

Twoignite

Pastor Ted Cunningham

Welcome to Woodland Hills Family Church and another Twoignite Sunday. If you are brand new to Woodland Hills or you've just been coming in the last couple of months, last year we started a new ministry at Woodland Hills called Twoignite and it's based on Hebrews 13: 4 that says marriage should be honored by all. So what we are doing is we give a Sunday a month, no matter what series we are in. We did Ephesians and right now we are in the middle of a series on 1 Timothy, called *Dear Son*. So we pause today and take a break to do another igniter.

What we've done is we've created 12 igniters and these igniters cover an aspect of marriage. Our goal is to help couples walk through and find ways to enjoy life again together to kind of reignite. We have created several products along the way and some of you were asking about this one. This is a deck of cards you can get in the back now. We have ordered a bunch more. They are like five bucks.

They are great conversation starters for you and your spouse. While you are waiting an hour and a half to get a table at Cantina Laredo you can pull this deck out and start asking "What would you do if you did not have to work?" "If you could rewind at any point in your life, what would you want to relive?" "Sing the chorus or one line of your favorite song." Just ways for you guys to reengage and reignite. So that is back there if you want to pick it up.

We also did the menu igniter for the TwoDrink month. We talked about sexual intimacy. We did TwoPlay, learning how to enjoy life with each other again and just enjoying time together. TwoLaugh was learning how to take a break in the midst of the grind. We did TwoHunt, talking about communication. We did TwoFight, talking about the right way to fight as a couple.

Today we are talking about TwoBreak. Before we do, we are going to take offering here at Woodland Hills, in these buckets. As they come around, we just want to again encourage you to be generous. So this year far we have taken up right at about \$40,000.00 for Haiti. That includes our first offering to give immediate relief. What we are trying to do is rebuild a school in Haiti.

In one month, Ted Burden and I go down with Paul Etheridge, from our church, on August 10 through 12 for a couple of days. We will be looking at three different sites that we will be rebuilding and then obviously we will want to send teams down later on. But we are going to go down with a small group to check it out and take picture and videos.

Some of you have been giving towards that and we appreciate that and continue to support the ministries and the outreach of our church. If you are visiting Branson on vacation, we always like to encourage our tourists to tithe to the church that you visit the week you are here. I'm just kidding; we don't actually ask you to do that. Actually, take that back home unless you've never tithed and would

like to start here and pick it up in your home church. No, we don't want you to do that either. Start giving at your home church. So if you are a guest today, we don't want you to feel an obligation to give.

So today we are looking at TwoBreak. If you have your Bibles, it's Genesis 2: 24. We are going to be looking at a passage of scripture that Jesus repeats in Matthew 19 and that Paul repeats in Ephesians 5. We are going to be looking at this in the context of prolonged adolescents and what many today are advocating in the church and in our culture which is for young people to delay marriage.

Now God's plan is that you delay sex until marriage. That's been his plan from the beginning. Sex is within marriage. Don't live together before you get married. Don't marry an unbeliever. We could go into all the different theological truths that need to be a part of marriage that we've covered in Twoignite.

Today we are focusing on the idea that you don't need to delay marriage. The abstinence talk is kind of bleeding over into the marriage talk and we are no longer seeing, in the church today, that couples that fall in love are marrying and then having sex. What they are doing is the message in reverse. They are delaying marriage and having sex.

The purity talks that the church gives... I grew up in a very conservative church at home that very much loved Jesus and taught the Bible consistently, but the message I heard growing up was that sex was dirty, nasty, and ugly and you should save it for the one you love. That was the primary message that I received on sex. You're probably thinking that they never said that and you are right. I never heard that spoken, but that's all I heard. Sex, sin and marriage were always used in the same sentence and always used in the same context.

Here's what we know after years of the *True Love Waits* and after years of virginity pledges and purity talks. I hate to break it to you, but they are not working. They are not working and they are not being listened to. So what a lot of fundamentalists will do is they will say it louder and they'll say it more often. But according to a believing professor at the University of Texas, Austin... Here's what he writes and I want you to hear this.

Indeed, over 90% of American adults experience sexual intercourse before marrying. The percentage of evangelicals who do so is not much lower. In a nationally representative study of young adults just under 80% of unmarried, church-going, conservative Protestants, who are currently dating someone, are having sex of some sort. I'm certainly not suggesting that they cannot abstain; I'm suggesting that in the domain of sex, most of them don't and wont.

So what does the church do? The church continues on one message instead of adding to that a very important part of the message. Hebrews 13: 4, right in the middle, says the marriage bed should be kept pure. But before you get to that part, it says marriage is to be honored by all. What we at this church believe with all our heart is honoring marriage and encouraging our young people to get married. God created it; it is to be received with thanksgiving.

We will see this in a couple of weeks in 1 Timothy: 4. A false teaching comes into the church. Paul uses very strong words to describe this false teaching. He says it's a doctrine taught by demons. He says some teachers have crept into the church and they are forbidding people from marrying and they are telling them to abstain from certain foods. He says this is a doctrine taught by demons and you should stop this because we understand marriage and food to be spiritual issues. He actually says we are to receive them, receive marriage, with thanksgiving.

We are to receive it and it's to be enjoyed and that's what we understand marriage to be. It's between a man and a woman for a lifetime. If you are a believer in here and you are dating or living with a non-believer, I'm going to give you a really long explanation. Move out. That's all I'm saying. You need to move out. You are increasing your chances of divorce by living together with somebody before you get married. I can give you all the moral implication; I can continue in Hebrews 13: 4 that says God will judge the adulterer and the sexually immoral. You need to move out. You need to honor God's plan for marriage.

So as we dive into this, I know there are some singles in here thinking I'm going to bash singles. No, I'm not. I want you to know, singles, that some of you guys... Now understand ladies, you are at a disadvantage in the church today because, not just Woodland Hills, but nationwide, there are three young Christian women in their 20s in the church today for every two 20 something men.

Some of these men were trained to kiss dating goodbye. So what I want to do; it's really simple. I tried it in the first service and I wish I had them, but I thought I should do this with sock monkeys or hand puppets. What I'd like some of you guys to do is walk over to a girl and say, "Would you like to go out with me?" and then she'll go "Sure, please, let's go." Ask her out. There's this idea that you are going to be buddies for the next ten years. No. Fall in love and get married.

I went to Liberty University. It was not only encouraged to date, but it was like a competitive thing. We had our chancellor, in his 60s, stand up week after week and tell us "Why aren't you guys dating; start dating." He would say "If you have found somebody you really like, but she's dating somebody else, that's alright; ask her out anyway."

I did. Amy was dating this bum named Tim Cartwright. Maybe I shouldn't have shared his name. He is a youth pastor in Arlington; love you Tim. I just knew the moment I saw them together that he was no good for her. Right, Denny? That's my father-in-law. We didn't like Tim; we knew Tim was no good for Amy. So I just moved on in and asked her out and watched my back the rest of that semester. Now that I look back on it, I didn't realize what was happening on my college campus, but the leaders of our school promoted and encouraged marriage. They believed in it because they believed what 1 Timothy 4 says; it should be received with thanksgiving.

I read a book this week where a young lady compares the singles of the church today, the 20 somethings of the church today, to the widows in Acts 6. In that day, the widows were being overlooked in their community. So the church actually restructured, if you read Acts 6: 1-7, so the widows wouldn't be neglected. But, again, we are going to get to this in 1 Timothy 5.

Paul says this: there is to be a list and on that list, you are to put all widows over the age of 60. If they are 60, put them on that list unless they have family who can take care of them. If they have family who can take care of them, don't put them on the list because they will be a burden to the church. He uses that term. They will be a burden to the church. You make sure the family is taking care of the widow.

And do you know what he said about the widows under the age of 60? Now this is Paul who was a believer in marriage and promoted marriage. He said if they are under the age of 60, here's my concern for them: they will be idle and that idleness, if not kept in check, could turn into them being a gossip and a busybody. Meaning they can become disruptive to other homes. So what does Paul tell them to do? He tells them to get married and have children. So if you are 58 and a widow in this church, get married and have children – 1 Timothy: 5. He is pro-marriage. He says we are to receive marriage with thanksgiving.

So what we are going to look at today in this text is an encouragement and Amy, after the first service, said "I can't wait to see how many emails you get on this one." That's because it's a message to both parents and to young people.

The first three observations we are going to make off of Genesis 2: 24 are directed towards young people. The last three are directed towards parents. This idea of TwoBreak is that we need young people today, boomerang kids, the one in seven who are returning home after college and late 20 somethings that decide to save a couple of bucks, they are going to move back in with Mom and Dad. We are going to challenge you to break away from home and be an adult. Mom and Dad, it's really simple; let them break away from home and let them be an adult.

Let's look at this text and we are going to look at it in all three of those contexts. Genesis 2: 24... I want you to circle three words as we go through it because there are three primary words for these observations. ***For this reason a man...*** Circle the word man and right next to it just draw two lines off of him and put child and adolescent. ***...will leave his father and mother...*** Circle the word leave. That's where we get the idea of this igniter, TwoBreak. ***...and be united...*** Circle the word united, speaking there of marriage. ***...to his wife, and they will become one flesh.***

Now Jesus repeats this very same text, but before I get to it, let me just give you a brief commentary on the text. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother... Jesus doesn't repeat it in Matthew 19 to say oh, for this reason, you should let your children leave home to become a man. The emphasis, and Mom and Dad, you get this at Woodland Hills, is that our young people leave home as adults, not as children, not as adolescents.

One of the reasons I so struggle with 20 somethings and, I will be very honest with you, hiring them... It's a very difficult thing for me because they ask me and they ask you and they ask the church to treat them, in their 20s, the same way Mom and Dad treated them and the same way college treated them. To be honest with you, in most cases that I've experienced personally... I'm giving no research or anything; I'm giving personal experience. I'm being asked to do what Mom and Dad and college never did and that's bring them from adolescence to adulthood.

At Woodland Hills, we don't want to prolong it; we don't want to keep you in that stage. We love you too much to treat you the way your parents did or the way culture did or the way college did. We want to see you become a man; we want to see you become a woman, taking full responsibility for your heart, your emotions, your actions, your words, and your decisions.

A man will leave his father and mother. There is a separation there. We looked at in the TwoGuard month, which was one of my favorite igniters. We spoke of the fact that the couple-centered home models the gospel of Jesus. Jesus did not encourage us to have kid-centered homes. Paul did not encourage us to have kid-centered homes. In today's culture, we are ending up with kid-centered homes. The bond between a husband and wife is meant to be stronger than the bond between a parent and a child.

We looked at that in the TwoGuard month. So we are to be growing our kids to one day leave the home as adults and be united to his wife. Meaning you come out of your home and into another home. Whereas the culture is telling you today that you need this period of independence; you need time to become an adult on your own, which is not the biblical model. You don't need a period of independence and we will get into that in just a second.

To become one flesh... Here's what Jesus said. ***"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator..."*** Now what's great about this is Jesus does the same thing that Paul did, two weeks ago when we looked at 1 Timothy 2. Remember we looked at the differences of men and women and we looked at the role a husband and a wife play in the home. All the time, when you are studying scripture that can be controversial, people will want to keep it back in that culture. Well what Paul did was go back to beginning and to the creator.

As Jesus is sharing Genesis 2: 24, what does he do? He goes back to Genesis 2. He says ***"From the beginning, the Creator..."*** and then he quotes Genesis 1: 27. ***"... made them male and female."*** Genesis 2: 24 – ***For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*** So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate.

Paul repeats it again in Ephesians 5: 31 to make the point of the couple-centered home and here's what he says. ***"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."*** But look at the context he puts it in. ³²***This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church.*** Why is it important for singles to honor marriage? Why is it important for the church to encourage marriage in young, budding relationships between men and women within our church and within our community? It's because marriage models the gospel of Jesus. It paints a picture of Christ and his bride.

When you live with someone before you get married, you are not modeling the gospel of Jesus. When you have sex before marriage and have that deep connection with another person, you are not modeling the gospel of Jesus. He said this is a profound mystery, but marriage is to be that picture of what Jesus did and how he relates to his bride, the church. ³³***However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.***

So let me give you some of these observations. The first one is this and I've already touched on it, but it's...

1. Break away from home as an adult, not as a child.

In a recent study by the National Institute of Mental Health and UCLA... this is the study most delayed marriage advocates will point to as part of their argument to tell you wait on marriage. They want you to leave Mom and Dad's home as an adolescent and have another period of time where you just kind of float until you figure things out. Here is the study that they used.

They say the age of reason comes at about the age of 25 and that major life-changing decisions shouldn't be made before then. But what's interesting... how many of you have friends who have college degrees in an unrelated field to what they are currently doing. We don't tell kids to postpone college until they get life all figured out. Hopefully, that's part of the process, just like marriage can be part of maturing process. This study says the problem is, teenagers and young adults make decisions in that instinctual or emotional portion of the brain, and the frontal lobe, which controls judgment and the ability to evaluate consequence, is not fully developed by the teenage years.

So what we've done is we've created this gap between childhood and adulthood called adolescence. When it was first created in the early 20th century, about 100 years ago, the gap was small, but as we've gone through life, I don't think the creator has changed our brains all that much, but what has happened is we've now got this gap that can be 15 and 20 years that we call adolescence. We at Woodland Hills call it prolonged adolescence.

This week I heard the best definition on prolonged adolescence from a marriage and family therapist that goes to our church, Ryan Pannell. This is the last time I'm quoting him because after this, it will become my definition. The first time you share somebody's quote, you say "Ryan Pannell says..." The second time you share it, you say "I once heard..." By the third time, you say "I've always believed..." So just for you communicators; that's how I was taught to do it.

Here's is definition of prolonged adolescence: too much privilege, not enough responsibility. There is too much privilege with our kids and not enough responsibility. I've ordered a book, but I've yet to read it because I'm frustrated with the title. It's called *The Idle Parent: Why Laid-back Parents Raise Happier and Healthier Kids*. The problem is that I'm not interested in producing happy children, to be really honest with you. I'm interested in, as a parent, and I want help producing responsible adults. That's what I'm all about. I asked Amy this morning, "How important is the healthier part; are we really into the healthier part?" She said yes we should be into the healthier part. So we are into the healthier, but not the happier.

What it is basically saying is how a permissive parent, how a parent doesn't want to hurt or mess up the child too early by placing responsibility on them. Do you know what my dad's remedy for adolescence was? Here was his remedy for prolong adolescence: shut up and mow the lawn. How many of you had dads like that? I asked my dad a few weeks ago why he was never interested in protecting my little

heart. He was always telling me what to do and instructing me and giving me direction. You know, the new parent, the idle parent, just kind of kicks back and lets the kid do whatever he wants instead of being a real parent and jumping right in.

I've enjoyed this book more. It's called *Do Hard Things*. It's written by two teenagers, Alex and Brett Harris. The subtitle is called *A Teenage Rebellion Against Low Expectations*. Do you know what I love about it? These two have decided that everybody is giving our teenagers low expectations today. I'll just go ahead and say it. The first low expectations that young people are receiving are from their parents. I love talking to 16 years olds and going "Did you get a job yet for the summer?" The mom looks at me as if to say "He's only 16." "And how many hours a week are you working?" "I'm up to five hours a week." "Wow, five whole hours?"

I was with one mom the other day and I was at her son's throat going "Get a job! Get a job!" She goes, "Ted, he just turned seven." Okay so I know there is a difference between seven and sixteen. But responsibility is the problem with prolonged adolescence. So here's what the culture and secular experts are telling us: you need to leave your house and learn responsibility. That's not God's plan.

If you get on Blogs and you start reading, here's what you'll get: You need a gap from the time you leave home to the time you get married where you can discover yourself and where you can understand the way God... And you can create a period of independence. Let me tell you young people, some of you have left your home already. You are gone from your house and you are adolescents. Now you get to make the decision to become an adult, taking responsibility for your life, not calling home for money, getting a job.

Let me just give you some practicals. If 40 hours a week is not paying your bills, get another job or you work 50 hours. If 50 hours doesn't cut it, what do you do? Work five jobs if you have to. That's life. We've all done it. Every adult in her, at some point, has had more than one job. You do what you have to do to make it through life and you don't need that period of time between leaving home and getting married. Scripture gives the emphasis of leaving home and going into your marriage. We will talk about in just a second.

I love what they define in this book. Here's what they say. *The teen years are not a vacation from responsibility*. I love that. *It's a time to learn it; it's a time to grow; it's the time to mature*. My dad was a huge believer in this. I remember driving up home one night and, two houses down, this guy's lawn and gotten this big and my dad stopped the car and said, "Get out." I was probably eight or nine. I said, "What am I doing?" He goes, "Go up and knock on his door and tell him that for ten bucks, you'll mow his lawn."

At first that ten bucks seemed pretty good, but it was one of those mow jobs where you go three feet, back up and shake the grass out of the mower and you go three more feet and shake the grass out of it. How many of you have mowed a lawn... your like "Yea, this week. That's how I mow my lawn; I mow it, once a month." I can remember how hard that was and painful. I can remember my dad looking over at me, while I was mowing, with just the biggest smile on his face.

It's took me two days to mow that lawn. We lived on three quarter acre lots and I mowed three quarters of an acre like that. I could just tell it was one of my dad's proudest moments in life.

The biggest fight my dad and I ever got into was over taxes at the age of twelve. I was working about 20 to 30 hours a week at the age of twelve for my church. My church believed in hard work. I was making five or six bucks an hour, which was good money for a twelve year old. I remember having to go down and get that little permit. I can remember, at age 12, getting the work permit and arguing with the lady over how many hours they were going to allow me to work. "This is ridiculous; I can only work 30 hours?" "Yea, during the summer you can work 30."

I worked it, but at the end of the year I got a 1099 and my dad did my taxes. He said, "Ted, I'm writing a check out of your account for this amount." It was over \$1,000.00 because of FICA. I was considered self-employed. I went right at my dad and said, "Dad, no. We're not paying that. They don't expect 12 year olds to pay Social Security." I remember just going at him. Think about that. How many parents would you see debating taxes with a 12 year old today?

That's because they are precious. You don't make a twelve year old work. Yea, you do. I can remember my dad... I mean he got mad. We had some moments of slamming doors. But I remember him finally sitting down and validating me. I kid you not; he leaned forward and goes, "Ted, I understand everything you're feeling. That's why we are republicans." If you've been here long enough, you know somebody... But he was like "That's why we are the way we are. I hate paying taxes too, but guess what? Grow up; you're writing this check."

I remember lamenting over that. It was at 12 that I became a republican. I was against it. It was absurd. I know some of you are democrats and love giving all or your money away and blessings to you. But at 12, I didn't like it. That's when my dad started... I didn't have a choice in the home I grew up and that's why I get kind of passionate about this talk. I'm sad when I meet a 17 or 18 year old in a home with a mom and dad who have such low expectations on their kids. We don't at this church.

Do you know why I love what Angela Jennings is doing here? Do you know why we don't do car washes or lock-ins or the traditional youth program? It's because we refuse, as a church, to put low expectations on teenagers. We are going to challenge them in the areas of justice and mercy and giving outside themselves, not going and raising money so they can go on a fun little trip. I love that. Angela has the heart of the *Do Hard Things*. She's disgusted by modern day youth programs that just put low expectations on our kids.

Mom and Dad, why would you want to bring your young people to a church that treats them the way you do. That didn't come out the way I meant to say that. But why would you want that? Why would you want us to join in on babying teenagers, rather than saying it's time to put your privilege in check and take on more responsibility? I'm preaching to the choir because I'm raising a five and a seven year old that when we got back from our June trip, it wasn't a thank you, it was "Where we going next?" Remember when you used to do an annual vacation? Now it's like "What are we doing this weekend?"

How many of you never ate out growing up? You remember that was a special thing. Now it's like "I'm sorry, Carson, we are only eating out once today. We're just going to do lunch and then we are going to find something at home." Think about it; that's where we've gotten: too much privilege and not enough responsibility. Mom and Dad, raise the expectations on your kids. Help them leave home at 18 as an adult.

2. Break away from home by creating healthy boundaries with parents.

You've heard me share this before, but that mom at a wedding who comes up to me and goes, "I don't feel like I'm losing a daughter today; I feel like I'm gaining a son." My favorite thing to say is "Nope, you're losing a daughter. She is going to be united with someone else and you need to back the heck off; back off, Mom."

When I read that passage, I go "Therefore, what God has joined together, let not one of these two moms separate them." That's because you are going to be busybodies. Get out of their lives. Some of you are going to need to get married and move a thousand miles away because you need space from your parents. You don't need them meddling in your life. Some of you need to begin creating those boundaries. Listen, your parents are not the best marriage counselors after you are married. Don't do it.

In a second here, I'm going to encourage you. You need the blessing of your church and your parents before you get married. Solomon did it. It says it in Song of Solomon 3. He wore a crown that his mother prepared for the day of his wedding. Meaning that it is important to honor your parents in the process of getting married, but then you need to leave emotionally, physically, maybe regionally, and here's one that all mom and dads will say amen to, and financially. Praise our father in heaven.

This was easy for Denny. I remember asking him for his daughter's dad. In his Norwegian accent he said "You betcha." That was it; that was our conversation; we went no further than that. Then I moved a thousand miles away, didn't I, Denny? He didn't shed one cotton pickin tear. "See ya." He was counting the money. He passed out a card on the day of our wedding saying "Today my financial obligation ends." He passed that out to everybody at our wedding. "I hope you enjoy the food I have prepared for you and the drinks you're about to partake in because it ends today." And I'm thankful for it. And Denny said...

3. Break away from home and get married.

There you go. You've heard me say it. There are four Cs I give premarital couples and they are character, chemistry, competency, and calling. We don't have time to get into it today, but I can send you the background of that or Denise can get it to you. But it's make sure that not only do they claim to be a Christian, but that they are a follower of Jesus. That's important. Don't ask the question of do you go to church. That's not the question to ask. Rather it's are you a follower of Christ and have you placed him first in your life.

Chemistry... Make sure there is a personality blend. Character is the only C that I say is non-negotiable. The rest of these are negotiable. But there is that chemistry. You need to make sure that you two can get along. If you are a strong, powerful personality and you want to marry another strong, powerful personality, put money away for counseling. You're going to need it. Understand that, unless you're a powerful personality wanting to get married to a softer, gentler, more loyal personality which will go easier for you. You need to measure all of that.

Competency is a big one. When you have kids, you'll want to put them in braces and if this guy plays Xbox ten times a day and considers 20 hour a week full time, you are going to have struggles. He may be cute with a six pack of abs be a hotty and you want him so bad, but let me tell you my favorite verse for you is and *it came to pass*... He won't have that hot bod forever and he's going to look like me about ten years in so just be prepared for that. You're like "Oh boy, that does give a whole new perspective to it." So competency is big. Does this guy have job skills? Is he a hard worker? You really have to ask the question is the guy you're wanting to marry an adolescent or an adult. Is he in prolonged adolescence, wanting mommy and daddy to do everything for him or has he grown up into a man?

And then there's calling, your direction in life. Does he have a passion for life? Does he have a clear goal in front of him? Does he have somewhere that he's headed? And then how do you two... Because that's part of oneness too that you have to bring those together. But you can get married... Woodland Hills is a church that promotes marriage, but I have to tell you, when you think you've found the right one, don't walk into the pastor's office or to your parents with the attitude of "We've already made the decision and we want you to conform to it."

We are here as spiritual guides and safety nets. Mom and Dad are there to help you process. I'm going to talk to them in the very next breath here, but let us help you. Let us walk you through the Cs. Let us ask the hard questions. Let us look at you and say "He is an adolescent and it's going to be tough if you marry this adolescent. You can, but be prepared. You are going to be part of his growing up and that may be until the age of 35. And you can't quit until he gets to that age. He will be an adult one day and we will help you with that."

Now I'm going to move away from young people and I'm going to talk to parents.

4. Parents, let your children leave.

For this reason a man will leave your home. Hopefully you are raising adults, not children. Our goal as parents is not to raise happy kids that love us and want to be our best friend. We are to raise responsible adults and send them out of our home, into their marriage and into their family as adults.

You are not going to be here forever, that's the job. "Who do you love more, daddy; me or mommy." "I love your mom and I'm going to be with her the rest of my life. You? Not so much. I love you; I love you with all my heart, but one day I'm going to say goodbye to you and you are going to leave." See ya; I've got big plans for that day. Just like Denny did. Denny got to save money and do other things. I'm looking forward to that and that's okay because our marriage is to model the gospel of Jesus, Mom and Dad, for your kids to realize they are not going to be with you forever.

It's time now... you've got them for this short window so let's invest in them to make sure when they get out there, they are not disrupting our plans and taking our money when they are in their 20s. We want that; we've waited for that; that's why all these people at our church have houseboats; they got rid of the kids. They can buy boats.

Some of you are like "I don't like this. I love being at home and being taken care of." Of course you do; we all do. I get that. But we have to let you leave.

5. Parent, encourage your children to get married.

Challenge them; let them know what marriage is. Some of you don't want to advocate for the marriage, and I'm advocating for marriage in your young 20s. You should get married when you are 21 or 22. You can do that and Mom and Dad, don't hold back because your first marriage didn't make it. Here's the secret. If a young couple... This is from the professor at the University of Texas, Austin. *If a young couple displays maturity, faith, fidelity, a commitment to understanding marriage as a covenant, and a sense of realism about marriage, then it's our duty, indeed our privilege and our pleasure to help them expedite the part of marriage that involves public recognition and a celebration of what God is already knitting together.* We are to rejoice and delight in them and praise their love – Song of Solomon 1: 4.

We need to look at our young people and say it's okay. Moms and Dads freak out over this. I had it last week at family camp. The parents go "What do you do when your eight year old comes up to you and says they have fallen in love?" What do most parents do? "No you're not; you do not love that person." I went "How did that work for you?" "You will not love that person." "We don't allow boyfriends and girlfriends in our home." Parents freak out. That was your parenting style wasn't it, Ted. No?

We freak out. When Corynn came out of kindergarten this year and told me she was in love with a little boy and stated his name, I wanted to react, but I looked at her and I simply asked her "Do you think he's the one? Because I'll lead you in that direction. We'll start now." And what did Corynn say? "Dad! No!" I go "What kind of house do you guys want to live in, because I'm not helping you with any payments. If you think he's the one and you want to be married by seven, it's going to be a lot of responsibility."

But here's the problem. In the Song of Solomon 1 and 2, young love is referred to as a budding love. In the church today, because we are delaying marriage and we are advocating for delayed marriage, we are coming to this young budding love and we are being a fox. I know some of you reacted when I encouraged you not to be a wolf. Well now I'm going to say parents, don't be a fox.

Look at what it says in Song of Solomon 2: 15. ***Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards, our vineyards that are in bloom.*** It's speaking here now of their love. The fox would sneak in while it was budding and they would rip it out. I'm sad to say today, but campus pastors and campus spiritual leaders are being foxes. They are looking at young people who fall in love and I'm hearing this from campus pastors; "Don't worry about that. Don't date; don't get married; focus on your relationship with Christ."

Guess what? You can love Jesus and a member of the opposite sex at the same time; it is possible. You don't have to pick one or the other. I do this every day. I love my wife Amy and I love the Lord.

Parents, because of past relationships or the divorce rate in our culture, we are saying no don't marry until you are really sure, and we over do it as we are being foxes.

I've asked my father in heaven all week: "Why did you create the Japanese beetle?" I can't figure it out. I have those bags hanging everywhere on the perimeter of my lawn. They are the bags that you catch them in. They say you can use them all season long. I put the first bags out and I filled the bags with thousands of these beetles in the first few hours of having them on my lawn. I have personally executed some 30 to 40 thousand Japanese beetles this summer.

I got back in June and they had destroyed a couple of my favorite trees. They always come back, but there is one bush that I love. I've had it for three years, but I've yet to see it bloom. It's an Althea bush. Have you ever seen one of those? The buds are huge and the blooms are gigantic and I love them. I've had it three years and I've yet to see it bloom because it's the last part of our landscaping that blooms and the beetles get it every single time. I declared before the Lord this year that it will not happen. I said I know you've created these things. Why; I have no idea, but I am taking them all out and I will see that tree bloom.

And do you know what? If we are not careful as a church, we all become like that Japanese beetle and we see a young person falling in love and we destroy it. We never see the bloom because we are so preoccupied with destroying the bud. We'll just take that bud right out and let them know they need to suppress these feelings. Listen, suppressed feelings are not always bad. Don't arouse or awaken love before it's time. You do need to suppress your feelings until you get married.

Even after you get married, you have to suppress feelings. As you begin to give your affection to another person, you suppress those feelings to stay true to your commitment you made to your spouse. So suppressed feelings and the discipline of suppressed feelings is not a bad thing, but are we going to be a church full of foxes or Japanese beetles where when we see young love blossoming, are we going to go after it? Are we going to take it out and try to tell them this too shall pass?

Or do we do this and I'm going to quote again, as I close, from Professor Mark, from the University of Texas. He words this so well. He said *Romantic relationship formation is what I study*. He has devoted his whole life to the study of how relationships between male and female form. *I have spoken with hundreds of young adults about not only what they think or hope for, but what they actually do. Time and again, I've listened to Christian undergraduates recount to me how their relationships turned sexual. One thing I never asked them is why. I know why. It's because sex feels great. It feels emotional; it's connectational; it feels deeply human. I never blame them for wanting that. Sex is intended to deepen personal relationships and desire for it is intended to promote marriage. Such are the impulses of many young Christians in love.*

Now listen to this last line. This is what guards us all from becoming foxes. *In an environment where parents and peers are encouraging them to delay thoughts of marriage, I'm not surprised that their*

sexuality remains difficult to suppress and the source of considerable angst. You are going to love this. We would do well to recognize some of these relationships for what they really are: marriages in the making. They are buds of young marriages and by the church promoting marriage, encouraging marriage, not teaching the doctrine of demons, telling people to forbid them or abstain from it, we say marriage is good.

As Paul said to Timothy, if it is received with thanksgiving and understood as a spiritual issue, this church should be looking at the 21 and 22 year olds who are in love and are enjoying each other... I remind all the old people that you had those feelings one point in your life as well. "Yea, and I got over them." Do we want it to pass? May we not destroy the buds in this church and keep them from blooming. May we encourage young men and young women to leave home as adults, create healthy boundaries with Mom and Dad, and be united to their spouse in a marriage that they are receiving with thanksgiving and understanding that it is between the two of them and in their relationship with the Lord.

Father, thank you for our time. We do thank you for marriage. May this be a church that always honors it. May we never get to a point where we stiff-arm it and say it's not good and do what the Gnostics did and believe that marriage or food is bad. No, may we encourage them. May young people in here who are in their late teens and feeling they found the one, honor their parents and seek their parents' blessing and receive a crown on their wedding day from Mom and Dad to say this is a union we believe will go the distance because they are receiving the ideas of commitment, fidelity, what it means to love one another, what it means to stay in this new bond, as Mom and Dad separate from them.

We thank you for marriage; we do as a church. We are pro-marriage and may we never end that. We receive it with thanksgiving; we teach it as a discipline in life. May people leave here encouraged. May young people feel validated in the love that they have as well as instructed to make sure that they submit to the authority of the church and seek the blessing of their parents.

It's in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.