



# Finding More

By Marie Armenia

**GIVE AWAY MILLIONS OF DOLLARS.** Abandon your church's multi-million dollar building program. Oh yeah, and move your entire family into a smaller house too. Francis Chan, author of the best-selling book *Crazy Love* (David C. Cook) and pastor of Cornerstone Church in Simi Valley, Calif., received this call from God and, though many of us can't comprehend it, that's exactly what Francis did. He and his wife, Lisa, gave away most of their stuff.

But you'd miss the point of the story, his books, and their lives if you think it's just about giving away stuff and living on less. It's not a frugal lifestyle the Chan family is seeking, but an obedient one. If surrendering themselves totally to God happens to bring changes to their lifestyle, so be it.

God's call to less also impacted Chan's church. On a ministry level, Cornerstone Church abandoned its building program and now gives away 40 percent of its income to others. As a result of this sacrifice, the church family has uncovered Creator-inspired ways to reach the lost and teach the found.

On a personal level, Francis and Lisa give the considerable royalties from *Crazy Love* to the Isaiah 58 Fund, a non-profit that helps victims of human trafficking. Francis also refuses to take a raise. Living on \$36,000 a year, the Chans downsized their home and, in the process, opened it to others — at any time.

These changes came as the answer to a simple question: "What does it look like to love my neighbor the way Jesus does?" If you've ever wondered the same thing, then the Chans' honest answers will encourage and exhort you. The couple recently spoke to *HomeLife* about the joy they experience as a result of saying "Yes, Lord" when He says "Give."

## The Hole in Their Hearts

The Chans have three daughters, Rachel, Mercy, and Eliana and a son, Ezekiel. You've got to be a man hearing from God to ask a woman with four children to cut the size of her house in half.

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**HOMELIFE:** How did God call your family to change your lifestyle so radically?

**LISA:** "When Francis went to Africa seven years ago, God burned a hole in his heart. It was after this trip that Francis wanted to downsize. I hadn't been to Africa. I didn't love the people like he did. But what was I going to do? Put my foot down? For what? My selfish little heart that didn't want to let go of my stuff? I was totally committed to submitting to my husband. That was so hard for Francis. He wanted to feel like we were on the same page, that this was something I wanted to do along with him. When I went to Africa with him one and a half years later, I bawled my eyes out. [I prayed,] *Lord if I had seen this, I would have downsized with a cheerful heart. I would have done it with so much love!* But God blesses obedience and by His grace, my heart is changed forever."

**FRANCIS:** "One of the things I emphasized early on in our marriage is that my wife would spend time alone with God. I said to Lisa, 'I love the way you follow me and trust the Lord to lead through me, but I want to encourage you to spend more time alone with the Lord. You are a fellow heir

with me. I want you to pray about this. I trust your relationship with the Lord'. I would never advise a husband to force or demand his wife to make changes, but to encourage her to hear from God herself."

### The Small Stuff

The couple began by making small changes (returning unnecessary purchases) that led to big changes, like cutting their house size in half.

**HOMELIFE:** Lisa, how has God aligned your heart with your husband's?

**LISA:** "The process for me has felt gradual. Francis has always been a giver. I, on the other hand, needed a little coaxing over the years. But the joy of giving is contagious. I would be a fool to stand in the way of what God has done through my husband's 'crazy' notions. As many times as a woman prays for her husband to be a spiritual leader, to be deeply interested in the things of God, she should also beg God to create a heart of submission in her that would be ready and willing to follow that lead. Please don't assume this comes naturally. Materialism plagues us all. I've found that if you don't have really nice cars or furniture or stuff, you don't worry about it so much. I love looking around my living room and telling others where I got all my hand-me-down furniture. We may not look like Pottery Barn, but we have little pieces of our friends with us every day. We're not

left to right: Mercy, Rachel, Francis, Eliana, Zeke, Lisa.



lacking anything, but there are choices you can make every day that cause you to think of others."

### The Brevity of Life

Chapter Two of *Crazy Love* is titled, "You Might Not Finish This Chapter." Francis writes, "You could die before you finish reading this chapter. I could die while you're reading it. Today. At any moment." The brevity of life hits home for Francis. His mother died

giving birth to him, his stepmother was killed in a car accident when he was 9, and his father died from cancer when he was 13. Francis gets it: Don't store up any treasure on earth because at any moment you may leave the planet.

**HOMELIFE:** Lisa, what have your husband's life experiences taught you?

**LISA:** "One of the great things about Francis is his eternal perspective. From the beginning of our marriage, he has spoken a different language. It's one of the greatest gifts he has given me. A girl can't argue with the fact that this life is short. We may give up some comforts here on earth, but we will be rewarded for all of eternity."

### A New Kind of Home

The Bible instructs us to practice hospitality, but the Chans practice like it's an Olympic sport.

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– Francis Chan

**HOMELIFE:** How has your family made biblical hospitality a way of life?

**LISA:** “We’ve had people living with us our entire marriage. I cannot stress enough the benefits of sharing your home with others. From the beginning, I was forced to consider that my home is not *my* home. Our children don’t know any other way of life. There have been more than 20 different people [living with us] over our 16 years of marriage. And what started out as a way of ministering to others has become one of the tools God has used to refine each of us in immeasurable ways.”

### A Sacrificial Way of Life

This sacrificial, open-door life sounds fine for Francis and Lisa, but what about their kids? How do they feel about their parents “live on less” lifestyle?

**HOMELIFE:** How have you have gotten your children on the giving team?

“When I think about how we instill joyful giving in our children, I can’t help but think our primary responsibility is to *become* joyful givers ourselves.”

– Lisa Chan

**LISA:** “When I think about how we instill joyful giving in our children, I can’t help but think our primary responsibility is to *become* joyful givers ourselves. We can’t ask them to do something we’re not already doing. There has to be a connection from what you say to what you do. Even my 5-year-old understands a conversation about why Daddy drives a beat-up Subaru. ‘Isn’t it exciting, Ellie, that Daddy can choose to drive an old car so he has more money to give children who don’t even have enough food to eat?’ My eldest daughter, Rachel, said, ‘I look at it this way. For every selfish decision I make for here and now, it takes away the blessing I can have in heaven.’ They, too, have seen with their own eyes what God can accomplish when we surrender everything to Him.”

### This Crazy Love

Francis doesn’t want you to think it was an easy path for him to surrender to God’s gentle nudges.

**HOMELIFE:** How did you get so hooked on such a radical way of life?

**FRANCIS:** “Until just a few years ago, I was quite happy with how God was working in me and in the church. Then

God began changing my heart. This took place largely during the times I spent reading His Word. The conviction I felt through the teachings of Scripture, coupled with several experiences in third-world countries, changed everything.”

Creating a lifestyle of generosity in your family begins with studying God’s Word, Francis says. “Don’t listen too much to what everyone else is saying and what everyone else is doing. There are tons and tons of people explaining away what the Bible says. It’s a wide and easy road that leads to destruction, and a hard and narrow road that leads to life. Pray, ‘Dear Lord, what is this Book really saying? What does it literally tell me to do?’ And then do it.”

Sounds so simple, it’s crazy. □

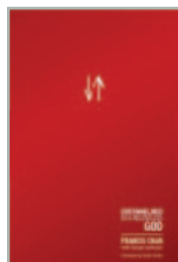
## The Forgotten God

Francis Chan’s first book, *Crazy Love*, reminds us that real love — for God and others — should be so passionate, white hot, and alive that it seems almost crazy to the world around us. In his second book, *Forgotten God*, Francis boldly gives the reason that so few of us experience this kind of love and power: We have neglected God on earth — the Holy Spirit.

Francis says, “If I were Satan and my ultimate goal was to thwart God’s kingdom, one of my main strategies would be to get churchgoers to ignore the Holy Spirit. The degree to which this has happened (and I’d argue that it’s a prolific disease in the body of Christ) is directly connected to the dissatisfaction most of us feel with the church. The feeling is so strong that some have run away from the church and God’s Word completely. I believe that this missing something is actually a missing Someone — namely the Holy Spirit. Without Him, people operate in their own strength and only accomplish human-size results. The world is not moved by love or actions that are of human creation.”

You’ll be challenged and moved by this passionate plea to give the Holy Spirit the control He deserves in our lives and churches. Francis says, “When we submit to the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, He helps us become more holy — more like Jesus.”

This book is a must-read for you and your family.



(From *Forgotten God: Reversing Our Tragic Neglect Of The Holy Spirit* (c) 2009 Francis Chan. Published by David C. Cook, 4050 Lee Vance View, Colorado Springs, CO 80918)

**Marie Armenia** has been married to her husband, Phil, for 40 years. Reading Francis Chan’s books and speaking to him and his wife, Lisa, has changed almost everything about the way Marie looks at being a follower of Jesus.