

hope for families everywhere

News and information from FamilyLife partners around the world

May 2015



nigeria—stepping up by chuck eckerson

Looking across the meeting room at the Cru US Staff Conference in Fort Collins, CO in July 2013, my wife leaned up to me and said, “Do you see that man? He is not African American. He is African. We have to meet him.”

While we could not articulate exactly what the distinguishing marks are, we had been in West and Central Africa enough over the past several years to guess if a person was African American or truly from Africa.

When the meeting was over, we introduced ourselves and discovered that Kathy guessed correctly. The man was from Nigeria. His name was Lepan.

He was excited to hear that we served with FamilyLife and came with us to the FamilyLife tent. As we sat and drank Cokes, Lepan shared about the needs for marriages and families in Nigeria. As we listened, we

kits home with him. (Shipping them would take forever, if he received them at all.)

He urged us to come and minister in his country. Nigeria was not part of our assigned

Lepan prayed about the materials we gave him and began to organize a group of men to go through Stepping Up. The problem was, all he had was the video kit.

territory, so we responded politely but did not seriously consider his request. Besides, given Nigeria’s reputation for danger, we had no intention of going. Little did we realize that we would be there 18 months later.

Lepan prayed about the materials we gave him and began to organize a group of men to go through Stepping Up. The problem was, all he had was the video kit. He didn’t have any copies of the participant workbooks.

Lepan was committed to call me up to courageous manhood, so he pressed forward to form a Stepping Up group, even without the participant workbooks. As foreign as it seems to our culture, he could not simply order workbooks and have them shipped to him. Not only is shipping prohibitively expensive, Nigeria is a cash economy; most Nigerians do not have (and cannot get) credit cards. Thus, they cannot order resources.

Lepan asked us for help. He wanted

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heard real needs. He thought God would really use FamilyLife’s Art of Marriage® and the new Stepping Up® video kits, so we made arrangements for him take both video

more hope for families inside

up in space

It may have been the most unusual program we’ve ever aired on FamilyLife Today®. **Page 2**

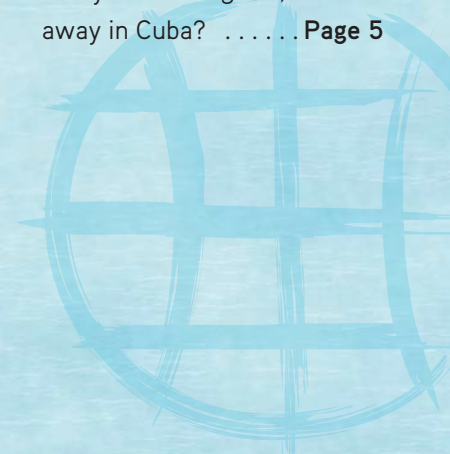
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up in space by dave boehi

It may have been the most unusual program we've ever aired on FamilyLife Today®. At various times during the interview, the guest stood sideways on the wall and upside down on the ceiling.

At one point, Dennis Rainey, co-host of the show, asked his guest, "Would you mind looking out your window and telling us what you're seeing right now?"

"I believe that's Australia going by," was the reply.

The guest for this program, which aired on February 6, was Captain Barry "Butch" Wilmore, and he was talking from the International Space Station. Butch is nearing the end of a six-month mission in space.

"Butch, you're looking at the earth as few men or women ever get a chance to see it," Dennis said during the interview. "Any thoughts come to your mind as you glance at the globe of



six billion people?"

"Very interesting question," Butch replied. "You know, when I was here before—when I flew five years ago, it was a shuttle mission ... shuttle missions were fast and furious—it was 11 days. I think the most time I ever had to stick my nose in the window

was about 20 minutes. ... But now, to have the opportunity to really, no kidding, poke my nose in the window for very extended periods of time, it's truly amazing and truly breathtaking. It makes me in awe of my Lord and Savior and Creator—I mean—beyond words.

"I can't explain—you can't explain the view. ... I mean, you can see pictures, you can see video, and they do a little bit to show what the beauty of the earth and the globe is from here. But to see it with your own eyes and realize that it's controlled by a sovereign God ... like I said, it's beyond words."

Butch went on to describe the incredible sunrises and sunsets he

enjoys ... 16 times a day. And then he made a comment that showed that, although he is enjoying a heavenly perspective—so to speak—he's still grounded in his faith. "I want to be clear—it is an amazing place, and it's an amazing view. ... But I did not need to come here to know my Lord ... All that

I could ever know—could ever want to know—I gleaned from the words of Scripture. So I didn't have to come here to find my Lord. He's in the Word—that's where He resides—and that's where He speaks to us from."

In this interview and another one that aired December 22, it was clear that Butch is wholly committed to Jesus Christ. At one point Dennis asked him a question he

often asks his guests: "What is the most courageous thing you've ever done?" You might expect him to describe one of his 21 combat missions in Desert Storm or his three rocket launches into space.

Instead, here's how he replied: "I think about some of the things that the Lord has allowed me to experience—the places He's allowed me to go. I have literally flown all over the world, and seen many things, and experienced many things—but nothing compares [to] when the Lord has already, through His Spirit, convicted the heart of someone, and He's on a few occasions drawn me to that individual. I've had the opportunity then to share the saving gospel with them and see Him transform a heart."

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hope for families everywhere

new resource—the art of marriage® connect sample pack

Whether you've been married five months, five years, or five decades, The Art of Marriage Connect Series will help you connect with friends and find help and hope for your marriage.

Formerly known as the Homebuilder's Couples Series®, each title focuses on a real-life marriage issue and delivers biblically-centered truth and practical application in a small-group study format to make your marriage healthy and strong. The series is perfect for following up The Art of Marriage video event.

The Art of Marriage Connect Sample Pack includes one copy of each title in the series, allowing you to review available titles before making choices for your group. We also include a copy of Starting an Art of Marriage Connect Group, a brochure of helpful information on how to host a group study.



cuba—help and hope from 1,000 miles away *continued from page 5*

church's next trip to Cuba, they agreed.

In November 2013, they made their first trip to Cuba with four other couples. They introduced the Spanish version of the Art of Marriage to 25 Cuban couples and left copies of the Art of Marriage workbooks and Building Teamwork in Your Marriage®, a HomeBuilders Bible study. They also organized some fun activities for the couples to illustrate marriage principles, such as a three-legged race that got everyone laughing.

Mike and Lisa also trained three leadership couples who could take the reins and continue the ministry once the Conns headed home. The new leaders

continued leading couples through Art of Marriage and Building teamwork in Marriage and emailed Mike and Lisa with updates on their progress.

Since that first trip, Mike and Lisa have visited Cuba three more times



and have continued to lead workshops on marriage and parenting. During the most recent visit, more than 60 couples renewed their marriage vows. Mike and Lisa presented the couples with a marriage renewal certificate provided by FamilyLife.

"FamilyLife's Spanish resources have made a huge impact in allowing us to minister cross-culturally in Cuba," say Mike and Lisa. "We are grateful for the opportunity to share the 'help for today and hope for tomorrow' available for marriages through the gospel and FamilyLife."

Africa

May 9, 2015	From Anger to Intimacy	Pretoria	South Africa
Jun 6, 2015	Right from the Start (parenting conference)	Pretoria	South Africa
July 24-26, 2015	The Art of Marriage	Moolmanshoek	South Africa
Aug 22, 2015	From Anger to Intimacy	Pretoria	South Africa
Sept 11-13, 2015	The Art of Marriage	Pretoria	South Africa

Europe (Western)

May 16, 2015	A Day to Remember	Zagreb	Croatia
May 3, 2015	Marriage Conference	Schonenwerd	Switzerland
May 22, 2015	Prepare/Enrich Conference	Zurich	Switzerland
Jun 6-7, 2015	Marriage Conference	Zurich	Switzerland
Jun 12-14, 2015	Father/Son weekend	Flaach	Switzerland
Jun 18-21, 2015	Marriage Conference	Imst	Switzerland
July 12-19, 2015	Family Adventure Camp	Wiler	Switzerland
Sept 25-26, 2015	Prepare/Enrich Conference	Zurich	Switzerland
Oct 23, 2015	Prepare/Enrich Conference	Zurich	Switzerland
May 23, 2015	A Day Together	South Bucks	UK

Middle East and North Africa

Due to sensitive nature of these countries, please contact global@familylife.com for further information.

North America

United States—Phone 1-800-358-6329 or www.familylife.com for a complete listing of conferences.

Canada—Phone 1-800-247-3180 or www.familylifecanada.com for a complete listing of conferences.

May 1-3, 2015	Marriage Conference (Mandarin)	Markham	Canada
May 16, 2015	AOM (Spanish)	Chicago, IL	USA
Jun 6 & 13, 2015	AOM (Spanish)	Berwyn, IL	USA

Latin America/Caribbean

June 19-20, 2015	WTR		Trinidad
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Asia

June 6-7, 2015	Weekend Marriage Class		Taiwan
Jul 4-10, 2015	Weekend Marriage Class		Taiwan
Jul 18-19, 2015	Weekend Marriage Class		Taiwan

Oceania

May 1-3, 2015	WTR	Rotorua	New Zealand
May 16, 2015	A Day Together	Morrinsville	New Zealand
May 23, 2015	A Day Together	Tauranga	New Zealand
June 12-14, 2015	WTR	Auckland	New Zealand
July 4, 2015	A Day Together	Flaxmere	New Zealand
July 24-26, 2015	WTR	Hanmer Springs	New Zealand
Sept 18-20, 2015	WTR	Auckland	New Zealand
Oct 20, 2015	Understanding One Another	Auckland	New Zealand

Quotes from a recent conference in South Africa:

“I learned that God has a wonderful purpose with romance and sex.”

“It helped me to refocus – refocused me on putting Jesus first. Enjoyed the tips and stories regarding romance.”

“Looking out for the foxes that negatively impact marriage relationships.”



cuba—help and hope from 1,000 miles away

by jayna richardson

How does a retired American couple from Alabama find themselves ministering regularly to marriages 1,000 miles away in Cuba? Mike and Lisa Conn have a thriving ministry to couples in their hometown of Montgomery, but they've also visited Cuba four times in the last two years to minister to marriages in desperate need of help.

Mike and Lisa couldn't have predicted in their early years of marriage that marriage ministry would someday be their calling. They both came from divorced families, and they endured their own share of bumps in the road once kids came along. Mike was preoccupied with his work as a navigator for the Air Force, and Lisa was wrapped up in being a mom to their two young daughters. "We were missing each other in every way possible—poor communication, unresolved conflict,

intimacy problems; you name it, we lived it," says Mike.

The turning point came when they found a Bible-teaching church and joined a Sunday school class that focused on building healthy Christian marriages and families. For the first time, Mike and Lisa were equipped with God's blueprints for marriage. The seed was planted for their future ministry. When the Air Force moved them to California, they took that teaching with them and began using it to disciple young couples at the base chapel.

In 1991, Mike and Lisa attended FamilyLife's Weekend to Remember® and were blown away. The next year, they took 13 couples with them to the San Francisco conference. They continued to return (and bring more couples) every year and were thrilled to see how God was using the conference

to bring positive changes in many couples' lives and hearts.

When they returned to Alabama and Mike retired from the Air Force, they knew they were called to family ministry, although they didn't know yet what that would look like. They set up their own non-profit organization called Covenant Family Ministries and began using FamilyLife materials such as HomeBuilders® and the Art of Marriage® as well as their own materials to develop an ongoing ministry.

In 2013 a Cuban pastor, concerned about the growing divorce rates in Cuba (currently at about 70%), contacted Mike and Lisa's church to see if the church could put together a team to minister to the couples in his church. Mike and Lisa had been involved in international missions to Brazil and Haiti before, so when asked if they would go on their

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nigeria—stepping up *continued from page 1*

not only participant workbooks for the men in his group, but also enough video kits and workbooks that each man in his group could start his own group. We found someone who was going to Nigeria soon. They said they could pack a small number of workbooks in their luggage and take them to Lepan. So we bought workbooks for the members of Lepan's group and shipped them to our friend who was Nigeria bound. Their trip was cancelled at the last minute because of Ebola, escalating Boko Haram activity, and other security issues. They were able to reschedule the trip a few months later (December 2014) and deliver just enough workbooks for Lepan's group.

Kathy and I traveled to Nigeria in January 2015 to take the initial steps in revitalizing their 20-year-old FamilyLife

ministry and chart a course for the future. What a joy it was to connect with Lepan in his country and be invited to "greet" his Stepping Up group. In that context, greeting doesn't mean just stopping in and saying hi. Rather, it means staying for and observing the entire meeting, speaking a word of encouragement to them, and praying over them. So that is what I did.

During the course of the meeting, Lepan asked the men what they had done recently to demonstrate courage. One man shared that it took a lot of courage to go back to the location where a terrorist bombing occurred just a few weeks earlier. As he shared, I remembered thinking, "Wow! They are living with a completely different set of circumstances and dangers than we have in the U.S. It

takes courage in different ways."

It took nearly 18 months from the time Lepan envisioned the Stepping Up group to when the men could watch the videos AND have workbooks to use. But Lepan trusted God and persevered.

In the spirit of 2 Timothy 2:2, each of these men want to start their own group now and call other men up to courageous manhood. They are each ready to Step Up and become multiplying disciples. May the Lord go before them, equip them, and resource them to reach a generation of men who are ready to Step Up. And may we join with them in praying for a breakthrough in the availability of FamilyLife's biblical, transformational resources in Nigeria and the surrounding countries.

up in space *continued from page 2*

"I've probably asked over a thousand men and women that question," Dennis said. "You are the first one to ever say that courage to share your faith was the most courageous thing."

Butch's commitment to Christ is also evident in his marriage. In that interview on December 22, he and his wife, Deanna, discussed their relationship. Even on their first date, he recalled, "we talked about the Lord almost the entire date—and our views on life and our views on what we'd learned from God's Word. That's the thing that made it really special."

Deanna was asked, "What's it like

to go outside and look up in the sky and know that your husband is circling the earth several times a day? What's that feel like?"

"It's amazing!" she replied. "It's so funny to look up and think that he's up there. It's great ... it's neat, and we don't worry. We know that he's in the Lord's hands, and it's just fantastic."

Butch praised his wife as a "faithful Christian witness" and expressed his wonder over her lack of fear on his dangerous missions. "She never has fear when I'm doing this or doing that because she completely has trust in the Lord."

Butch and Deanna said they often listen to FamilyLife Today, and on another program while in space he sent her a special 20th anniversary greeting:

Deanna, dear, I love you; and I'm grateful to our Lord and Savior who brought us together—just over 20 years ago—and our marriage 20 years ago today. And life is better, and I pray that our Lord has been glorified in our marriage and will continue to be as we go forward. And I love you.

As co-host Bob Lepine said on the show, a husband can't do much better than that.