospel, such as rage, misuse of alcohol or drug abuse. May the Lord use the scriptures, testimonies and words in this issue to invite you into a painful, difficult and messy process. A process where you might experience love, forgiveness, insight, healing and hope. A hope

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shattered

by a Navigator staff couple

Imagine a stone thrown at a window, with the glass shattering into a million pieces and crashing to the ground. That was my life the night my husband woke me from sleep to say, “I have something I need to confess to you.”

He then shared about an ongoing struggle with sin that had finally brought him to a place of complete brokenness. Desperate for freedom from the prison he’d been living in for too long, he had decided he would rather risk losing everything—wife, family, ministry—than face a life empty of intimacy with Jesus. His confession rocked my world down to the foundations of our marriage. I stood in a sea of shattered glass, sliced to the core of my being, bleeding tears and wondering how I would ever take another breath, let alone find healing for our marriage.

Just over seven years earlier, we had left for the mission field, confidently called to serve among an unreached people on the other side of the world. As part of a growing, thriving team and ministry, we now felt that our focus country had become home. But as the light of the morning sun began to invade the darkest, most sleepless, tear-filled night of confession, we knew things would never be the same.

We were scared to death of what would happen next, of how our lives would change. But we couldn’t keep this to ourselves. With nervous fear, we called our Regional Reps back in the States.

Later, my husband told me he had dreaded this moment. The fears he’d wrestled with, which for so long had kept him in the darkness of disillusionment and rationalization, centered in this phone call. He knew it was the pivotal action that would set everything else in motion. Would The Navigators abandon him on the side road of failure and leave him there to fend for himself? Would they publicly expose and humiliate him, placing him on a pedestal of shame for all to see and “learn from”? Would he ultimately lose everything?

What this phone call actually led to was an incredible surprise and grace-filled gift. After an evaluation of our circumstances and a field visit from our supervisors, we returned to the States. There we were invited to enter into a formal restoration process with the People Resources Team (PRT).

As painfully difficult as it was for us to leave our home and ministry, we knew we were in desperate need of exactly what the PRT was offering. It was scary. My husband was especially fearful of entering into the restoration process. The thought of baring the darkest places of his soul before a team of people was terrifying. Would it be too much? Too ugly?

But those who were to work with us promised that if he was willing to enter in with humility and a “do whatever it takes” commitment, they would walk with us through this Valley of the Shadow of Death to pastures of healing. We chose to open our hearts and receive this gift.

A carefully selected group of seven people served as our official Restoration Team. We met with them for the first time just a few weeks after moving back to the States. We had no idea what to expect and were anxious about this new

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*Would The Navigators
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PRT EVENTS IN COLORADO SPRINGS

Personal Contribution Assessment

April 21-23, 2014

July 8-10, 2014

Oct. 28-30, 2014

Listening & Inner Healing Prayer Seminar

May 19-20, 2014

Relational Healing Seminar

July 1-2, 2014

Sabbatical Orientation Workshop

July 21-24, 2014

Becoming One (marriage retreat)

July 26-28, 2014

*For more information call
(719) 594-2555.*



shattered

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chapter of our broken lives. What we found in this team was an abundance of grace...a strong, hope-filled grace that says, "If the Gospel doesn't speak to the most ugly and difficult places of our lives, then we might as well all call it quits and go home." We heard them say, "Now we get to DO the Gospel"...the loving, believing and healing that Jesus gave His life for.

The process of restoration was not easy. It included regular meetings with our team, listening and inner-healing prayer, marriage counseling, and other stretching opportunities. We experienced hard questions, painful tears, moments of fear, and desperate soul searching. But we began to sense the possibility of restored life.

For us, the restoration process took about two years to see us fully released to the work of the ministry once again. It culminated in a Restoration Celebration event that included those who had loved and walked with us through this painful season. What an incredible time of celebrating God's redemptive work in our lives and our marriage.


The night I was awakened to the shattering of our lives, I never thought I would experience joy again. But God brought beauty out of ashes.

We would say today that our marriage is better than it has ever been. We are continually growing in what it means to walk openly and transparently with one another, trusting each other with the deep places of our hearts, and living as each other's allies in the battles of life. Through our restoration, we learned how to communicate in new ways and on deeper levels. We are committed to investing in our marriage in all areas of intimacy.

In a world of broken marriages, the opportunity to have a team of people come around you and walk with you on a road to healing is almost unheard of. I am so thankful that we serve in an organization that believes in grace and in the power of God to heal and restore those who are willing and humble to allow His transforming touch to invade their lives.

To me, the story of Lazarus is a beautiful picture of what a restoration team looks like. In his book, *The Lazarus Life*, Stephen Smith brings this miraculous story to life in a new way. Just like Lazarus, we all have our "tombs" or places of brokenness and hiddenness, of wounds, death, and prisons of sin. But Jesus is calling us, just as he called to Lazarus to "Come out!" When Lazarus came out of the tomb, he was still wrapped in his grave clothes and clouded in stench. What I find most beautiful here is how Jesus calls Lazarus' friends and family to unwrap him. It must have been smelly, messy, and perhaps even painful for Lazarus. They probably had to work slowly, with gentleness and care.

This is what our restoration team was to us. They got into the stink and stench of our lives. With tenderness and grace, they helped to remove the grave clothes. They actively lived out their belief in a God who loves us enough to not leave us in our tombs, but who calls us out to a life of freedom and souls restored.


I no longer see myself standing in a sea of shattered glass. By God's grace and through the community of His people, my husband and I now walk forward again in the work to which God has called us. 

no return

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that will take you from a point of no return to a day of new beginnings in Christ.

Is this the day you will act? You can learn more details about the Restoration Process at NavCentral, and I invite you to give me a call if I can help or answer questions: Brad at (719) 594-2285.

Hebrews 12:12-13 says, "Therefore, strengthen the hands that are weak and the knees that are feeble, and make straight paths for your feet, so that the limb which is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed." 



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