



Twoignite
Part 7 – The Tug O’ War of Marriage
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So here we are prioritizing marriage. Today is *The Tug O’ War of Marriage*. If some of us were to be completely honest today, our marriage feels like it is taut like this rope. If we were to be honest, it just feels like your tugging back and forth. “I want a house and you want a condo.” “I want to raise the kids this way and you want to raise the kids that way.” “I want a boat and you want a new car.” And the rope is taut. There’s this battle, this tug o’ war that is just going on.

There is this old Cherokee legend that I’m going to share with you. This old Cherokee legend is about these two wolves. There’s this black wolf that is considered the bad wolf and then there is this white wolf that is considered the good wolf. On Saturday nights, these Cherokee Indians would create these big circles and then they would take the good wolf and the bad wolf and they would all bet on who they thought would win the fight. They never let the wolves get hurt too badly, but they wouldn’t know who was going to win. They would pull them off of each other so they could do it again the next week.

As these Cherokee Indians would make this big circle, they would start waging bets. They would put their tomahawks down and their bow and arrows down and their buffalo hides down and their peace pipes down and they would wage bets on which wolf was going to win. Every week it was a different wolf that won. So sometimes it was the black wolf which is the bad wolf and sometimes it was the good wolf which was the white wolf. Sometimes certain Indians would win and collect their winnings and sometimes they wouldn’t. But there was one Indian that always won and that was the chief, the keeper of the wolves.

The chief’s little grandson was kind of catching on to how sometimes his dad would win and sometimes his dad wouldn’t and sometimes his uncle would win and sometimes his uncle wouldn’t, but his grandpa, the chief, always won. So one time, this little brave comes up to his grandfather and says “I don’t understand, Grandpa, sometimes they win and sometimes they don’t, but you always win. You always know if the good wolf or the bad wolf is going to win. Tell me how you know.”

The Chief looks down at his young brave and says “It’s simple; it’s whatever wolf I feed that day.”

It’s funny because similarly in marriage, as we tug on this rope and we go back and forth... Scripture actually speaks into a similar tug of war. It speaks about what we feed.

It starts in Galatians 5: 19 as a matter of fact. It says **19 The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of**

rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions ²¹ and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

So rather than a bad wolf, we have this thing called our flesh. So every day we know we are at war with our flesh. "Give me what I want." "Give me what I need." And we look to our own needs and this rope stays taut and tight. Or there is this other part of the body called the Spirit. It says ***²² But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,²³ gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.***

So there is this tug o' war going on not only in our marriage, but as individuals. We all have this constant tension in our own life of whether it's selfishness or thinking of others above myself or whether it's sexual immorality or purity or whether it's serving or selfishness. There is this constant tug o' war in our own life and then when we take that in our own life and transfer it into our marriage, it just keeps it taut as well.

There are three things I really want to talk to you about that I believe that are on the different ends of this rope today. There is this tug o' war between happiness and holiness. There is this tug o' war between me-centered and spouse-centered. Then there is this tug o' war between child-centered and marriage-centered. We are just going to put all three of those things on the stage today.

Holiness vs Happiness

Some of you are in marriage and you are in this tug o' war, saying it's all about your holiness, your sanctification. It drives me nuts when people lead out like that. Yes, marriage will sanctify you. Add kids to that and you will really get sanctified. So there's no doubt... There is a part of marriage that is going to make you more holy. God is going to use marriage to make you more holy, but when we lead out with that, we are selling a horrible message to young people.

As a matter of fact, listen to some of these stats on this generation because of what we are doing by leading out with this. By the way, marriage is good. God says it's good in Proverbs 18: 22. ***He who finds a wife finds what is good and received favor from the Lord.***

So when we lead out with "There goes your life; you're getting married." "See ya... the old ball and chain." Like any wife wants to be called "the ball and chain." Why would any 22 year old be like "Man, I can't wait to get a ball and chain"? When we talk about our spouses like that, it's perhaps the most destructive thing we can do.

Listen to this. The US adult marriage rate is at an all-time low of 51% compared with 72% in 1960. Today, just 20% of adults, ages 18 – 29, are married compared with 59% in 1960. Only one in five young adults are married compared to three in five one generation ago. Marriage is a metaphor for God's love. We know that from Ephesians 5. Marriage genuinely aids in the happiness end of the spectrum.

About 40% of married people say they are very happy, compared to 24% of unmarried people. Eighty-four percent of married people said they were very satisfied. Marriage is by far the best place to raise children. This isn't biblical; this is statistical. Statistics support that children raised outside of marriage, even by cohabitating couples, are much more likely to be physically abused, sexually abused, and emotionally abused, according to American Values Association. Marriage is by far the best place to have sex. Most pleasure long term? Yes. You need to let young people know. Is marriage hard? Yes, but it's also good. Is marriage good? Yes, but it's also hard. You need to let them know it's not just about holiness; it is also about happiness. Ecclesiastes 9: 9 says it very clearly. ***9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love...*** Have fun. Enjoy it. Be happy.

Have proper perspective and proper perception. I had a poor perception before I got married. I thought my wife was going to serve me chocolate dipped strawberries every night while wearing her Victoria Secret teddy and I was wrong. It's only every other night. As married couples, we need to let them know that marriage takes work, but man, is it awesome and is it so much fun to celebrate memories and to raise kids together and do fun things together. So Generation iY looks at us and says "Why would I want that?" I pray that the young people that I'm constantly discipling and mentoring will look at my marriage and say "Yes, I do want to get married. They look like they are having so much fun. They admit when they drop the ball and they work together and they are the team."

So that's the happiness – enjoy life with your wife, enjoy marriage. God says it's a good thing and it is. There is happiness, but the holiness side of it... Proverbs 27: 17 says ***As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.***

How many of you have ever been to Walmart or Target and been down the Nerf aisle? We've all been down the Nerf aisle, right? Nerf darts, Nerf guns, Nerf toys, Nerf swords, etc. But the one thing I do know about Nerf, as I've walked down those Nerf aisles several times now with a three year old and seen what new Nerf toy he wants, is that I've never seen a Nerf sharpener. I haven't found one. I think the reason I haven't found one is because Nerf doesn't sharpen Nerf.

Scripture says that ***iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.*** The reality is that if we are not careful in our marriage and in our self-seeking and not worried about our holiness, we will begin to surround ourselves with people that are a bunch of Nerf. We will surround ourselves with other married couples. We will surround ourselves with girlfriends that are a bunch of Nerf. What will happen is sometimes wives and husbands... Wives, you'll get around your girlfriends and they will tell you what you want to hear to make you feel better rather than what you need to hear. What you need to hear when you get around your girlfriends and start throwing your husband under the bus and start gossiping about him... What you need is a friend that will stop you and tell you to go talk to your husband and reconcile that. "You're hurting trust when you do this right now. You need to go have a conversation with him about this." We will surround ourselves with Nerf because it feels good. It's not sharp and it doesn't hurt.

Stephanie and Adam Donyes need people in their marriage that tell them what they need to hear, not what they want to hear. I need people that constantly point me back to Jesus. And so do all of us. So when I surround myself with guys that are like "Man, you're an awesome husband; don't even listen to

her. You don't need to help with the kids. You already help with the kids enough." That's not healthy. I need guys that are like "You need to keep serving your wife no matter how much you think you are already serving her." So with all of our marriages, with the holiness part, we do need people around us that sharpen us.

The reality is no matter how many times I hack at this watermelon with this Nerf sword, it's not going to penetrate. Nerf is not going to penetrate to the depths of the soul. Nerf is not going to get into the heart. Nerf is just going to tell you what you want to hear on the outside and not ever affect the heart. That's scary because we need people that know our heart. We need people that know the inside and out of us and know our blind spots, so when we have a tendency, men, to start letting our eyes stray or whatever the case may be, we have iron that brings us back and gets into the depths of our heart and asks us hard questions.

It's crazy what it says about iron. It says iron sharpens iron so one man sharpens another. The Bible says in Hebrews 4: 12 ***For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*** It's a sword. It pierces, right? So when we point people back to iron sharpening iron, we are able to penetrate the depths of their heart. We are able to see what's going on. Iron sharpens iron. We are able to really get below the surface and not just this fluffy Nerf stuff like "Sister, keep doing what you're doing. I don't know why you're letting him treat you that way..." No, point them to healthy counseling. Point them back to scripture. Point them to what God's word says, not your opinion. Last time I checked, our opinions are nothing compared to this truth that's unchanging. So, yes, happiness... Absolutely. Yes, holiness, where we allow people to get into the depths of our heart and know us for who we really are.

Me Centered vs Spouse Centered

You're trying to be a good wife and you're trying to serve him, but you want what you want and then he wants something else and you want different things and you're not on the same page and you're just worn out. He's over here just tugging on you and you're over here wiping your brow thinking it's all about you. But it's not all about you. Philippians 2: 3-4 makes it very clear that it's not. ***3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.***

So look to the interest of your spouse. Don't make it all about you because when you do, I promise that the rope will be completely taut. At the same time, don't make it all about your spouse either because then if they are just receiving that and not reciprocating, it's going to get taut as well.

Ephesians 5 says it very clearly. ***22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.*** I know we really wrestle with this word *submit*. I've done a lot of premarital counseling and I always tell the ladies "When you feel like you're the spiritual leader in your home and you feel like your husband is not stepping up and you feel like it's just a tug o' war to go to church and a tug o' war to

pray with the kids and a tug o' war to even point him to Christ and you just feel like you're so exhausted and you're tired of this taut rope as you keep tugging back and forth and back and forth... Ladies, all you have to do is take your part of the rope and your part of the marriage and wrap it around the cross, as you submit to Christ, and let it go. Look at how loose and relaxed that rope is. Let it go.

And then you have knucklehead over here. His part of the rope is as taut as all get out, but her end is not taut at all. She's relaxed. She has surrendered it to the Lord. He's going to wear himself out, trust me. I know the Lord. He's batting 1,000. He's never missed a curve ball. Your husband is not going to beat him and your wife is not going to beat him (whoever is not following Jesus). Let them wrestle with Jesus. What's going to happen is he's going to notice "She ain't sweating at all. She's not fighting back. She's got this joy to her. She's smiling and happy. I'm incomplete. I'm not carrying my load. I'm not surrendering to Jesus. I'm making it all about me. I'm tired of this."

Then before you know it, just like scripture says in 1 Peter 3, you'll win a husband over and he'll wrap himself around that cross. "I'm done playing this tug o' war. I'm going to lay it at his feet."

It goes on to say this. ***25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.***

Early on in my marriage, I was me-centered. We've been married seven years this summer and the first year and a half, I was an idiot. I'm still an idiot, but I was really an idiot in marriage and it was all me-centered. Basketball coaching, teaching, ministry... It was all about Adam and I was missing it bigtime.

We had just finished with the playoffs in basketball and then I left for India for ten days without her and I came back. She got a meeting set up with this wise couple and she just broke. I was like *Oh, my gosh, I'm blowing it.* Going through this rough season, I realized I was leading her and I was serving her, but one thing I was not doing at all was I wasn't washing her in the word. I didn't really get that. She knows how to read the Bible herself; why do I need to read the Bible for her.

Stephanie and I started this devo back on January 1st. I've pushed a lot of people in this church into doing it and they've been richly blessed. We've probably missed ten total nights since we started in January because either she has fallen asleep or I've been out of town. It's called *New Morning Mercies* by Paul David Tripp. After seven years, nothing short of God's grace, Stephanie and I are in a better place in marriage than we have ever been. One of the reasons, not the only reason, but one of the reasons is I'm washing her in the word every night and grabbing her hand and praying with her. By the way, couples that pray together, stay together. That's statistical. Praying couples have a much better chance of staying together than non-praying couples.

Just so you know, you can get this devo on Amazon. It's *New Morning Mercies* by Paul David Tripp. I've been reading her a devotion... They're just one page devos. So I've literally been washing my wife in the

word every night. And the conversation and the way this gets us off of me-centered or spouse-centered is unbelievable.

We hear this idea of submit, right? So really wives, I don't want you to think about it like "I have to do what he wants to do" and husbands, I want you to understand your role in this. John Henderson says *"When a husband is called to love his wife as Christ loved the church, he is to joyfully sacrifice himself for the eternal welfare of his bride. This sacrifice leads his bride toward the Father and for the Father's pleasure. This service prays for sanctification and growth in his bride. A husband who loves this way seeks to help his bride glorify and enjoy – Yes, see, there is both the holiness and the happiness - her eternal husband. Jesus Christ, from whom he draws his strength, about whom he speaks, and to whom he aspires."*

Now, similarly, on the girls' side, look what he says about the women. *"Whenever a wife finds herself fighting to maintain a joyfully submitted posture towards her husband, God gives her this image to remember and behold: Christ and His church. No believing wife has been asked to submit to her husband as her husband deserves, but as Christ deserves. The Father does not ask his daughters to honor their earthly husbands according to the behavior and spiritual maturity of their earthly husbands, but according to the behavior and glory of their heavenly husband. Jesus always deserves our full and happy obedience. A wife's heart attitude toward her husband always reflects her heart attitude towards Jesus Christ. The manner of a wife with her earthly husband always expresses her manner with her heavenly husband. The former gives visibility to the latter."*

There is freedom in that. So it's really easy, if I'm not careful... I got her permission to share this. We have had an unbelievable summer at camp. Summers have usually been pretty hard for Stephanie and me. This summer has been the best summer yet. God's grace... Once again, I will point everything back to Jesus' grace. In the past, unintentionally, we will start tallying in our head. "I changed a poop diaper." "I took out the trash." "She did the dishes ok I'm going to vacuum." We would do this all summer long.

Then last week, as I'm preparing for this message, literally a little tally came up. I just started laughing. We hadn't done this all summer and I want you to know that's why things... It's because it hasn't been me-centered or you-centered. A lot of times what we'll do when we become me-centered or spouse-center is we'll start keeping score of the tasks we performed. Nobody wins doing that. What you're missing is the whole point. You're not doing this for your husband or your wife; you're serving and surrendering to Jesus. I was starting to realize this picture that I literally get to serve my Lord Jesus Christ when I'm serving my wife. So I decided I was going to do this without her even knowing it.

The rug we had in our house had not been beaten out or taken out for about a year. So I had to move the whole couch and I took the rug... It was like a hard dessert underneath the rug. I folded it over our balcony and I started beating this rug. Don't judge me. We had been at camp all summer. My wife is a very clean person, I promise. So I brought the rug back and put the couches back. She walks in... Girls just know this stuff instantly. She's like "You cleaned the rug."

“I wasn’t doing it for you; I was doing it for Jesus. I’m serving Jesus.” Of course a little bit of my pride wanted her to know that I had just spent an hour on that stupid thing, but it wasn’t about serving her and it wasn’t about what I did and now she needed to do something. That’s not a healthy marriage. That’s a competitive marriage. That, my friends, is what I would call a taut marriage, a tight marriage. Keeping a tally of what each one did. Don’t keep tallies because you’re not competing against each other. You’re serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Look at how loose these ropes are when they are wrapped around his feet.

Child-Centered vs Marriage-Centered

That’s the other tug o’ war. Ted and I both are very passionate about eradicating the child-centered home, getting rid of the trophy child. When we raise a child up to think that it is all about them, we are setting them up for a horrible, horrible success because it’s not all about them; it’s all about Jesus. So when it becomes a child-centered home and we don’t prioritize marriage – Ted and I are very passionate about prioritizing marriage over a child-centered home – we point them back to Jesus because a healthy marriage is an illustration (Ephesians 5) of Christ and the way he loves his church. So when we make it all about kids... “You need to be playing baseball and soccer and football and I’m going to vicariously live through you and you’re going to be awesome and I’m going to brag about you and I’m going to think you’re the best and you’re going to be the best at everything.” When we start to do that, it is a heavy load to put on kids.

As a matter of fact, Ephesians 6 says ***4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.***

I was a college basketball player and I coached for many years and people always ask me if Aiden is going to play basketball. Aiden is going to do whatever he wants to except for living in sin without getting a whooping. He might do baseball or he might do soccer. I’m not going to push him towards any certain sports. It’s going to be hard for him not to like basketball with his dad around it all the time, but I’m not going to exasperate him. I’m not going to stir up his anger.

Similarly with girls... We try to get them to fit our mold, failing to realize God has crafted them a special way. So we are to bring them up in the training of the Lord, not child-centered, but bring them up in the training of the Lord.

One of my favorite things this summer is tucking my three year old in at night while my wife feeds our 10 month old. As I’m tucking him in... As you know, at three years old, he is in sponge mode. So I thought why am I not just pumping scripture into this kid right now? He is in sponge mode right now. So we have been memorizing scripture after scripture. It’s so fun. You can go up to him and say “What’s Psalm 51: 10 or what’s Psalm 119: 11 or what’s Psalm 119: 9...” He can just recite them right back at you.

The latest is Psalm 103: 12 – ***...as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.*** His name is Aiden West. I named him after that verse he just recited for you guys. It’s crazy that the Psalmist here says as far as the east is from the west and not as far as the north is from the south because if I start going north across North America into Canada and I go into Greenland and I wrap

back around and start coming to Russia, I am no longer going north. Eventually, I start going south. Similarly, if I keep going south and wrap around and come down to Africa and Antarctica and wrap back around South America, I start going north. So you see, north has a limit and south has a limit.

But watch this. If I go west, heading out to the Carolinas and I keep going west to Africa and I keep going west to China and I keep going west past the Hawaiian Islands and back to North America and I keep wrapping and I just keep going west... And in the opposite direction, if I start going east out towards China and Asia and Africa, I just keep going east and I just keep going east. The Psalmist says as far as the east is from the west, so has he removed our transgressions from us. There is no limit to east and there is no limit to west.

So dads, I don't care if you've been blowing it. Moms, I don't care if you've been blowing it. There is grace. God is not a God of shame. He's not a God of guilt. He is a God of conviction and a God of restoration and a God of redemption and he says as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. That's so important to know.

Today is the day that you can stop doing this tug o' war with your marriage and realize it's not about you and it's not about them and it's not about your kids. It's all about Jesus.

So I'm pumping all these scriptures into Aiden, but I'm making sure right now at this age I don't want to exasperate him. I want Aiden to know it's not about just memorizing verses and it's not about what you do and how you look and how athletic you are and how great you are and all these things. That's listianity; that's not Christianity. I tell him "Daddy loves you so much, Aiden. Do you know why Daddy loves you so much?"

Video of Aiden:

Adam: "Aiden, why do you love Daddy so much?"

Aiden: "Because God gave you to me."

I don't want him to think it's anything he's done, anything he has to do, anything he has to earn. That's not the gospel. It's not about him getting an A on a report card. It's not about him hitting a home run. It's not about him memorizing scripture. It's not about him being super spiritual. It's about him simply knowing that God's grace, and God's grace alone, has given him to me and me to him and that's why I love him so much. And, fathers, when we lead out with that and they know it doesn't matter...

Here's the other thing when we get into this tug o' war of marriage and the rope gets so taut and we're so bitter and we're so angry we just want to throw our spouse under the bus... Let me ask you a question, spouses. If you know that your spouse is not perfect then why don't you show them grace when they prove you right? Think about it. If you know that your spouse is not perfect then why don't you show them grace when they prove you to be right? You know they're not perfect, but we are so slow to show each other grace, we're so slow to forgive each other, we're so slow to let go of the rope and die to ourselves.

So here are the questions today. Is it happiness or is it holiness? Is it me-centered or is it spouse-centered? Is it child-centered or is it marriage-centered? It's none of the above. It's Jesus-centered. Yes, prioritize marriage, absolutely, but you can prioritize marriage all you want and if you don't have your savior in that marriage, it doesn't matter how much you prioritize marriage. By the way, my wife is awesome, but she would make a horrible savior and me much more so. So when I look to her to fulfill a role or satisfy me in a way that only Jesus Christ can, it creates dysfunction and vice versa.

My wife and I went on our last date two weeks ago at camp. She said "We're in a phenomenal spot." We are in a really good spot. After seven years, we are in the best spot ever and we are in the middle of camp. You guys don't know camp; it's intense. We're in the best spot we've ever been in in seven years of marriage and I asked her why she thought that was.

"Well, we're getting our daily delay. We're getting our weekly withdrawal. And we are looking forward to our annual abandon coming up in two weeks. We are speaking redemptively to one another. We're not keeping tallies. We're just serving other. We're seeking after the Lord."

But the common denominator that she and I both concluded is that it is nothing short of his grace and it is standing smack dab in the middle of our marriage more than it ever has. This is elevated above kids. This is elevated above our marriage. This is elevated above everything else in our marriage right now. She and I both concluded that night that this is why we are in the best spot we've been in. And there is no doubt there will be some trials, but when those trials come, I'm praying and hoping that my knees are before this cross and not pointing to her fault whatever the case may be. God's got us in a really good season right now and I'm so thankful because we've been through some really tough seasons and I've been a really big knucklehead and I'm still learning things.

But I know this. Jesus said a lot of stuff. You can go through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and you'll see the red lettering, indicating the words of Christ. But out of everything that Jesus said, he leaves us with two greats. The first great you find in Matthew 28: 19. He's about to pull off this really cool hover board trick without a hover board and ascend into heaven, but right before he does it, he says ***"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.***

And then this teacher of the law comes along in Mark 12: 28 -30 and says ***28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"***

29 "The most important one..." It's more important than holiness, more important than happiness, more important than kids, more important than marriage, more important than any of those tug o' wars. ***...answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' 31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."***

I am far from having it figured out, but I know for me personally in my own marriage when Jesus is at the center, there is a lot more healthiness going on. When I'm transparent and I'm letting people see into my heart and see my sinful tendencies and things I might gravitate towards and I let the Brian Wangs and the Adam Mortons into my life, there is healthiness there. Those two guys always point me back to the cross. They are iron people in my life. They are the kind of people we all need.

Wives, there is freedom as you walk out of here today. It doesn't have to be taut anymore. Husbands, it doesn't have to be taut. Some of you are worn out. You're tired of this tug o' war. For those of you that are worn out, there are some phenomenal ministries at this church: Marriage 911. All these things we do to pour into marriages and help marriage...

Here's the deal. We're doing a new thing this next month. As the kids are going back to school, we're going back in time. If you post, you have a really good chance to win next month because we're always looking for new couple that haven't posted. Forget the 52 dates. Do one date this month where you go back in time. For some of you that's not very hard; you're still stuck in the 70s, you hippy child. It's great. Go do a 50s date at Cakes and Cream or go do an 80s date at the roller rink and post it. You have a really good chance to win a fun prize.

Go take your wife on a date and as you do it, talk about Jesus. Talk about the one that will hold all things together when everything seems to be falling apart, including your marriage. Talk about the one, when you're home has completely become child-centered, and point your marriage back to Jesus and help those kids realize it's nothing they've done, but just because God gave them to you.

Father God, we thank you so much for your grace, for your cross, for your mercy, for your forgiveness, for your patience, for your forbearance towards us. God, we pray for Jesus-centered homes that prioritize marriage and Jesus-centered home that eradicate child-centeredness.

I pray that if there are any marriages in here this morning that are in the tug o' war and that are tired and worn out, that are tired of being drug through the mud... I just pray that you free them to lay the rope at your feet. I pray that you would free them to walk with you and put you at the center of their marriage. There is hope there, Jesus, and we thank you for that hope. We thank you that as far as the east is from the west, you have removed all of our marital mistakes, all of our parenting mistakes, all of our premarital mistakes.

God, you are good and you treat us all far better than we deserve and for that we are eternally grateful. It is in the matchless and mighty and powerful and pure name of Jesus that we pray... Amen.