

Integration of Faith and Theory: *You and me forever: Marriage in light of eternity.*

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The book *You and me Forever: Marriage in light of eternity*, by Francis and Lisa Chan suggested that the key to a successful marriage is ensuring that the focus is always on God (Chan & Chan, 2014). In addition, the authors instructed their readers to focus on an eternal life versus a secular one. The authors applied scripture and biblical principles to their book and online video series, which portrayed an open and honest depiction of examples that helped the couple transform their marriage. They disputed that “marriage-centered marriages have become accepted and applauded rather than Christ-centered ones” (p.117). They stressed that marriage issues can be traced back to a lack of intimacy with God (pp. 20-21). In addition, they emphasized that a lack intimacy with God, tends to result in looking within the oneself or other substitutes, “Like wealth or pleasure. Like fame or respect. Like people. Like marriage” (pp. 25-27).

More than ever in history, we live in a world dominated by self-pleasure and personal gain. The authors argued that if God is prioritized first place in married couple’s lives, they will persevere through any trials and tribulations. The current times pose a significant challenge for believers in Christ. Chan and Chan (2014) asserted that the world has changed and that “sin is more accessible and acceptable than ever before” (p.27). Jeremiah (2021) confirmed that non-believers are becoming “more callous, selfish, violent, and angry. Attitudes and behaviors deemed unthinkable even a decade ago are now considered acceptable” (para 1). He emphasized that the apostle Paul wrote in detail what the world could expect when approaching the end times by reiterating that:

In the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

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unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. (2 Timothy 3:1–5)

In addition, the authors discussed spiritual warfare in their book. They emphasized that tremendous consequences are inevitable without maintaining a biblical mindset (Chan & Chan, 2014, p. 84). They included the following bible verse to support their position, “Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul” (1 Peter 2:11). Furthermore, they argued mistrust in God is a result of arrogance. They highlighted that believers commonly look within themselves for answers, maintaining a false belief that they alone can solve worldly problems (p. 31). They supported their argument by quoting biblical scripture that illustrated their case, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9). Finally, the authors stressed that a worldly mindset and desire for the flesh are hostile towards God and make it impossible to submit to his law (Chan & Chan, 2014, p. 5, Romans 8:5-8).

An additional theme the authors illustrated is that Christians are called to be a living example to believers and non-believers (Chan & Chan, 2014, p. 55). However, the authors implied that a selfish nature is a part of our human core. Bloom (2016) explained that “Wanting our own way is woven into the fabric of our fallen nature. Since the fall, it has been our default orientation... We are disturbingly and persistently selfish” (para. 3). In addition, Deep Spirituality (2021) supported this notion by confirming that the biggest hinderance in relationship with

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others is our innate tendency of being self-serving (para. 12). They emphasized that selfishness creeps into our lives and presents itself in many different forms (para.15). Finally, they asserted that a self-consumed mindset while relying on our own strength separates us from others and from God (para. 20). Bloom (2016) illustrated that “our selfishness is a master of disguise, wearing a thousand masks to cover its motives...our selfishness is an attorney, trained from childhood in both defense and prosecution, bent on persuading judge and jury on behalf of its sole client” (para. 4). In addition, they implied that “insisting on our own way is at the heart of most of our conflict, and at the bottom of almost all of the ways humans abuse others. This lack of love is a source of much human heartache and suffering” (para. 5.) Finally, they supported their argument by quoting biblical scripture to defend their point, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Philippians 2:3-4).

The book *You and me Forever: Marriage in light of eternity*, is about more than just marriage. It is an instructional guideline of how God calls believers to behave and interact with others. Their message argued that believers are called to showcase God's glory through relationships, as examples for others. Plemmons (n.d) explained that life is a result of the choices we make every day (para. 1). One of the main roles of a mental health counselor is helping others to learn skills that assist them in making better life choices. A counseling modality that mirrors this biblical theory is reality therapy. Psychology Today (n.d) explained that reality therapy incorporates choice theory. The theory highlighted that “the behaviors we choose are key to our accountability and who we are... the goal of this type of therapy is to help people take control of improving their own lives by learning to make better choices” (para. 1). Another key message

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that the authors attempted to affirm is that we are instructed to make choices that are biblically sound. They argued that self-indulgent choices in relationships and interactions with others has detrimental consequences. Although we are ethically obligated to abstain from sharing our personal faith with clients, we can still incorporate the same principle that the authors outlined in their book with our clients (ACA, 2014, Section A.4.b). As counselors we can teach others these relational skills for decision making without violating ethical standards. In addition, the skills outlined in the book *You and me Forever: Marriage in light of eternity*, provided a theoretical roadmap for working with couples without causing them to feel as if they are being besieged in the context of counseling.

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