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**Twoignite**  
**The Case for Dating**  
Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today is Twoignite Sunday. I've been looking forward to this. I've been excited about all of the online activity that we will be talking about in just a second. We thought the best way to kick off 2015 with Twoignite was to talk about dating.

Before we talk about married dating, can I see the hands of all the singles who would like to be dating? There's a lot you can pick up from this. Sarah Yocum, you were the first hand I saw so could somebody... No, we are not going to go there. We love talking about dating around here. We believe in the scriptures and that they are infallible. We believe in the priesthood of the saints. We believe in the date night and keeping it holy.

So today, we are going to talk about what every marriage needs. If you are a single, tune in because you will pick up as much as you need to prepare for your dating life. If you are a parent, you can pick a lot up as well because you're probably, at some point, going to get asked the question: "What age is appropriate to start dating?" It seems like it's this magic number of 16, but we are not talking today about the character required for dating; we're not talking today about the person you need to find for dating; we're talking about just the value of dating in and of itself.

About ten years ago, Joe White invited me over to his house to have breakfast with him. I sat down for the very first time with Joe over a meal. He poured me orange juice at his breakfast bar which sits right above his stove. The very first thing I did was knock the orange juice over onto the stove. So he spent 45 minutes cleaning the stove while talking to me. I'll never forget it... Have you ever had this little bit of wisdom that comes to you from a friend that you just never forget and it sticks with you forever? This has just stuck with me. It's part of the core of my marriage belief and teaching today. It was this simple; this was all he said. **"Every marriage needs a daily delay, a weekly withdrawal, and an annual abandon."**

A daily delay is 15 to 20 minutes a day where you are eyeball to eyeball with your spouse. You are distraction free, you are tech free, you are child free, and you are connecting at an eyeball to eyeball, heart to heart level.

The weekly withdrawal is the date night. This is the priority of getting out of the house and leaving the crazies with Grandma and Grandpa. Does anybody know what I'm talking about? It's saying "Our marriage is important."

Then the annual abandon... We live for these now in our marriage. We look forward to this. It's a little mini vacation we take every year, just the two of us. I've told you what Amy's favorite is. For some of you, it's the beach. For some of you, it's the mountains. For my wife, it's any big city where we can walk and shop and eat. It's a mini time away. We've made this so the core of our marriage. We talk about this almost on a daily basis. We don't take a mini vacation every weekend. We take a date once a week, but it's like every day we're talking about quality couple time. When I say the word dating in our house or in our marriage, it means quality couple time.

Here's why dating is important for the married couples out there, no matter what your age or how long you've been married. **Dating esteems marriage as highly valuable.** The vision here for Twolgnite is around those three words you just saw on the screen: Honor – Enjoy – Prioritize. Hebrews 13: 4 says ***Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure.*** We believe the word *honor* means to esteem as highly valuable. We believe marriage should be esteemed by all walks of life, by all seasons of life, by every age, whether your marriage or single.

Marriage is an important value. I need to do a message on this sometime, but I believe the problem with poverty in our country could be solved if we took marriage seriously. The problem of rebellion among the youth in our country could be solved if we started esteeming marriage as highly valuable. I'm not a government expert, but if we started taking marriage seriously, entitlement programs would be taken care of and no longer needed, in my opinion. A lot of the parenting issues that you are dealing with today, as we talked a little bit about last week, would be solved if you esteemed marriage as highly valuable.

How, as a parent, do you look at your children and teach them right from wrong if you don't esteem marriage as highly valuable. We said it last week and we will say it again, faithfulness in marriage is one of the best ways to prepare your children to be adults. It's one of the best ways for you to have a foundation of moral authority in your home which is necessary for great and successful parenting. We believe dating does that.

Here's what dating says... When you date, when you prioritize quality couple time, you're saying to family and friends and to your children "Our marriage is important. It is a value. We take it very seriously around here. So when we plan it this week, when we talk about it this week, and then when we actually go on the date, this is to the value of everyone around us."

## **The Daily Delay**

**The daily delay realigns your marriage and provides emotional safety in the home.** If you have your Bibles, you can turn to Song of Songs 1. We are going to be in Chapter 1, 2, and 7 as we look at these three: The Daily Delay – The Weekly Withdrawal – The Annual Abandon.

We are going to start with the daily delay because I think this is where a lot of us begin to neglect our marriage. We begin to just let routine slip in and we're not intentional with 15 to 20 minutes a day of connecting at a heart to heart level – emotional communication.

In the Song of Songs 1: 14, 17, the Shulammitte woman and Solomon begin painting this picture of what their soon to be home will look like. So if you are single and not yet married, this is a great example for you of something to shoot for and something to prepare for. They begin painting this picture of a home that is a place where you relax, a place where you rejuvenate. She's going to use En Gedi, the oasis in the midst of a desert, to describe that. They're also going to speak of this security that every home needs.

A home is a place we step into at night and we are able to relax and disconnect from the world. We should be stepping into a home where we are not treated like the world treats us and we should be protected and we should be safe. Here is the word picture that is used.

**14** *My beloved is to me a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi.* En Gedi is a desert oasis. I love this word picture. Just imagine. You work your job all day, you work hard, you have meetings, you're dealing with drivers, and you're dealing with people who don't really care or tend to you all that well. You want your home to be the place at the end of that day for you to come home and say "This is a place where I am going to be refreshed." Some of you are like "Are you kidding? I go to work to get refreshed." That's a problem. I want you to enjoy your job and have passion for your job and do your job well, but home should be a place we all long to return to and desire to be.

In this church, our desire is to help you set up a home like that where it's an oasis in the middle of a dry, long, exhausting day. It's a place you want to get to, and you can see it from far off and you have this feeling of it's so good to be home. It's not pulling in the driveway and praying to your Father in heaven for strength to go inside. You want it to be this place of rest.

Then there is also this idea of security that's involved in the home and that's Verse 17. ***The beams of our house are cedars; our rafters are firs.*** I love this imagery. It's like I go into a physical place where I'm protected. I find shelter from the elements. I find protection from the outside enemies. I always love this in the Psalms. Let me take you through some of the Psalms because this describes our relationship with the Lord. This is what the Lord brings us.

Psalm 18 - ***2*** ***The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer...*** It's this idea of the one I turn to, the one I go to when times get tough, when times get hard. ***...my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.***

Psalm 46 - ***1*** ***God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*** This is what I want my marriage and my home to be. I want it to reflect my relationship with the Lord.

Psalm 28 - ***7*** ***The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and he helps me. My heart leaps for joy, and with my song I praise him.*** If you are in a place that is safe and secure and you have

rest there, your heart should leap for joy. This is why I believe the daily delay is so important. It's this security and this protection.

I have to laugh... Yesterday, my dad took my son to the knife show at the Chateau to buy weapons. So if your tuning in from California, we love our weapons here in the Ozarks, we love anything that can be used to protect us. My dad and Carson bought about five knives. There's nothing greater than your nine year old playing with something like the Rambo knife.

My dad said he went there to look for a stun gun for my mom. If you don't know my mom... I think she will allow me to say this. She lacks the strength, the speed, the coordination necessary to take someone out with a stun gun. I've got these two pictures in my head of someone grabbing my mom... I laughed when my dad said it because I could just see her getting grabbed from behind and her reaching in her purse really quickly and shocking herself down to the ground. That's all that would happen. Or she would keep it in her night stand. I could totally see this. She hears something in the middle of the night, leans over into the drawer and shocks herself. That's exactly what would happen. Mom, you're not allowed to get a stun gun. A Glock or a nine millimeter or something, I have no problem with, but even that...

I say all this... Men, to some degree, let's train our wives how to kill people I guess is one of the lessons there, but let us be that place. Shouldn't we be that place where our wives feel protected? A place where she comes in her home and it's the place she is physically safe.

When my dad would leave town when we were kids, my mom would move the dresser in front of the door. She's always thought about that protection, but there's something about the safety in a home. I think where we often forget about this is... yeah, we can have fun with that physical safety and talk about it and deal with that, but, also, in the home, there needs to be an emotional and relational safety.

What Solomon and the Shulammitte woman are exchanging is how their relationship is going to be safe. He's going to protect her physically, relationally, emotionally. And here is why the daily delay is so important in that. Amy and I used to have this thing in our marriage called a QMR. You've heard me teach on this before. It was a quarterly marriage realignment. It was unplanned. We didn't have any scheduled time for this; it just happened. The ebb and flow of our marriage was quarterly. Why was it a quarterly marriage realignment? Why did we wait and quarterly have these knockdown, drag out, blowup conversations? Do you know why? It was because we just stuffed it. We didn't deal with it. We just let things go and every three months, the letting of things go would resurface and we would finally erupt. Here's one of my favorite questions that my kids love asking. "Dad, have you ever thought how good a volcano feels after it erupts?"

I never thought about that, but that's what was happening in our marriage. We would erupt quarterly and then we would have a long conversation over the course of a night or maybe the next day. We don't do these anymore because we so value the daily delay. The daily delay realigns the marriage. The daily delay provides a safe place to have conversations to where I can discuss something. Even something that I know is a little bit of a trigger in my spouse, I can bring up because we have so spent the time building

emotional, relational, and physical safety in our home. It may only be five minutes or it may be only ten minutes or maybe fifteen minutes. We just know the daily delay is what does this.

Here's the picture of how that works. The gap between what you expect and what you receive... we call that stress, but stress is a socially acceptable term for anger. You're mad and the quality of your marriage rests in the gap. So if your gap is big, you have a stressful marriage. The goal with the daily delay is to bring the gap down. When the gap starts to get bigger, I want to deal with it before it gets huge. As I start to feel the gap widening, we want to discuss this, deal with this.

We had our daily delay last night over coffee. They have this new coffee at Starbucks. I can't remember what it's called, but it's espresso. We had one of those at 4:30 and then I have that January mug that they fill up for free. I took that home and we were having coffee as we sat in our sitting area for 20 minutes, just Amy and I. We woke up this morning at 2:00 am, just wide awake, having great conversation, buzzing off espresso. About 5:00 am we were sound asleep. At 7:00 we wake up and get ready for church. It was one of those nights, but we look back on this and we want the gap of our marriage to be in the small range; we're done with the huge gap. We want every day to have enough safety in our home and that's why the daily delay is important. Then you're prepared for the next one.

### **The Weekly Withdrawal**

The problem with not having the daily delay is you're using date night to be the time where you realign all of your expectations and bring the marriage back in tune. This is why you've hated dating. It's because it's hostile; because it's like we have to talk budget, kids, you're job... you just start going through the line and you just want the date to be over. Dating becomes exciting when you have the daily delay first and foremost built into your marriage and now you're creating anticipation. Now you can't wait for Friday night. Until you go see the movie *Into the Woods* and realize you wasted your date night. That was the dumbest movie they ever created. I look at Amy and say "I'm going to the bathroom and I'm walking very slowly." I still don't know what the point of that movie was, but I was still looking forward to it.

**The weekly withdrawal creates anticipation and memories worth repeating.** We stole this from Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation. Their whole mission statement is "Creating Memories Worth Repeating." Again, my favorite statements I've ever heard have been at Silver Dollar City. There are two of them that have always stuck with me. One guy is walking... People are trying to make a living so there's somebody there that wants to take your picture. Be kind; be courteous even if you don't want your picture taken. This one dad says to the lady that wants to take his picture "I don't even want to be here with them; why would I want my picture with them?" That's not fitting the Herschend Family Entertainment mission statement at the moment.

The best one was when we were leaving one day. I've seen a lot of meltdowns. Has anybody else seen a meltdown at Silver Dollar City? It's so fantastic. We've been out there a couple of times when the Duggars have been out there and I just kind of follow them around. I'd love to see a 19-kid meltdown. I think that would be fantastic, but they're always happy, even when the cameras aren't rolling.

But this one dad looks at his kid who is just whining and complaining and he says to him “If you don’t knock it off, I’m going to stuff you in one of those barrels over there.” Creating memories worth repeating, right?

But the weekly withdrawal, to me... If you’ve never experience Hebrew poetry, this to me is some of the best in Song of Songs 2. It’s speaks of this anticipation and this desire. The daily delay is in the home or maybe right around the home. If you have a fire pit or some area of your home set up for this... but the weekly withdrawal, the date night is actually getting away. It’s going away from the home and leaving the dishes and the laundry and the housekeeping and everything there so you can get away. It’s my break during the week. Watch what happens as she begins to speak of Solomon. Again, you’ve got to keep in mind that in Chapter 2 of the Song of Songs they are not yet married.

**8 Listen! My beloved! Look! Here he comes...** This is that anticipation. ... **leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills.** This is a guy that is running; he’s excited. **9 My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Look! There he stands behind our wall, gazing through the windows...** I always have to stop here because if you are not familiar with Hebrew poetry, you’d think this guy is a pervert. “He gets to her house and starts looking through her windows? This is not normal.” ...**peering through the lattice.** This is the idea of “I can’t wait to get my first glimpse of her.”

This is why, guys, I just want to encourage you to step it up a notch on the weekly withdrawal. There are times I get ready for our date night and I come out and Amy has gotten ready and I’m just kind of wearing whatever happened as I went into the closet. I come out and I realize I should probably step it up a notch and I walk back in and I pick something else out. Guys, I know you love Old Spice and you’ve loved it for the last 75 years, but maybe it’s time to try something new. Some of you guys, just for fun, get a shirt with snaps. Tell her “The snaps are for you, baby.”

**10 My beloved spoke and said to me, “Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me.”** He’s saying “Let’s get away from all this. Let me get you out of this home. Let me get you away from what you’ve been doing.” **11 “See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone.”** Are we longing for this or what? **12 “Flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in our land. 13 The fig tree forms its early fruit; the blossoming vines spread their fragrance. Arise, come, my darling; my beautiful one, come with me.”** The idea there is of spring.

At Woodland Hills, we have decided to fully embrace the date night movement. A lot of churches are challenging their people to three dates in three weeks or four dates in four weeks or five dates in five weeks. We’ve kind of stepped it up a few weeks. We’ve taken it to a new level. So to share with you this big idea of 52IN15, is Woodland Hills’ date night Jedi Master Adam Donyes.

**Adam Donyes:** So for those of you who weren’t here last week or you didn’t tune in online, 52IN15 is simply 52 dates in 2015. Yes, we are giving away a cruise at the end of it. Ted and I got together this week at Starbucks and we realized so many people outside of Branson are getting involved. If you haven’t looked at #52IN15 on Instagram, Facebook, or Twitter, I strongly encourage you to do so. It’s so

neat how this church is encouraging people even outside of Branson to date their spouses. We've got families in California, Florida, Minnesota.

The whole purpose of 51IN15 is not to discourage anyone. "Fifty-two dates? Adam, do you have any idea what my life looks like? There's no way I'm going to get fifty-two dates!" That's why we do the monthly deal too. If you need to start just by going on a date with your spouse, we want to encourage you to do that.

In ten days, Woodland Hills has been on 137 dates. So if you do the math, if we keep that trajectory going... That's just Woodland Hills. That's not including all these other dates we're seeing pop up that have been encouraged by what we're doing at Woodland Hills. That's going to be close to 8,700 dates at the end of 2015. That's really neat because Ted and I believe that dating your spouse, pursuing your spouse is what keeps healthy marriages breathing.

I'm getting a lot of questions about the rules. After last service, I had some couples come up and say "If we're not married, can we be a part of it?" I told them they couldn't win the cruise. We aren't going to send a non-married couple on a cruise; that would be pretty stupid of us. But I told them they could definitely win the monthly giveaways. But for the non-married couples, this is what I want to encourage you with. Have the same energy and passion that you have right now in dating your girlfriend/boyfriend, and take that into marriage and keep dating them with that same energy and passion.

I want to clear up some discrepancies about what qualifies as a date. Here are some great pictures of some great dates that we found on social media this week. This first one I want to show you is perfect because this was a stay at home date which completely qualifies as a date. They put the kids to bed, made dinner, watched August Rush, and they had intentional time. Now a stay at home date doesn't mean watching your favorite sitcom and tuning each other out. This was intentional. They had dinner alone together and they watched a movie together. That would qualify as an entry that could possibly win the cruise at the end of the year.

Check out this next couple. So this group is the Grimmers and they had a fiasco trying to get a babysitter. The babysitter bailed on them. They still ended up going on a date so they decided to try out the new Buffalo Wild Wings. They got there and they couldn't even hear each other. The wings they tried were way too spicy so they were sweating. But, it was really neat because they were really positive, making an effort to do this. They have three kids and they are five and under, but they are not making excuses; they're going to date each other and pursue each other.

Check out this next couple. This is Richard. All these people that I'm showing you were actually in the last service so we were giving away gift cards. Richard posted "I would love to take my wife to Red Lobster except Dave Ramsey says it's not in the budget, so I'm going to take my wife to McDonalds instead." Their date night was in McDonalds. So Woodland Hills gave Richard a \$40.00 gift card to Red Lobster. He'll get to take his wife to Red Lobster and we'll probably get to see it on social media this week so make sure you check it out.

Here's the next couple. They actually won a prize. This month's theme was to reenact your first date. Think about that. It was fun hearing some of the stories on how people reenacted their first date. Ted just talked about reenacting their first date.

I don't know if you guys realize it, but the temperature has been in the teens this last week and they are talking about being outside in a tent. I'm hoping that on their first date, that tent remained open the whole time. I'm just saying. We gave them a gift card to a restaurant and movie passes and told them it would be a lot warmer indoors during the month of January in Branson.

This was simple. We saw the Watsons at Sugar Leaf doing this. This is the Lanes. This was simply a lunch date. When Ted's talking about that weekly connection, and just cutting everything off and cutting the kids off and cutting off all the craziness... A lunch date completely qualifies for this.

Here's the last picture. This couple made an Instagram just for the purpose of #52IN15 this year. Their Instagram handle is literally 52IN15ers. This was just a fun picture I wanted to share with you guys because they're having a blast with it. Their whole deal was they were going to do dessert before dinner. They stayed at home, put the kids to bed, and you can just see they are being super intentional with 52IN15.

So 52IN15 isn't going out and spending \$40.00 to \$60.00 every week. It is being intentional with your spouse and continually pursuing them even if that's a date night at home. That's something I think all of us can do. I believe we will always make time for the things that are most important to us. It's not that we don't have enough time to pursue our spouses; it's not that we don't have enough time to date; it's that it's just not that important to us.

I've been thinking about that and I've seen some comments of some people that are discouraged or even the husband that comes in and has his arms crossed and says "This is dumb. We're not going to date; we don't even like each other." I want to speak specifically to you. I'm not telling you to go for 52 dates. I'm asking you to go for a date. I'm asking you to trust the Lord to reignite or kindle a flame in your marriage and see what happens when you start pursuing and dating your spouse.

Maybe your wife/husband is not even here because they don't even want to come to TwoIgnite and he's burned out on Woodland Hills always talking and supporting marriages. By the way, healthy marriages create healthy families. That's why Ted and I are so passionate about eradicating the child-centered home. If the marriage isn't healthy, the kids won't be healthy. That's why we are so passionate about marriages here. I have a \$40.00 gift card to Olive Garden that I'm going to leave with Ted. If you want to come talk to Ted afterwards... Maybe your husband won't even take you on a date because he thinks you can't afford it. Here's a no excuse... I had a coach in high school that told me excuses are like armpits; everybody has them and they all stink.

Keep rocking on and keep posting. It is so neat to see what the Lord is doing with 52IN15. God bless you guys.

**Ted Cunningham:** What I love about this is the two main reasons couples give for not dating or doing the weekly withdrawal are children and no money. So as I have been out looking at Instagram and Facebook

and Twitter at all the different dates going on, a lot of them are cheap, a lot of them are at home. Amy and I are still going to do a date... We haven't downloaded the movie yet, but part of reenacting our first date... It was on Smith Mountain Lake. It was a blind date, so I thought we could watch the movie *What About Bob*. They filmed *What About Bob* on Smith Mountain Lake and we are going to sit there with blindfolds since it was a blind date. No, I'm just kidding. We'll watch it and it will be fantastic.

I had someone ask me something last week and I thought it was great. Her initials are Courtney and she said "What about a mom whose nursing? Can we take the baby with us?" My first gut reaction to that was absolutely! I wasn't going to be this guy that says "NO! You will leave that baby in capable hands and you will go out." I told her I would talk to Adam about a rule change. I was planning on talking to Adam because he's in charge of the rules. If you want to go to our website, you can find all the rules of how many dates you have to be a part of to qualify for the cruise at the end of the year.

In our minivan going home, Amy and I kind of debriefed the whole morning. I told her I was going to talk to Adam about the rule change, allowing moms to take their small babies and she goes "Absolutely not."

I go "You people are ruthless; this is a new mom with a small baby."

She goes "They need it the most."

We wish we would have understood this when we first had our children. An hour to an hour and a half getaway...

I just want to say Courtney, I tried. This is a mean church. This is a rules-driven church that at times is pharisaical. If you want to take the baby and hide him from the selfie, I won't say anything. I'm just kidding; we're going to stick with the rules because I have been trumped on that.

### **The Annual Abandon**

We usually have that this weekend in Love and Laughter, but it doesn't mean you still can't have an annual abandon. This is the season in Branson to get a cheap hotel room. I don't know if you know that. I know our hotel guys are going to hate me, but I would call and negotiate. They are going to be pretty open. You can get some pretty good deals off season. I travel and do marriage and family speaking and I do conferences in the off season in all sorts of places. For Branson, the off season is winter. Nobody wants to come visit here in January. You can get great deals here. If you're traveling and want to get a great deal in Palm Springs or Phoenix, I recommend August. You can find great opportunities.

We see the annual abandon in Chapter 7. Now the Shulammite bride and Solomon are married. They were married in Chapter 3 of Song of Songs. They went on their honeymoon in Chapter 4 and in Chapter 7, after they've had some time into the marriage and after life has clicked away a little bit, she comes to him and says this and this is one of my favorites because this ignites intimacy.

**11 *Come, my beloved, let us go to the countryside...*** So not only does the daily delay take place in the home and the weekly withdrawal is in and around town, but the annual abandon is out of town. You

know we are a small enough town. Yesterday, we walked around the RecPlex. When you go the RecPlex on Saturday during small children's basketball, you realize we live in a small town. We know everybody. You know everybody.

There is value in going to the countryside and getting away from people you know so that on your date night, you can walk in to Buffalo Wild Wings, see people you know, stop and talk and have a good time, but the annual abandon is going someplace to hide, to get away and no one will know you; you'll be all by yourselves so you can enjoy one another.

**...let us spend the night in the villages.** Solomon is a busy, tired shepherd king. He has a lot going on in his daily routine. Getting away is good for them both. **12 Let us go early to the vineyards to see if the vines have budded, if their blossoms have opened...** The whole idea you see here is just this slow pace. We're not in a rush to do anything. We're going to go down and see the scenery. **...and if the pomegranates are in bloom—there I will give you my love.** Again, if you do not understand Hebrew poetry, "there I will give you my love" is the Hebrew term for bow, bow, chicky, chicky, bow, bow. She is saying "I want to go and get away from all of our distractions."

I'm done with the distraction of the internet. I would encourage you to take the selfie and maybe post it at the end of the night, but put the phone aside, put the technology aside. I don't even think the selfie is a requirement of this. You don't even have to take your technology into the date night or the annual abandon. Leave it at home and come back and report about your date. Tell us what happened if you don't want to take it with you. The idea here is we are distraction free, tech free. We have a couple of days where we are unplugged from all that's around us and we are focused on each other. We're spending time with each other. We're enjoying each other.

I just want to encourage you as your pastor. This was a very simple message, a very easy message, but I'm done getting the call almost daily or being told almost daily that this couple or that couple are done. It's at epidemic levels in our country and in our community. I'll be honest with you. Facebook is so negative and toxic and people are angry and frustrated. And 52IN15 has been so refreshing. We see couples having a good time. You don't need to put anymore pictures of yourself on Facebook putting yourself out there for others. Put a picture of you and your spouse out there enjoying life together.

Ecclesiastes 9: 7-9 is a passion of this church. **Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all your meaningless days.** Life is tough, life is a grind, but you can choose to enjoy life together. We want you to enjoy life together. We want you to take the time to do that. If you are living in a kid-centered home, 52IN15 is your wakeup call; it's your opportunity to break free from the kid-centered home.

There are guys in here... I've heard this and I've received a lot of private messages. Continue to be who you are because when you leave here on Sunday morning and you're having conversations on your way out the door, other people are hearing those conversations and reporting back to us. Just like the guy who looks at his kid and says "I'm going to stuff you in that barrel if you don't knock it off," the stuff you pick up on your way out...

People have been picking things up in the last few weeks and when Adam introduced this in December, some people left and they heard other people say in our church "We'll never be able to do that. It just

isn't going to happen." I just want to challenge the men because you're thinking *Next week you're going to have us do a vow renewal and we're going to have to come to the front and exchange our vows and slow dance in front of the congregation and I want to throw up in the back of my mouth just thinking about it.* Can I encourage you to take the lead on this? Take the lead, be the husband. We're not making this a candlelight dinner once a week, although it's more doable than you think. We want to challenge you to step up. You can do this. You can prioritize this time and I believe it's the greatest gift you give your children. You're like "No the greatest gift I give my children is watching their games on the weekend and all throughout the week."

It's shocking to me... I grew up playing sports because I was one of the greatest athletes of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but my parents came to as many games as they could. My parents had this thing called a job. I never grew up thinking *Why aren't they here at 3:00 pm at the junior high watching my practice?* I'm just shocked at the number of parents who think they have to be involved in every single thing their child does, to which I say who said? I don't think the greatest gift you give your kids is being there watching them practice. I think we've fallen for the lie that says participating with them in sports is more important than dating our spouse. I really do. I think we've fallen for that lie and I don't think it's true at all.

I think the best gift you give your children is a mom and dad who enjoy life together. Again, in counseling, when I'm trying to get to the root, the history of what happened in their life that brought them to this point of brokenness... Nobody sits around going "I'll tell you what the problem was. My parents loved each other too much." I don't ever hear that. Do you know what I hear? I hear the brokenness of the parents. They didn't stick it out. They gave up. They quit. That's what's fueling our passion for this.

One of the trends we are attacking in this church is the trend of dating while divorcing. It's couples who divorce and while they are in the separation process, they begin dating new people. It's happening all over the internet and I'm praising my Father in heaven for 52IN15 to show married couples who are prioritizing time together. Prioritizing quality couple time says "Our marriage is important; we want to give this to our children, we want to give this to our church, and we want to give this to our community." That's what we are asking you to commit to.

Father, we are grateful for our time today. I'm sure there are not a lot of churches that would give a whole Sunday to talk about dating and spending time and going out together as husband and wife. But I pray this movement of 52IN15, that seems to have taken off in the first 11 days of January, would continue in this church. Your word is very clear; we will be known as disciples of Jesus by the way we love one another. Thank you for this one expression of that love. I pray that this is a testimony to our church family, to our community, and around the country of couples enjoying time together.

May this be a trend that people see and say "Oh, that's cool; married people dating, spending time together, prioritizing their marriage, prioritizing fun time together, play time together, adventuring and dreaming and laughing together. May we take this seriously as we have a lot of fun together. May it be a priority. May we give this as a good gift to our children, to our grandchildren, to our family, and to our friends?

I thank you for the safety and security that we have in you. May we model that in our homes. May our homes be that safe place, that judgment free zone where we enjoy one another, where our children can come home at night after school and rest, knowing they are in a home where Mom and Dad love each other and enjoy each other and where patience is practiced and forgiveness is practiced and joy abounds. We look forward to those homes and we are grateful for them.

We pray that you keep all of our family here safe as they travel the roads today. Be with our community. We are grateful for what you continue to do.

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