



Twolgnite

Part 8 – Rainbows and Unicorns

Pastor Ted Cunningham

We're talking about rainbows and unicorns. One of these is in the Bible and one is not. One of my goals today... A lot of you heard the message and you thought I was going to be doing a whole message on same-sex marriage. That's not where I'm going, but I do have the goal to reclaim the rainbow for Christ, and all God's people said... Amen. Stephanie Watson made this rainbow; is she not amazing? Stephanie Watson has a passion for rainbows. So, when I said I was doing rainbows and unicorns, she immediately said, "I'll do the rainbow!"

One of these is a promise of God; it's a covenant he made between Noah and all living creatures that he would never destroy the earth again with a flood. The other one is not in there. I'm teaching my kids not to be looking for unicorns in the Bible. A lot of people go into scripture, searching for stuff that ain't there. The two biggest mistakes we make when we read the Bible are we see things that aren't there or we don't see enough; those are the two biggest problems.

Today we want to spot the unicorns in your marriage with the purple pixie dust flowing from the hooves as it goes through your home, and run it out and say, "What do we know as truth; what do we know as promise?" So we want to call it either the truth of God, a rainbow, or false, myth, a unicorn.

Here's why that's so important. We believe Proverbs 4: 23 is very clear. It says ***Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.*** In other words, we have these beliefs that go deep into our heart and every word we speak, every action we take, flows from the heart. For many of us, the marriage breakdown and the struggle to form good relationships are flowing from bad beliefs. Here's what we know. What you believe about marriage, the fundamental beliefs you have about the institution of marriage is determining what you believe about your spouse.

What we are going to see today is the enemy of your marriage is Satan, not your spouse. The source of life for your marriage is not your spouse; it's Jesus. So unplug from each other as the source of life and plug into the true and only source of life, which is Jesus, and spend your days giving one another the overflow. Make sure you're on constant guard with what your believing as true and the myths that you need to run out. As parents, listen today as well as we look at six myths that are decreasing marital satisfaction. We will discover that our kids are learning a lot of myths about love and dating and sex and marriage and we need to run those out of our home and look at what the truth and the promises of God are.

Hope or Despair

Here's why the beliefs you have about marriage is so important. The beliefs you have will lead you in only one of two directions. You are either going to be led towards hope or despair. With truth, we find hope. With truth, we are able to make good decisions. With truth, we remove ourselves as the truth maker and we lean on the one who is the source of all truth.

Despair is when you find yourself at the end, you find your marriage at the end, you find your family falling apart and you're wondering how you got there. You got there by listening to lies, by allowing these lies to seep into your heart. If you've never been to counseling...

My kids and I were talking about counseling and I told them I had been to counseling and they gasped and asked me what the matter was. I told them counseling is good. You go and you get another voice that listens and they're kind of emotionally detached and you are able to share with them. A good counselor will listen and ask great questions. But my kids think if you have to go to counseling, you are really screwed up. I told them that wasn't true. I told them I need people that lead me towards hope. I want people surrounding me that lead me towards hope. And all God's people said... Amen.

When I'm feeling despair, I want people to step into my life and tell me it's not true or ask me why I believe that. A great question a counselor will ask is "When did you start believing that?" You've listened to this lie long enough and it has seeped into your heart. "When did you start believing that because the despair you're feeling is because you're basing your life, your marriage, and your family on a lot of bad beliefs?"

So today, we want to give you not only the lies of Satan and how you can refute those with the scripture, but, more importantly, I hope you see the strategy of Satan. I hope you see that strategy of Satan so that even if we don't cover a specific lie today and the truth that you write over that lie, you are still able to know what Satan's strategy is. That way when another question is brought up - and I don't think we are done hearing the questions come up on the news about what's right and what's wrong - you're able to watch the news or read the paper or walk down the street, hear something and go "Hey, is that a rainbow or a unicorn? That is a unicorn and we are not going to allow that one to be brought into our home."

Here is where we take you to Genesis 3. ***1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made.***

Amy and I were walking this week. It's fall; this is Amy's favorite time of the year, so any time we can get a walk in. The copperheads are coming out onto the asphalt for their last little bit of sunbathing. All the snakes are warming up. Copperheads aren't that big when they coil up. I don't really see them, but Amy spots them. As we are getting close to them, she'll put her arm out and stop us. I jump back and I think I said something like "EEEEK." Isn't there something about it when you see it? How many of you hate snakes? I know they are great for the ecosystem... No, they're more nasty and crafty than any of the other wild animals that God has made. Just stay away from them.

So let's just get the picture. **He said to the woman...** Now this is very important because we believe and we know that he who frames the question wins the debate. So part of Satan's strategy is to take something God said and twist it a little bit to where it's no longer truth, but it has words and pieces from something God said to where it sounds right... This is why it gets confusing when you're trying to figure out if it's a unicorn or a rainbow.

Satan asks this question: **"Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"** "Did God say you can't eat from...? He created this and now he says you can't have it."

What did God really say? Let's go back one chapter. **15 The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. 16 And the LORD God commanded the man...** Look at how God starts this out. **"You are free to eat from any tree in the garden..."** That's very different. "All this I've created and you're going to name the animals, enjoy the fruit from these trees; you are going to enjoy creation, however..." **17 ..."but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."**

Satan wants you to believe that God is a cosmic killjoy and God is in heaven, trying to figure out new ways all the time to make your life miserable. This is part of the strategy of Satan.

This is what Jesus says in John 8 about Satan. Let's define him a little bit. **"He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him."** He goes on to call him a liar and the father of lies.

The first guy who comes calling to ask Corynn on a date... I've got to find out if this guy is a unicorn or a rainbow. If he's a unicorn, I'm going to say, "You are of your father the devil and a child of darkness. Leave my home at once."

But this is so important to, again, not just get the lie, but the strategy. He's now wanting to frame God and put God in this box that says, "He created it and it's all off limits for you," but that's not it at all. He created it and he has a plan for how you partake in it.

The same is true with marriage and relationships. God has a plan. The way we're using the rainbow today, do you know what we are doing? We are shaking our fist at God and we're telling him "You know what? Yeah, you created me a male, but who are you to tell me if I'm going to be a man or a woman?" "And you defined marriage, but who are you to tell us who we can love?" And I hope you know the whole love whoever you want, do whatever you want... Have you taken that to the farthest conclusion? We're not done with what type of relationship... Some relationships we now consider criminal and the society accepts as criminal, five years from now, it may not be because we're now in charge. We've told God "We don't need you; we don't want you. We will set the rules. We will determine them." And we are shaking our fist at God.

Satan comes in and the woman now has to say back to him... and she remembers what God said. **2 The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, 3 but God did say, 'You**

must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.’”

Now here’s where we get to the strategy of the evil one. He says this: **4** ***“You will not certainly die,” the serpent said to the woman.*** What Satan wants you to believe is there are no consequences for your actions. You can live how you want, you can do what you want and you’ll have to worry about nothing. Let me tell you something. We wouldn’t need counselors if that were true. We wouldn’t be dealing with all of the mess...

I’m trying to figure out how all this works in the church and in the community and as a pastor. It’s like we are shaking our fists at God and then we wonder why things aren’t going well. Why aren’t we able to do marriage well? “Why are my kids not talking to me?” “Why are my kids’ marriages falling apart?” I think it’s because we are saying, “God, we don’t need you.” And Satan comes in and reinforces that.

You set the rules and then don’t worry about it. **5** ***“For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”*** So he saying, “You’ll be illumined, you’ll be smart once you eat from it and you’ll be able (because he talked about good and evil) to determine... Truth now is in your hands; you determine right from wrong. You say what’s right and you say what’s wrong.” Does this sound familiar to anyone today? You get to be the one who determines that. This is what you’re saying when you say “Don’t open a Bible and tell me what God says about something or if you do, let me rework it a little bit for you.” “Let’s just be honest about it I want to be like God. I want to be my own little God. I don’t want anybody telling me what to do or how to live.”

The reason we share truth with you is not that everything is off limits. No, it’s more like here is what God has created and here is how he has asked you to partake in his creation. Satan is saying, “God made all of this and he made you a sexual being and he wants to deprive you of sex.” No... God has a plan for that. “He made me as a relational being, but why can’t I keep a marriage together?” He has a plan for that too and he has a way of going about it.

We don’t want you to be as Jesus taught in the parable of the sower. Here’s how he describes it. ***Some people are like seed along the path where the word is sown.*** They’ve received the truth of God. They know what’s true, they know the rainbows. ***As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them.***

Paul puts it this way to the Church in Corinth in 2 Corinthians 11: **3** ***But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.***

This why Jesus, at the end of his earthly ministry, before he went to the cross, prayed for the disciples and then after he prayed for his disciples, the group he was with, he prayed for all of us, the followers that would come. This was his prayer in John 17: **15** ***“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world...”*** So we don’t teach isolationism here. We don’t isolate our children from the world. Our

children have to be in the world. They are going to go out into the world. ...**but that you protect them from the evil one.**

Six Myths That Lead To Marital Despair

So with that strategy, let's look at some of the myths. These myths are worded in a way that they sound good at first. You'll read it and say, "I've said that stuff and I've heard that on eHarmony.com and farmersonly.com commercials." "I've read that at Hallmark." "I remember the most classic line that is the most truest of all love lines. It's the line when Tom Cruise said to Rene Zellweger 'You complete me.'" Do you know how many people's marriage are falling apart off that one stupid line? They believe that. "You're finally here and I'm now a complete person."

So we have six myths that lead to marital despair. If these unicorns are in your heart, in your family, in your home, I hope you see that you have a bad belief on your heart. So today, I want you to know the truth of it. I'm going to start with singles and marrieds. So singles, it's very important. It's a new term. I'm sharing this term for my senior friends if they've not heard the term "hook-up."

THE "HOOK-UP" MYTH: "Frequent sex with multiple partners is the best." Hook-up is not coffee after school or a burger and a milkshake. A hook-up is "We're just going to have sex" and it's casual. I heard this movie line recently. Two husbands were talking with each other and the one husband says to the other husband "You cannot tell me that after seven years of marriage, your wife still turns you on."

I will answer that. I will answer that right to my wife, Amy. Bow bow chicky chicky bow bow. Do you know what makes a marriage bow bow chicky chicky bow bow and awesome at 20 years of marriage and 25 pounds... okay 30 pounds heavier than when we first got married? We are just, with everything we've got, saying exclusivity. I want no other woman in my mind. Amy, you're it. You can't watch the Cubs play the Cardinals without a Soma commercial coming on; it just pops up. Carson and I immediately have to cover our eyes and wait until the bras are off the television. You might think I'm getting a little ridiculous. I just want Amy to know I'm thinking about her right now. Exclusivity is God's plan.

You're going to get all of our foundational passage from Twolgnite. The honor, enjoy, and prioritize will be in all six of these myths. Hebrews 13: 4 – We focus a lot on the first part of this verse. **4 Marriage should be honored by all... esteemed as highly valuable ...and the marriage bed kept pure...** So we do not believe God gave you your spouse and sex is dirty, nasty, and ugly, so you save it for your spouse. That's not what we believe. We don't believe sex is dirty, nasty, and ugly, but we believe it's beautiful and meant to be between not a man and a woman, but a husband and a wife. God's plan is that it's in the context of marriage. ...**for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.**

I want to share because this myth has been shared with me in so many different ways. Some of you won't believe I have to say this, but I do in this context. There are senior adults who believe this passage applies to young, single people. I've had people in this community tell me sexual immorality is talking about virgins. "Ted, I've been married and I'm widowed and I'm now over 60; all that stuff doesn't matter." Again, I always have a hard time confronting my elders, but I'm sitting there going "Where did

you get that? Where am I at right now that you think sexual immorality is for young people, but not applicable to seniors?"

"It doesn't matter if you're in one of those large retirement communities in Florida, hooking up..." Don't laugh; you know it's true. Old single men are going to those communities to hook-up. This applies to you. Sex outside the context of marriage is sexual immorality. Outside of a husband and wife enjoying one another.

Single people, let me share this... And seniors, this applies to you as well even though it's in the context of younger, budding love. Song of Songs 2: 7 says ***Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.*** When does it desire? That's in the next chapter of Song of Songs. In Chapter 3, it's called a wedding. Sexual intimacy happens after a wedding. You're husband and wife now and now go and enjoy one another. This is a prayer to pray over your children at night. "Father, do not arouse or awaken love into my son until it so desires." "Father, do not arouse or awaken love in my daughter until it so desires."

This week, our family just so happened to be... I picked this passage about three weeks ago and I didn't even think that our family would be in this chapter for our devotions. It's chapter 5 of Proverbs. It's a father warning his young son about the adulterous woman. It's a father warning his son about what's going to happen if he goes down this road. Carson calls it the awkward chapter. But you sit your kids down. Dad, sit your son down. Have this conversation with him. When he starts squirming and doesn't want to hear it, you make him listen. This is when we need to get it into their heart. This is when the truth needs to be placed there. I don't want my son, at the end of his life, to say this as we read in Proverbs 5: 11 - ***At the end of your life you will groan, when your flesh and body are spent.*** It goes on in Proverbs 5 and we are going to get very detailed here. ***15 Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. 16 Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? 17 Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers.***

I'm just going to ask. Do I need to explain this? I will, but I know some of you will leave with your small children if I start explaining this in great detail. The cistern is the biblical language used for the woman. For the man, the male, male and female, he created them. For the male, your springs... Don't go giving it out to everyone. Streams of water in public squares... Don't share them with strangers.

Promise me you will share this with your kids this week. "Don't give it to strangers or you will end your years with a moan when your flesh and body are spent. Don't do it."

Now we are talking about marriage: ***18 May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.*** Young people today, the message... We've had them at church and in scripture since the Bible was given to us. "Get married and enjoy frequent, creative sex." But young people today are saying just the opposite with the hook-up myth. "We are going to go ahead and delay marriage, but we are going to have sex." What do churches do when we don't feel the message is being heard? What do parents do when they don't feel the message is being heard? We get louder and repeat. Don't wait to have this conversation when your kids are 13. I think that's too late. It starts much earlier especially if they are watching sports. They are getting the commercials and they have the questions.

Now this is where your son really starts to squirm, but you make him sit there. **19 A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.** “Son, I want you to get excited thinking about the naked body of your wife. And then to be intoxicated with it, to enjoy it.”

“Okay, Dad, can I go.”

“No, sit. I want you to get this because the problem is when you start getting...” And you know the dilemma today. Young men are finding their adventure in video games and their romance in porn and they are becoming intoxicated with the bodies of hundreds, if not thousands of women. They are addicted. We need to be painting a beautiful picture for our kids. “One day, let me tell you, son...”

We’ve got deer in our neighborhood; you’ve got deer all around you. Take that moment and teach this text. What do you do when you see a deer? You don’t go running up on the deer, shouting at them. What do you do when you see a deer? You’re gentle. “Carson, I want you to know that one day, when you are married, be that gentle, responsive lover to your wife.”

“DAD!”

“No, listen, may you ever be intoxicated with her.”

If you think this is too much information, I’m going to say you’re already behind. Your kids need to hear this. And the best person to hear it from is a dad. How often do they need to hear it? As often as possible. The more we talk about it, we have discovered the less awkward it becomes and the more it just becomes truth that is planted deep within their heart.

THE “SOUL MATE” MYTH: “There is one perfect person out there for me.” To which was say “No.” This one gets me in the most trouble because you have to understand the idea of a soul mate came from the philosopher, Plato. He would teach that your soul always existed (not true). So your soul was existing and your spouse’s soul was existing and, through the forces of nature, the two of you came together. The reason you’re compatible is because you were put together by forces outside of your control and that’s just not true. That’s completely not true when it comes to compatibility.

The scripture calls compatibility this right here and this is Genesis 2: 24. “...they become one flesh.” You *become* compatible; you don’t find compatibility. Think about it. What happens? You’re like “I went on eHarmony and I found the one that I’m compatible with.” But what if your soul mate was on match.com? Now you’ve got a real problem with your theology. You’re hoping that she went to eHarmony.com. When Neal Clark Warren says you can find your soul mate, he is wrong. You become one flesh and it takes a long time. It’s the reason you take a vow to do this until one of you dies. They become one flesh.

Why is this myth deeply seeded in the heart of an individual so important? It’s because when marriage hits hard times, you start asking the question: “What if you’re not the one?” “Oh, I should have spent

more time on that quiz. I raced through that profile because I was stressed that day and lonely and 45 and thinking this is it; I'm on lastresort.com..." So you raced through the profile and you're thinking they are not the one. And then you find someone else.

I had a husband tell me this earlier this year. They were getting married and he said, "Ted, when I get around her there's a spark."

I go "Yeah, that's good. I have a spark with my wife. Hopefully, your spark will turn into a flame."

He goes, "But I've never had it with another woman. I've been married multiple times, but with this woman, it's like something physical is going on."

"Yes, and guess what? You could have that spark with literally millions of people."

Going back to the hook-up myth, it's like "Well, we need to sleep together to figure out if we are sexually compatible before we get married." Let me help my young friends with this one. You're sexually compatible with millions and millions of people. It's not that complicated. He created male and female; it's not that difficult, so you don't need to hook-up to figure out if you have chemistry. The problem with that spark is what about the days you don't feel that spark? I'm not going to ask you to raise your hand. How many of you are feeling a spark right now. You're like "We have kids with squirt guns; we haven't had a spark in a long time." That's the problem; that's when it's based on feelings and emotion.

THE HAPPILY EVER AFTER MYTH: "True love means smooth sailing from here on out." This is when you hear people talk about true love. True love... Smooth sailing? Here's the problem with this myth and this lie. I'm calling them myths to make it softer, but it's a lie. The problem with this myth is when your marriage hits hard times, you begin to say to yourself *We must not really be in love. We have a love problem.* No, no, no, true love equals commitment. True love says, "I love you even though I want to punch you in the face right now. But I love you and we're going to work through this." That's your wife grabbing you by the face after you've done something stupid and saying "I love you and I will continue to love you; me and Jesus will love you."

Let's just be very clear. There is an activity involved in marriage. It's not just true love; it's more than that. In Ephesians 5, it says **22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.** How are you doing submitting to your husband as unto the Lord? "No, we are redefining that whole text, Ted. This is 2015 and you are way behind the times." I am. I'm a couple thousand years behind the times, I will continue to be behind the times, and I'm okay with that.

I found a great definition this week of submission and it's by Beth Moore. She says, "*Sometimes submission is ducking so God can hit your husband.*" That's submitting as unto the Lord. And you know if Beth Moore said it, Jesus believes it, right? We've got that down clearly.

A little bit further in Ephesians 5, it says ²⁵ **Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...** I've got to be really honest with your guys. I'm talking to my husband friends in here. Do you want to love your wife? Someone has to start being Jesus. Let it be you. I'll remind you what Jesus did and I'll quote Jason Earl here. "Guys, you need to crawl up on the cross and die even though you didn't do nothin'." You come home and you're like "Hey wait, I didn't do anything; I don't deserve this." Oh, that's right; neither did Jesus. Now don't be getting into this where you're acting it out and being the... "She continues to nag; I shall go to the Roman torture device..." Someone has to be Jesus. There is an activity involved.

THE "MARRIAGE IS HARD WORK" MYTH: "Marriage requires constant, grueling work to stay in love." We need to stop using the word "work" with marriage. It is an overused word and it is seeping into the hearts of couples today. It's also seeping into the hearts of singles to where they feel like marriage is work and they are avoiding a whole body of text.

Let me give you an example. On the day of your wedding, did the wedding feel like work? Even if it was work, it was something you wanted to give yourself to. Why is that? That's because the day of your wedding is the day your heart rejoiced. There was activity, there was excitement. I've never talked to a couple getting ready for wedding that said, "This is too much work I don't want to do it." They are there at Target with their little gun, shooting everything they want. They are doing registries, they're doing invitations, and they're getting things going. Maybe they're out there, but I've never met a couple that says, "I don't want this wedding because it's too much work."

I have to give eHarmony some credit because I'm constantly putting them down. Just so you know, I'm not against online dating. Online dating is a viable way to find someone so long as you are pursuing traditional relationship formation. Here's what eHarmony says, "*Marriage doesn't need work. Marriage needs attention. The time that you give to your marriage will pay exponential dividends in joy, companionship, sexual satisfaction, and teamwork, but it shouldn't feel like work. More often than not, it should feel like play.*"

This is why I did the book *Fun Loving You* because I've changed the belief in my heart. I'm not using the word like "Oh, I'm home now; I have to *work*." "Oh, hey, Amy, what *work* are we going to do tonight?" You look around this place and all the decorations and everything... these are all Amy Cunningham's ideas that Andy and David fulfill. Every now and then, they want to pull me in on it and I'm like "I've got a home that she decorates. I go home and do what you're doing here." But I don't look at it as more work. I've made the decision that our marriage is going to be fun. I'm looking for ways to find fun with it. We have honey do lists and they are expensive. I've spent more money in the last two months taking care of our home. There are times it's frustrating, but it's not directed towards her. It's a home in a depressed economy that I'm really kind of frustrated with. A house is work, but your marriage doesn't need to be.

THE "HAPPINESS VERSE HOLINESS" MYTH: "God gave you your spouse to make you holy, not happy." I've argued against this one for a long time because this is twisting... It's kind of, again, with the strategy. Gary Thomas asked the question: "What if God gave you your spouse to make you holy *more* than happy?" What if you pursued holiness and happiness, but your prioritized holiness over happiness? I

get that, but now the idea is seeping into the church that marriage is all about beating you down and sucking the life out of you so you can be more like Jesus. Don't pursue that.

I'm for happiness in marriage, but it doesn't mean I'm against holiness. This is the last core verse I'll share with you from Twolgnite. If you are brand new to our church, this is what we believe. It's in Ecclesiastes 9. ***9 Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.*** So work is grueling, but in the midst of the grind of work and life, I'm going to enjoy life with my wife. This is a statement we've had around here for years, but, guys, "if you're looking for greener grass, I want you to know there is a septic leak and it's nasty. Stay home and water your own lawn." For a good time, call home.

This text is teaching you don't have to choose between life and a wife; you can have both and at the same time. That decision you made... Marriage is hard; it's a grind; it's difficult; it's not supposed to be fun... Change that belief. Life is hard. We are going to be dealing with our bodies breaking down pretty soon. We're going to be needing help with our bodies in our senior years, and we are going to be spending time with doctors and getting joints replaced and you're going to go through it. But in the midst of this, we've got each other. I'm breaking down at a rate much faster than Amy. She knows I'll work hard right now, but she is going to have some work to do because I want to be spoiled when I'm old and decaying. I've shared that with her. But that's life breaking me down. We've made the decision to have fun with that.

THE "50/50 CHANCE" MYTH: "Since 50% of marriages end in divorce, we might not make it." It's amazing how many Christians believe this lie that 50% of marriages end in divorce. Do you know that's not true? Fifty percent of marriages do not end in divorce. How do we get the divorce rate? The divorce rate is calculated by the number of weddings in a year versus the number of divorces in a year. So if 100,000 people get married in our country this year, that doesn't mean 50% of that 100,000 will end in divorce. It means we will experience 50,000 divorces this year, but now you need to take the 50,000 and make it to the next year accumulative. Shaunti Feldhahn even goes a little bit further with this myth, saying that she believes the divorce rate peaked in the 1980s and has been trending downward. She's a Harvard graduate who has spent a lot of time studying this. Think about it. If you've got the belief in your heart that your marriage might not make it, how much are you going to put into your marriage when the going gets tough?

Here's what Jesus said in Matthew 19: 6: "...what God has joined together, let no one separate." We believe that God's heart for marriage is permanence.

So what do we do with this as we close? I want to share a video clip with you that speaks to the whole hope and despair idea. I believe according to the Song of Songs 1: 4 that says we rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine. All of us are called to be advocates for marriage. We are all called to share and breathe life into the marriages around us. We believe Jesus breathes life into dead people; that's the gospel. We believe Jesus breathes life into dead marriages. You and I need to step up in a time where marriage is being redefined and gender is being redefined and marriages are falling apart. It's time for us to step up.

I'm not talking on a national level; I'm talking about just in your home and in your church and in your community. Step up and say I'll be a voice of truth and hope. I'll go into my family on Thanksgiving and Christmas... I know the cousin. I know the brother. I know the sister. I know the parents who is having a difficult time in marriage and I'm going to step in there and be willing to take the shots. But I'm going to be a voice of hope and a voice of truth.

I have a friend who fell in ministry about two years ago. He had multiple affairs. I'm not sharing anything that wasn't online or in the news. He fell and, obviously, everybody is coming alongside the wife, saying, "You leave this guy. You're done with this guy." What I notice all too often, when someone's having a hard time, is that church people tend to just scatter. It's way too messy, way too much to handle. Where are the people coming in saying, "I'm going to walk alongside you and remind you that Jesus breathes life into dead people"? We believe in the resurrection power of Jesus. And because we believe that, there is no situation, there is no relationship, there is no marriage that is outside of what He is able to do.

My friend was frustrated for about a year or year and a half that no one in the church would just hug him. For about a year, all I would hear him say was "Ted, all I need to do now..." I told him I didn't need to share his story. It is his story to share one day. He told me to feel free to share his story. I don't give his name or put it out there. For the first year, he would say things to me like "Ted, I just feel like I need to live out my years and die. There's nothing left." I'm just trying to speak into his ear, going "Is this really the message of the gospel? Just live out your years and die? Is this what we believe Jesus does? You have sinned way too much; you are way too gone so you are done?" I told him that's not true. It's just been in the last few months that I've started to hear hope again in his voice. He is still married. His wife and he are working; they are moving through some difficult times.

As I thought about this clip, this clip is at a time in our nation where we were in despair. We were mourning and going through some difficult times. We were angry. We were frustrated and we were mad. We dealt with so many emotions in the days, weeks, and months after 9/11. Most of us didn't know what to do. I think we got rid of the message I preached the Sundays after 9/11. I think I even prayed "Father, please blow them off the face of the map." I was angry! I was angry like a lot of Americans. It's in moments like that we need a leader. Let me say it again as we head into the 2016 elections. It's in moments like that we need a leader – someone who will stand up and say we will not be bullied, we will not be pushed around, I will speak truth and I will speak hope. Some of you have checked out because I went political. Don't check out on me.

This is a clip from October 30. It was about a month and a half after 9/11 when President George W. Bush showed up at Yankee Stadium to throw out the first pitch at the World Series. My favorite scene in it is when Marine One landed and he walked from the helicopter over to the car, as only George W would do. He may have not been great with words, but he was a great showman. As he walked from the helicopter to the car and he was warming up his arm. What other president would do that. He's practicing like he throwing the pitch. This clip, to me, is of a leader who steps up in the middle of despair and says, "I'll be a voice of hope."

[Video plays] - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bxR1tZ08Fcl>

It's time to start warming up every arm in this place. It really is. I'm going to call every single one of you, from here on out, a brick wall. I will not say brick house; I'm going to make sure I'm clear on brick wall. I think that's exactly what our families need. They need sanity. It takes 10 minutes of the news to go "We have lost our cotton pickin' minds." We are talking stupid and trying to look smart. Where are the people that are standing up? If it requires a bulletproof jacket at Thanksgiving or Christmas at your house, that's fine. But stand up on the mound like a brick wall, declare truth, speak light, and breathe hope. Say to your family, who are a mess from following and chasing after the pixie dust of the unicorn, "Let me tell you the truth because I love you and I care for you. You may feel the despair right now and you may be in mourning over the loss of your marriage, but we believe Jesus breathes life into dead people and marriage." And all God's people said... Amen.

Father, we thank you for our time this morning and we do pray for hurting families, hurting marriages that they would be open now and that the Holy Spirit would call them by name and they would call out the lie that they've been resting on, that they've been living out of in their hearts. I pray that they take the truth, the word of God, and place it deep within their heart and begin to function as a spouse, as a parent, as a child, as a brother, as a sister out of that truth.

I pray for my single friends that you do not arouse or awaken love in them before their time. I pray that one day, as they walk down an aisle, they will be intoxicated with the physical intimacy of their spouse. I pray for the one who feels they failed so many times in marriage that it's not possible to be successful from here on out that they would just hear today that is not true because we believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ and the life it breathes into those who are dead.

We pray for that resurrection power in marriages and families right now for yours is the victory and you go before us, proclaiming this victory. It is in the name of Jesus that everyone agreed and said... Amen.