

Twolgnite
TwoFinish

Pastor Ted Cunningham

Some of you right now are not singing for the glory of the King and you can't. You are right in the middle of Justin and Robyn's story. I'd like you to just bow your heads right where you're at and let's just take a couple of minutes. Some of you need to sit in this for just a little bit. You need to really reflect.

Some of you are in the middle of that story. This is a small enough town and I see you out there with your girlfriend before your divorce is even final. I see you out there with your boyfriend before the divorce is final. Some of you, right now while that story was playing, during worship, while we came back in singing of the glory of our King, in your mind, you were preparing and structuring your afternoon and evening to go home and download porn so you can cheat on your wife. Some of you are thinking oops, I've gotten caught.

Listen, we are not naming you. The Holy Spirit is doing that right now. Sometimes, because of a service and the time that is structured into it, we rush on through, we get to the next song, everything is timed perfectly, but this is just too important.

Some of you really need to do business with the Lord this morning. You need to take time to repent before the Lord, who as we will see in a second, stood as a witness between you and your wife on the day of your wedding. As you exchanged vows, he was the primary witness. You've been able to hide a lot from your wife; you've been able to hide a lot from your husband, but you can't hide anything from Him.

You are here with the wife that says "I am in no mood to lay my head on his shoulder right now." You are still in that mourning stage, that anger stage; you have that bitterness and resentment. We want you to get to the place where you can sing for the glory of the King, but right now, you need to repent.

Some of you are thinking about divorcing your wife for trivial reasons. As they asked Jesus, "Can we divorce our wife for any and every reason?" Some of you right now have a list of petty reasons. Out of selfishness, you are planning on divorcing. You just ask the Lord to continue to work in your life and in your heart this morning.

Father, anything we can say right now seems very inadequate. I want your Holy Spirit to just work in the lives of people right now. Father, we know you love marriage and you hate divorce. Moses permitted it because of the hardness of man's heart, but this is such a sacred covenant; it's a covenant that is binding between a husband and a wife.

As we talk about it today, I pray that men and women would be convicted of their casual attitudes towards this subject. And that those who have divorced would just leave here today not with their head hung down in shame, but knowing that there is hope. May everyone leave here today with hope. We all want to leave singing the glory of the King. Rebuke, correct, reprove, and teach this morning, through your word.

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

Before we jump into the text this morning, we are going to take an offering and I want to tell you about an offering that I received this morning. Is that adorable or what. My dad told me this week... My dad is going to stop talking to me because I use illustrations from him all the time. But my dad said, "Well, I know I'm getting old, Ted." I go, "Why's that dad?" He goes, "I walked by a dime today and didn't even feel like picking it up." That's when you are getting older. You have to know my dad to know it is really bad for him to walk by a dime and not pick it up. If it were a quarter, he would have reached.

Mattea here brought me her offering and I need to save it for the second service. I was going to do the dramatic thing and dump it in the bucket so you could hear it, but, as you can hear, (coins rattling together) it's quite a bit. She will find money in the house and run it to her bedroom to give. She gave it to me this morning.

She knows that Ted and I and Paul Etheridge are going to Haiti on Tuesday. It's our first trip to Haiti as a church. We plan to take many more, but she gave it to me and said "I want to give this to the children of Haiti. I love when the kids of our church respond to need and I'm loving that the church is embracing a heart for missions. It's been a long time in the making and a much necessary step for us.

I want to encourage you to give as the offering comes around. We are building a school in Haiti, giving to the food and shelter there, as well as the hope of Christ. So we encourage you to give. Thank you, church, I know many of you, above your tithe and regular offering, have been giving towards Haiti and we want to say thank you for that. I will dump this in the second service offering. Those buckets are coming around, as we give.

So, again, it is a very sensitive topic today. We are on a TwoIgnite Sunday and this is TwoFinish. It doesn't mean we are finishing TwoIgnite, but it's talking about finishing well. There are going to be so many things I mess up on in life, but marriage is not one of them. I want to grow old and crippled with Amy Cunningham; I do. She is going to be in such great health; she's going to be perfect to take care of me. She actually says she is looking forward to that. I know that I've failed in business and I've failed in ministry and I've failed in my marriage, but I want to be able to say I finished well at the end of my life.

I asked Ted Burden... One of the little games we play around here at Woodland Hills is see how quickly you can make Ted Burden form a tear. I did it this week when I said "We're coming up on 2 Timothy and I want you, as Paul talks about pouring out his life as a drink offering, to get in front of the camera for five minutes, like it's the last five minutes you have to address your wife, your children and your grandchildren at your funeral." He goes, "You... what? Why?" I said, "No, I'm not planning anything; I need to see what you would say if you only had five minutes."

What is interesting is that the church does come to mind, but when you are on that deathbed, you gather the closest people around you that you can and you make sure they hear it. The TwoFinish igniter is finishing well, knowing that when I get to the end of my life, I have stuck it out with the wife of my youth, or she has stuck it out with me. If you notice, every time I talk about death, it's always me on my deathbed, saying good-bye to Amy. I'm looking forward to that.

This morning, I saw Sonya Hayter and she is saying good-bye to the last of her children on Wednesday, as they are all off on their own now. She will see them maybe but once a year. I'm just kidding; it will probably more than that. Instead of talking to the kids who are going off to school, I'm comforting the parents. I said, "I've got big plans for that day, Sonya, big plans. I'm already thinking about all of the stuff we are going to do that we can't do now because we have kids." I told Amy that these are times we have to dream together. We are looking forward to those empty nest years and our kids are still in pre-school.

Yesterday was one of those days. The night before, I was on a trip and Amy let the kids stay up until 10:00. She knows better. They were a mess yesterday. We dreamed about the empty nest years all afternoon and into the evening. But we are looking forward to finishing well.

Before we begin, I need to address a few different people that are in here this morning. Whenever we talk about this, there is a group that this will hit and they will be filled with guilt and shame, and they will walk out of here with their head hung down. It's the one who has divorced, found grace, and for many, found the Lord for the very first time after their divorce. They are remarried and they are moving on in life, loving the Lord and loving each other. Don't you dare leave here today with your head held down. If you do, I will kick your hind end. Don't do it; don't start beating yourself up and putting yourself on the guilt trip.

There is the one who has divorced due to persistent, relentless sin of a spouse or desertion and you are going to have those feelings come back of the one who broke faith with you, who deserted you, who left you for another woman, or left you for another man. Today, you need to sing to the glory of the King and know that he is your heavenly father who loves you and he cares for you.

Today, TwoFinish is directed towards the one who is married and who has developed a casual attitude towards divorce for trivial reasons. They asked Jesus, "Can we divorce our wife for any and every reason?" We are talking about trivial reasons for our casual attitudes towards divorce. We are talking about the person who has grown tired of their spouse and they feel they are more compatible to the one they just met.

You are not more compatible with that one you just met. No, that one you just met, you don't pay bills with, you don't mow the lawn for, you don't raise children with, and you don't pay taxes with. That's why they are more pleasant to be around... period! If you think "Oh no, they're my soul mate," that is, as we call it in the Hebrew, *caca*. Where you think the grass is greener, never forget there is a septic leak and you know that very clearly. Some of you today need to run from that person.

Do you know what I hope happens at the end of today's message? I hope that men will be men and go home and call their girlfriends and say "It's over; I'm sticking it out with my wife and you need to go back to your husband. We are done with this; we've been acting like little boys and little girls." I would love nothing more than for a guy to go home and get rid of his computer or hand it to his wife and say "I'm ready to come clean. I'm ready to find hope and live in the light rather than in the secrets and the shadows so that we can have a marriage and finish well together."

It's the guy who has just grown bored and stagnant and the lady who says he just doesn't meet her needs like he used to. "We don't talk like we used to so I think I need to start finding someone else." I hope that you would go home today and say "I'm going to take charge of this thing. I'm going to trust in the Lord to bring healing to my marriage like we've never had."

Don't forget, as we go through this, we are talking to the person with the casual attitude. We are going to see in a second that a casual attitude started towards divorce in Judah. They started to develop this casualness of just "we'll divorce and leave the wife of our youth." And you are going to see the sin of... Many of them were intermarrying, meaning marrying someone outside of Israel, breaking the covenant with the Lord, mixing religions.

2 Corinthians 6 talks about the exact same thing, saying you should not marry an unbeliever. You should find someone who loves the Lord. I love Justin in that video. "What was the first thing that attracted you to her?" "It was her walk with God." Right! I love it when... Sorry Justin. He told me I could pick on him. Her walk with God... It wasn't that, but it was quickly that; I get it.

Some of you are considering marriage... and singles will think this is a "divorce-proofing your marriage" message so they don't need to listen. No, you need to listen because we are going to see that integrity and character have everything to do with commitment. If you choose a guy with no integrity or you choose a gal with no integrity and no character, don't be shocked when it doesn't last, because character is essential; a walk with Christ is essential. Don't you dare start dating or marry somebody who tells you about their faith and all they can say about their faith is that they walked an aisle at VBS when they were eight. That ain't enough.

Don't you dare fall for that one... I love asking "Tell me about your faith; tell me about your walk with Christ." They say, "I've always been religious." That's even worse. But that's a bad answer. "I grew up in a Christian home." Bad answer. A good answer is "I walk with Christ. My friends reflect the sacrifice of Jesus. My mouth reflects the sacrifice of Jesus. My behavior out in public and the way I dress reflects the attitude and the person of Jesus Christ. That's what you want, not some commitment they made 15 years ago. You want to know that they are walking with Jesus, because those are the marriages that last; those are the marriages that go somewhere.

I had the opportunity to preach at my Aunt Bev's funerals. I loved her; she was one of my favorite people on earth. I'll never forget that after her funeral... some of you have heard me share this story. Her son, Greg, is a year older than me. We've been cousins for around 36 years. He is leaning on the back of his car, with a Bud Light, in his hand. He says to me, "Tell me about this marriage and family stuff you do." He is single and has been single his whole life.

I just started sharing a little bit of it and you could just tell he was kind of disconnected from me. He goes, "Ted, that all good and well, but I only have to be able to answer one question before I walk down the aisle." I said "What's that, Greg." He says, "Am I willing to spend the next 6 to 8 years of my life with this woman?" Oh I'm proud of you Greg. He's a deep, deep man. That is the attitude we have developed. We've developed the let's give it a shot attitude.

Some of you are thinking he's hit everybody in here and I'm just hoping he is done and he's not going to touch me. No, you need to stop living with your boyfriend and stop living with your girlfriend. Your fear of divorce has caused you to try a trial marriage. You are going to see how well you get along, but you've always got the back door open just a little bit. About 60% of young people today will live together before they get married.

Guess why you are living together. If you are cohabitating (that's the big fancy word), do you know why you are doing it? It's because you don't have character and you don't have commitment. You are just trying it. You are scared of divorce; you don't want a marriage like your parents so, but you want all the benefits that come with it. So you remain single, but outside of God's plan, and you are sleeping together and you are living together. God's plan is still that you delay sex until marriage. But the world now is saying no, go ahead and have sex, just delay marriage. Remember, God honors marriage. We are going to see it in the text today. He loves marriage and he hates divorce.

So as we dive into it, I want you to turn in your Bibles to Malachi 2. If you go to Matthew, the very first book of the New Testament, and go left, you will find it. Today, in Malachi... let me kind of give you just a synopsis here. We are dealing with a casual attitude toward divorce which is just a symptom of a problem with one's heart towards the Lord. We are going to see this connection as we walk through Malachi. Again, we're talking to the one with a casual attitude toward divorce for trivial reasons.

1. Our triune God, at his core, is a relational being.

God made a covenant with his children, the Nation of Israel. He challenged them, he commanded them. "Have no other Gods before me. You follow me; you are in a special relationship with me." The triune God... When we say triune, we are referring to the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In Genesis 1, it says **Let us** [Father, Son, Holy Spirit] **make man in our image. ...male and female he created them.** The triune God speaks of his relational being and, to go further, to be a Christian or to be a follower of Christ is to be in Christ and deeply connected with other believers.

Let's look at what Malachi says. We are going to see words today like *abomination, detestable, treacherous*. Malachi 1:10 - **Have we not all one Father?** Hear O Israel... my people, hear this. The Lord our God, the Lord is one. **Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?** He is going to speak here in Ezra 9 & 10 and in Nehemiah 13. We read that they were commanded to put away their pagan lives... You are going to see these terms *put away* and *break faith*. They did that for national cleansing. ...and return to this covenant. They went off and intermarried. It's not speaking anything of racial or ethnic, but speaking of religion, speaking of the relationship they had with God.

For us today it would be 2 Corinthians 6 – ***Don't be unequally yoked***, meaning don't be dating or considering marriage to a non-believer because it breaks that special relationship. A husband and wife need to be equally yoked, pulling in the same direction at the same speed with following the Lord.

A casual attitude has crept into the camp and they begin to profane the special relationship that God had with the Nation of Israel. Intermarriage was just one of the issues.

¹¹ ***Judah has broken faith***. Circle or underline *broken faith* because that is a word picture of divorce. **A detestable thing...** Another translation says the word *abomination*. We hear the word *abomination* and many of us forget that means a stomach revulsion. When something is detestable to the Lord, when something is an abomination to the Lord, it turns his stomach. Homosexuality... you probably hear the word *abomination* in the evangelical church today most associated with that word. Homosexuality is an abomination to the Lord. It turns his stomach. Guess what? Divorce turns God's stomach. Breaking faith and the special relationship we have with Christ turns God's stomach.

I know something about this. This may be way too much information but I'm three years away from being old, according to the text we looked at last week. Dairy before 5:00pm and I'm fine; dairy after 5:00pm and I'm a wreck. My stomach can turn like that; I totally get it. How many of you know what I'm talking about? Old people, raise your hand. So I get it. It's saying when you break faith with the Lord... Just keep in mind that divorce is a symptom of ones broken faith to the Lord.

Many of you... and I love this about this church. Many of you have found your way into Woodland Hills because of your impending divorce. You have found yourself here today because someone deserted you. You came in and wanted us to help you. You then realized that in the beginning we didn't spend a lot of time with your marriage. We spent the time with you.

For some of you, this is the first wake up call in your life. A 20 year marriage is being thrown down the drain. And for the first time in your life, you have this wake up call that there was something that you did to contribute to this for 20 years. It's not always about the other person. Some of you have worked hard to reestablish faith with the wife of your youth and she said no. You've worked hard to reestablish that covenant with the husband of your youth and he said no. You've been deserted and you find yourself here at Woodland Hills trying to pick up the pieces of that.

The scripture says that your relationship with the Lord is the first key to a great marriage because the Lord stands witness to the vows that you took. The Lord stands witness to your character. Some of you are dealing with deep conviction because Justin's story from a few years back is your story and you don't want to be named this morning. But the Holy Spirit has named you and you need to accept that and you need to repent and begin to establish your relationship with the Lord.

Some of you are here and the reason you are off in the affair or considering the affair or downloading porn... the reason you are doing all that and you're not acting like a Christian... we have to keep this in mind. For some of you in here that are not acting like a Christian right now it's because you are not a Christian, but you attend a church, thinking it makes you one.

A detestable [an abomination, a stomach revulsion] ***thing has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem: Judah has desecrated the sanctuary the LORD loves...*** speaking of a special relationship. Some commentaries point to this as being that marriage relationship when you stand in a wedding to exchange your vows. Understand you are having church wedding and what we are assuming is your desire to have a church marriage. Don't desecrate the temple of the lord. Don't profane the Lord's name by standing in a church and exchanging vows with it in the back of your mind that you will see if this works. Be a man of integrity; be a woman of integrity and exchange those vows, saying this truly is till death do us part. "Yea, but she's gone nutty." In sickness and in health. "Yea, but he doesn't make a good living." For richer or for poorer. You made a commitment; stick it out. You can make it through.

Justin and Robyn's story – it's my story, it's Amy's story, it's your story. We all know what those first years of marriage are like. We get a couple of years in and we realize this person doesn't conform to our ideology as quickly as they once did and we begin to go at it. We begin to fight, we begin to nag each other and try changing each other. The average marriage lasts 7.8 years because we get tired of each other. We go before the Lord, saying I have spent years trying to change this woman, Father, when are you going to do your part? I'm doing my part, when are you going to do your part?"

We live in this idea that the vows mean okay we're going to try this. But He says no, don't desecrate the temple by coming in and saying we are going to give this thing a shot; we're going to give it a try. Be a man or a woman of integrity.

... by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. Many of them did this, but as some on once put it, marry me, marry my God. In that day, these guys in Judah and Jerusalem were marrying foreign women with pagan gods and that was coming into the family and it was coming into the Nation of Israel. That's why Ezra, in Nehemiah, had to do a national cleansing.

¹²As for the man who does this, whoever he may be, may the LORD cut him off from the tents of Jacob-even though he brings offerings to the LORD Almighty.

2. A casual attitude towards divorce calls your integrity into question.

If you fail in this area of marriage, it calls every other area of your life into question. It's why when you're going to sit down and get a new insurance man, part of your interview should be "have you ever cheated on your wife?" How can you trust him to not cheat on you if he is willing to cheat on someone he stood before people and signed an agreement, a legally binding document?

Before you pick a financial advisor or give your money to someone to manage, ask them if they ever cheated on their wife or if they have ever downloaded porn. Some of you thinking you would not ask that question. Think about it. Are you going to trust your money to someone who takes commitments lightly? You have to think about it.

Some of you are here from out of town. Here's where I'm really going to get in trouble. But tomorrow, you are going to take a 90 minute tour. We work with a lot of people from this industry, I'll be very honest with you and those are pretty real questions you need to be asking.

They will tell you this and tell you that. Ask them if they've ever cheated on their wife or if they have ever messed around with anybody in this office. You are thinking we are going to be a hated church after this. You expect what they are telling you after that tour to be true and they want you to sign on a line. What I would say to them is that I know there may be people in this office that are cheating so I'm going to sign it and I'm going to take it about as seriously as they take their signature when they signed to commit to a woman and be a one-woman man. So now, is my name on this piece of paper worth anything?

I don't know if you know this, but we actually fill out a document from the Taney County Assessor's office that is two big, huge pages. That comes after you sign this piece of paper. But you get a piece of paper and I sign it and then I have to say what county it was in, where we did this... it has all this information on it. Then I usually get your best man and maid of honor together and we sign it. I make sure they know this is a serious deal.

I always give the bride and groom the option. I say "We don't have to sign this."

"But we've spent a lot of money on the wedding."

"I don't care; I didn't. This is a binding agreement. We do not have to sign this; if you have any hesitation, let's not do this. "

"No, sign it."

Okay, this is a serious deal. When you sign a covenant, it's a formal, public, legal and sacred binding.

He talks to them about breaking faith with Judah when they were intermarrying and the cleansing of Ezra and Nehemiah, but now look at Verse 13. **Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears.** Some commentaries say that these are the women who have been deserted. Some say it's the people from the nation who don't understand, even though they broke faith with their wife, why the Lord doesn't want anything else from their hands. Again, they didn't keep this, why should he accept this?

You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. ¹⁴ You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

Guys, you can succeed in every area of life, but if you blow it in this area, it clouds all the other areas. You say "No, not true, Ted, today it's being widely accepted." I know that, but before the Lord, remember he stands as the primary witness to what you commit to.

If I can talk to the single guys and the single gals for just a second... In 2007, Amy and I built a house. When we cleared the lot and there was this 100 year old oak tree. It was the most gorgeous... this was stuff you see on logos. It was the most beautifully shaped oak tree; it was stunning. We made the brilliant decision to build our house around this tree. The next year, we realized it didn't leaf out quite as well as it did before we cut everything down around it. Then the second year, we looked and we discovered it was not coming out that great.

Now this year, we looked at and we were in trouble. As you walk up to this tree... it's this big around. I haven't done it because I don't know what all is living in it, but I could put my hand into the middle of this tree; it's hollow and it leans at a nice 80% angle towards our house. Every day I go out and look at the tree, I know it needs to come down. I didn't pay close enough attention. I was looking at the outside and not seeing what was on the inside. Every year that went by, I saw less and less fruit (go with the illustration for just a second). I saw fewer and fewer leaves and the tree was dying.

Many of you are spending too much time looking on the outside. You are focused on the aesthetics of the person you are interested in. This is why when you do pre-marital counseling at Woodland Hills, we go deep into the inside because we want to make sure the marriage is going to last. So we ask questions like "Is he a one-woman man?" "Is he a hard worker?" It's not what kind of work is he going to do, but is he going to be able to provide for your family?" "Is he going to be a good dad?" "Is he able to deal with his anger?" We don't want you marrying somebody whose character is weak because of unresolved anger and resentment.

On this side, "Is she a malicious talker?" "Is she moody?" "Is she modest?" We go through all these questions because we don't want you just looking at the outside, we want to make sure as you get in to marriage, there is nothing hollowed out on the inside. Integrity is what keeps commitment. When you make a commitment, you stick to it and you stay strong to it.

3. God loves marriage; he hates divorce.

Whereas the law regulated divorce, the Lord said this was because of the hardness of man's heart. ¹⁵***Has not the LORD made them one?*** We've looked at this verse a lot in Twolignite. Genesis 2: 24 – ***For this reason a man*** [not a child, not an adolescent] ***will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*** You are no longer two, but you become one.

In flesh and spirit they are his. Speaking of the oneness of marriage. ***And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring.*** Speaking there of returning also to the covenant and making sure that the church stays strong. That's why marriages use the model of the gospel and the model of the church. Our church will only be as strong as the marriages that exist within it. We have to have strong marriages modeling the gospel of Jesus and that creates a strong church.

The reason marriage was so important to the covenant that Israel had with the Lord is it kept the covenant strong. When they were breaking faith and marrying women of pagan Gods, it broke the covenant and it broke faith.

So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. God's Holy Spirit in the life of a married couple is what the scripture is speaking of here, and that his work will continue to strengthen you.

Today many of you need to open your heart back up. Some of you have closed your heart down in marriage. You only have one heart. The same heart that loves God and is open to rebuke and correction of the Holy Spirit, loves your spouse and loves your children.

You cannot close your heart off toward your spouse and act like it's going to stay open to God and your children. You have to do business with the Lord today and open your heart to God and allow his Holy Spirit to convict in your life.

Then here is the strongest statement of divorce in the Old Testament. It's speaking here of the word *treacherously*; it actually means the actions of a traitor.

¹⁶ **"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel...** I don't want you to read this as "I hate the divorced person. Don't you dare walk out with your head hung down today on that one, but it says I hate divorce; I love marriage." Again, when Jesus was asked, as we will see in a second, what do you think about this divorce for any and every reason, Jesus said, "The only reason Moses allowed you guys to do that was because of the hardness of your heart." It's never been a part of God's plan.

¹⁶ **"I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty.** The word garment there is speaking of protection.

Guys when you make the decision to divorce your wife, you remove protection from her. My wife gave me the greatest compliment last night; it's a compliment every man wants to hear. I got home late on Friday night. She didn't wake up. I got into bed... my wife is a very light sleeper. Last night when we were getting into bed, she said, "I always sleep better when your home because I feel safe." Now when I hear noises, she doesn't see me shaking under the covers, but for the most part, she feels safe. Can I just say, to some of you guys that have deserted your wives, that you have removed that protection from her. We are going to see this next week in 1 Timothy 5 as well. You've acted towards her as an unbeliever, as an infidel.

I like what Mark Driscoll said in Seattle. He is talking to his church, Mars Hill. He says, "There are a handful of guys around this church that are sick and tired of cleaning up your messes." Amy and I watched that clip together this week. When he said that, I just went "Yes."

There are ladies in this church that many of you are taking care of right now because their husband is worse than and infidel. Some of you guys need to get a job, provide for your family, grow up, and honor the commitment of the vows that you exchanged with that woman. I would love nothing more this morning than for some of you to turn to your wife and simply say the words "I'm sorry. I have been wrong and I am going to do something about it. I am going to stay committed to this marriage."

He also hates a man covering himself with violence and removing a wife from under the protection of him. He says in Matthew 19 ***So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.*** Jesus was asked this: ***"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"*** ⁴***"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female..."***

We've seen this time and time again this year in our study on Ephesians and 1 Timothy. Both Jesus and Paul go back to Genesis; they go back to the original plan for man, for woman, and for marriage. He made the male and female. ⁵***and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?***

Again, he quotes Genesis 2: 24. ⁶***So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.*** And that includes you. ²***"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"*** (break faith with her) ⁸***Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.*** Here's what he is saying: that's not how it was intended to be.

Some of you are caught up in the casual attitude of divorce because of our culture, but you need to return to the roots of scripture and know that your casual attitude before our Almighty God is sin and that is what you need to repent of. That is what you need to take dead seriously.

⁹***I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.*** We are not talking today of remarriage; that's a whole other message. But the challenge today, the encouragement today is for men. I am going to ask you to take the lead on this because a lot of guys in here need to take the leadership of the home. You need to be the spiritual leader number one and you need to start acting and speaking in courteous ways towards your wife. You need to go back to the roots of kindness. You need to resolve your anger. You need to endure with your wife and with your children and learn to be patient. You need to live in freedom from addiction. You need to act in a tender, gentle way towards your family. You need to learn to validate your wife's feelings rather than trying to control her or change her. You need to go home today and say "I don't always get it right; I'm going to make more mistakes, but one thing I can promise you is that we will never ever again allow the "D" word into this home. Divorce is not an option for us... period." You take the lead on that.

Some of you guys have been married for a long time and you do not pray with your wife. You need to start praying with your wife. You need to start praying with your kids. You need to start modeling the gospel of Jesus in your life and sharing it with your family on a regular basis. You need to admit your mistakes freely. You need to explain to your wife, "eyes for no other faithfulness."

There are plenty of shows on TV that we would watch and Amy took the lead on saying we ain't watching that. I would ask why not? Remember she read that book on how men think. It's not a real thick book; you can read it in about a night. But guess what? Now I'm the one that initiates what show will not watch. I'm initiating "eyes for no other faithfulness." I want Amy to know that. "I know the woman on TV right now is 75 years old, but just incase you think I'm lusting after her, I'm turning the channel."

Admission of mistakes – a united front. Some of you guys need to go home today, grab the kids, bring them into the family room, and just say this simple statement: "You are no longer in charge; I'm the dad, that's my woman, I love her, and you will not come between us again." Walk out of your bedroom every morning arm and arm, ready for battle. Be the protection, be that security, be the one that says you can trust me. I am not only going to take a bullet for you, but I'm going to be here to take that bullet for you.

Agree to join a marriage support group. We have Marriage 911. That's what Justin and Robyn were referring to with Karen and R.G. They are available for you. You need to call out to those people. You need to get help. You need to say "I can't think straight right now." Some of you are so close to the forest that you can't see the trees so you need to back up and let somebody come in.

What is interesting is you will notice that R.G. and Karen are a married couple leading out in Marriage 911, but it wasn't Karen who worked with Robyn, it was someone else. And they don't let you play sides so R.G. and Karen can't go home and go "I hope you helped him because he's a mess." No, it is structured in such a way to help and encourage you in that way.

Some of you need to get Christian counseling to deal with unresolved hurts. But the most important thing, as we close... some of you need to walk out of here, trusting God for a miracle, believing in God for a miracle. But it starts with you repenting; it starts with you resolving the anger in your heart. You know I'm passionate about young marriage. I just think people don't really get how they come across sometimes.

A mom, a couple of weeks ago, looking at her daughter, said "You're too young to know what love is!" The daughter goes, "I'm not, Mom." The mom yells at her, "No, you are too young. Love is what your father and I have!" I don't know... that's the kind of love she ain't wanting. That's what I'm trying to explain to you. Some of you need to start modeling it for your kids.

What I want to do as we close is to ask everybody to bow their heads again. I am going to ask you to be very bold this morning. I am going to ask you to meet with somebody if you're in the middle of Justin and Robyn's story right now, which was my story, which is the story of many in here, don't leave here today in your bitterness, your resentment, your frustration, and your hopelessness. Leave here today with hope.

We are going to have people down front that you can meet with as I dismiss you here in about 30 seconds. But you say "Ted, I have a casual attitude towards divorce and I'm ready to bolt on my wife, I'm ready to bolt on my husband for a trivial reason, for any and every reason." If you do not want that to be true of you, right where you are, I want you to raise your hand. Just be bold enough to raise your hand and say "Today I am removing the divorce word from my marriage."

If you raised your hand, I want you to come forward and meet with somebody down here on either side of the stage. Ted is going to send us out with a song.

Father, thank you for loving marriage and for giving us the DNA in this church to honor marriage. May no one leave here today on a guilt trip. May no one leave here today hopeless, but leave with hope that they would not break faith with the wife of their youth. May men grow up to be men and honor their commitment and build their integrity. May women break it off with somebody they may be messing around with right now and restore their marriage and present a united front for the kids.

We love you; thank you for your heart of marriage. May we always have the same heart. It is in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.