



The Barnabas Group mobilizes San Francisco Bay Area Christians to contribute their unique talents and resources to build the capacity of ministries addressing local and international needs.

San Francisco Bay Area

SF Bay Area Spiritual Journal

Dr. Les Parrott, the male half of the best-selling husband-and-wife author team of Drs. Les and Leslie Parrot, brought their latest message to the San Francisco Bay Area Barnabas Group at the Round Hill Country Club after logistical challenges posed by the Bay Bridge closure prompted the shift from the Old Skool Café. The details are summarized here by our spiritual reporter, Tim Hunt.

Before challenging members with a truly big question and equally huge goal, Les both entertained and equipped members about why “good conflict” can bring married couples closer together. Their latest book is “The Good Fight,” was published this year. It also includes an app.

Les explained that all fights stem from perceptions---the perception of threat or the perception of neglect. Threat could include criticism, being controlled or being judged, while neglect would be uncaring, disengaged or selfish. This is based on a Baylor University study of 3,250 couples over three years.

He also said that the brains of men and women are wired entirely differently. There is the equivalent of a six-lane freeway connecting the lobes of a woman’s brain, compared to a country road in a man’s. That leads to the differences in communication styles: men report in conversations, while women seek rapport. The result: men want to fix problems, while women want to explore them.

Les offered one technique that he said really has helped his marriage. They share “withholds,” those things that were left unsaid—both positive and negative. You may have forgotten to thank your spouse or point out something that irritated you. Left alone, the negatives build. The Parrots each write down three withholdsa—a positive, a negative and a positive. One person shares and then the other shares—the response: Thank you. No further comments allowed on any of the withholdsa for 30 minutes.

After the entree, Les shifted to his non-profit, MarriageMentoring.com and its audacious goal: reducing the divorces in the Christian church by one-third in the next 20 years. The importance of the initiative: every 1 percent drop in the divorce rates means 1 million children will have both parents in the home.

Les is a psychologist by training; Leslie is a marriage and family counselor. Les and Leslie have taught at Seattle Pacific University (a Christian institution) for more than 20 years and have built the mentoring program through their personal experience with students and families. They started with a weekend program that became a manual and then a training program with DVDs and written materials in 2005.

Last year, they took their program online with the goal of training one million couples to be marriage mentors. Surveys indicate that 84 percent of married couples would like a mentor—only 22 percent have one.

The big challenge is penetrating the church with their effective program. In one-on-one conversations with executive director, Ryan Farmer, the program is explained and pastors get excited. Obviously, there's no ability to scale to reach one million mentors if the only effective outreach is one-on-one. Ryan served as executive pastor of a church that grew from nine couples to more than 10,000 within its first 10 years—he also has been a successful entrepreneur and joined Les and Leslie last year.

Les said that marriage mentoring has three phases: helping engaged couples prepare; repairing broken marriages by bringing "instant hope" through a mentoring couple that has overcome the same challenges; maximizing a good marriage by making it great.

The online training includes a strong initial filter to determine if the mentor marriage is sound and then interactive and fun exercises designed for the couple to do together.

The challenge discussed—with an Ideation session to follow by Skype this month—is how to market and expand the reach of the ministry into churches of all sizes across the country. "Ideation" is the new term that Barnabas is using for their revised and improved SWOT meetings.

For more information about the ministry, please see MarriageMentoring.com.

A special thanks to the management team of Larry Wiens, Megan Klopp and Joanne Perra, who handled all of the challenges in shifting the meeting to Round Hill at the last minute.

Also, Larry made a point of thanking Jennifer Hollingsworth of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, who postponed her presentation when it was clear there would not be enough time during the August meeting. She will present in November.

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