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## Twolgnite

### Lavishing Love on Your Spouse

Pastor Ted Cunningham

The second Sunday of every month, we talk about marriage; it's called Twolgnite and it's driven by these three words: honor, enjoy, and prioritize.

Hebrews 13:4 says ***Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure.*** We believe that part of Twolgnite Sunday is to paint a beautiful picture of marriage as often as possible for singles, for spouses, and for parents as we talk about relationship formation.

We also believe Ecclesiastes 9:9 which says ***enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all [your miserable days].*** So we want you to enjoy life with your wife. You don't have to choose between a life and marriage; you can have both at the same time. Part of painting that beautiful picture is enjoying life together.

And then the last word we use is *prioritize*. This comes from Genesis 2: 24 and it says ***for this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two become one flesh.*** We believe it is our responsibility as parents to make sure our children leave home as adults, not on a journey to become one. So we want to encourage young people to grow up and to take on the responsibility of work and relationships.

I've been excited about this message all week. This word, *lavishing*, is going to scare all the men. That's going to freak the men out, going *What are we getting ourselves into? That's a woman word.* I love this word and I want to put us all at ease because here is what we are talking about all morning. We are going to define lavish as this: **Extreme generosity to the point of extravagance.**

If you are wondering if we are going to be talking about spoiling today, the answer is yes. We're talking about going overboard. How do we do it? We do this; we lavish love on people. This is what we want to do. Over the last few months, some people have asked me "Ted, you seem to be crying more than ever; what seems to be the problem? Do we need a line item in the budget for your counseling?"

I will be honest with you. I got a little choked up during worship again today. I think it's a good thing. I'm getting older. I'm going to say this without getting emotional. You know that in February I lost my grandma and then five days later, we traveled to Minnesota to bury Amy's grandma. As I look back over

this last year, in many ways, I still feel like I'm mourning. I'm mourning those deaths. Our elders are getting older and as I look around this morning, I'm thinking *My goodness; I have so many funerals to do over the next ten years.* Honestly, I'm wondering if I can do it.

Amy says "You tell people all the time you do not have the gift of mercy, but, Ted, I think you might and you've kept it suppressed with sarcasm." When I go to a funeral, I take it all on. Just going and being with Jim Sedlacek... This may be too much information, but Jim is an elder that has done so much for this church. He lives in Phoenix now and he lost his wife last year. When we were together, I noticed this cut down the back of his neck that I could tell was put together with glue. I said, "Good Night, Jim, what happened?"

He goes "Oh, they just had to scrape a little rust out of there earlier this week." I asked him if it was something we should be praying about and you could just see it in Jim. He was kind of like "You know what; I'm ready to see Jesus." He kind of has that heart.

Then I've been dealing with the emotions of Gary Smalley. He's been a mentor in my life and he has not been doing well over the last four months. To be perfectly honest with you, I put this sweater on today in honor of Gary Smalley. I went into the closet and I said "That looks like a James Dobson/Gary Smalley sweater if I've ever seen one; I'm wearing that."

Last night, I got kind of emotional driving home from a wedding. We went to the Hilton and there was an open bar and I didn't have one drink. I'm going "Seriously? It's right there." I didn't do it. As I was driving home, Amy said we needed to stop at Sunfest, so we stopped at Sunfest. I'm praying for Gary Smalley on the way home and I go into Sunfest and the Lord allowed me to do something in honor of Gary. It just hit me because I've been with Gary when he's done this I don't know how many times. But as I got my bananas and my apples and my Jack Daniels, I stood there in line... That last part is a joke; I don't do that every time I go there.

As I walked up to the line, in front of me there were two Vietnam Veterans and their wives. I could tell they were from out of town. They're just standing there; we're not even talking. I start getting choked up, thinking about their lives and all the mess they are probably going through right now. They are with their wives and you could tell they just got into town. I've seen this play out at Sunfest I don't know how many times. They are buying breakfast for the morning at Holiday Hills. I just know it. They stop at Sunfest to get a few things and then they go to Holiday Hills.

They had a few breakfast items and orange juice. I walked up behind them in line. They quickly saw me and took the plastic divider and laid it down. I, in honor, of Gary Smalley, I picked up that divider and I threw it back on the deal. I said "Thank you, men..." I got all General Ted on them. I said, "Thank you for your service to our country. I will buy your breakfast items for the morning." They looked at me with this bewildered look on their face.

Have you ever practiced generosity to the point of extravagance? I'm not saying a few muffins and orange juice is extravagance, but it's almost awkward, isn't it? We have a very difficult time accepting extreme generosity to the point of extravagance. I said "Please let me do this in honor of Bill, Earl, Roland, Lloyd, our grandparents who served in World War II." The ladies start choking up and there we

are, hugging in line at Sunfest. I'm waiting for the people to be so inspired behind me that they decide to buy all of our stuff, but no, it was just me.

The cashier is about 19 years old and he goes "I've never seen anything like that in my life."

I don't think it's that hard. The more I've looked at it this week... I've studied it and I've tried to apply it in my marriage and I don't think it's that hard. I actually think it's easier to give lavish love than to receive it. I actually think it's easier for me to get up every day and go "What can I do today that is unexpected, that is immediate, like spontaneous, that is... and I'll even use the term *unaffordable*." What is it I could do that may just stretch me today to show this to my wife? And then what would happen if that was really my attitude and heart every single day?

I'll tell you what would happen. I would wear myself out. That's what some of you are thinking. You're thinking you can't do that every day. Where do you get the energy for that? Where do you get the emotion for that? "You're an emotional wreck and I don't want to end up like you right now, Ted. I want to be full. I want to have something."

I'm saying there is a way. There is a way I think you can do this every single day in marriage and here's the secret. You know it's coming at our church. Jesus is our source of life and we use the love he gives us to lavish on others. This is the love the Father lavishes on us that we should be called children of God. He pours out extreme, extravagant love on us and we get to take that and give it to others.

I had a great emotional moment on Friday afternoon. We did an event in Florida. The whole family left and we had to fly to St. Louis. We get there Friday and we get to Enterprise because we are going to have to rent a car to make it back to Springfield Airport. I need you to know this about me: I never, ever take the insurance at a rental car place. I've called my insurance man three times on this to get verification. He's tired of me asking the question. He says "Ted, if you get in an accident in a rental car, I have you covered in such a way that it's as though it's your own car. Don't buy the insurance."

I said okay I'm not buying the insurance, so I give them this spiel when I get up there and they start putting the pressure on me. I say 'Listen, Mark Harris from Cape Girardeau, Missouri tells me I do not need to get your insurance, so back it down...!' I get really passionate about it.

But I have this young Banana Republic model guy come out at the Enterprise lot at the St. Louis Airport and he goes "Mr. Cunningham, let me put you in a brand new Acadia for ten more bucks." I thought *Ok, yeah, I'll do that. The AGs were going to pay for it anyway.* So I get in the car and he did that salesman move. I can't stand that salesman move where they get in the way of the door closing because that's the quickest way to turn a salesman around: you just slam the door. But he wouldn't let me shut the door.

He said, "Sir, let me cover this car, bumper to bumper, and I want to give you a million dollars of coverage."

I said, "Why would I need a million dollars of coverage. I have my own insurance."

He said, "I'm going to give you a million dollars of coverage if something happens to you and your family."

I was like "If something happens to me and my family, we won't need a million dollars."

He goes, "Forty-five dollars, bumper to bumper, a million dollars in coverage."

I told I didn't want it and he goes "I tell you what, I'll put aside the mission bucks, but I'm going to cover you bumper to bumper for thirty bucks."

He wouldn't leave me alone. I kept telling him I didn't want it. I have to tap into Jesus as my source of life at that moment with the salesman. Finally, I cave, I give in. I can't believe it. I was just at that point... This is the secret to all you salesman out there. Tap into my guilt prone nature for a just a little bit and make me feel like a bad dad, bad husband. Finally, I said I would take it.

Later, we pull up to the Residence Inn in St. Louis. I go in and get the luggage cart. You know those massive luggage carts. I wheel it out by the car and I have no idea. I grab our suitcases and I put the first one on and then I grabbed the second one and I put it on. As I go back for the third one... I don't know how this happened. The luggage tips over. It totally busts out the rear tail light. It makes such a loud noise. I had to jump back. Amy jumps out of the car and I'm looking at this busted out tail light.

Amy goes "Are you okay?!"

I said "I've never been better! I'm on top of the world! Come back here and look at this; we knocked out the tail light. Kick in the head light and let's do this thing over. We'll go bumper to bumper on the whole thing!" This is like twenty minutes after we rented the car.

She goes "Can you believe that happened?"

I said "That is our Father in heaven that did that."

I deliver it back to the Springfield Airport. I took a picture of it. The guy said "You've got bumper to bumper; we don't need to see anything."

I said "Do you mean to tell me I could take that thing and run it into a brick wall" and he goes "So long as you bring it back to me, we're good." That was the best thirty bucks I've ever spent.

I want to talk to you today about going that extra mile and maybe doing some things you've never done. So you would never buy the insurance. I'm glad I tried something new. It paid off. Maybe the payoff for you this morning is a marriage that's not just going to stay together for the kids, but a marriage that's truly going to thrive and you're going to experience marital satisfaction at a level you've never experienced or you'll experience it at a level you never dreamed was even possible. I believe it comes to us right from Jesus, our source of life.

I want to take you to a story in John 12. We are going to look at this great little story. It's a quick story, but I think it's a powerful reminder to us of how we lavish love on others, but then we also have to look at some aspects of this story of how people respond when you begin doing this.

A lot of us won't do this because of the awkwardness that it may create. A lot of us won't do this because we are afraid our spouse will see it and think we just want something. When we talk today about extreme generosity to the point of extravagance, there is a secret to it and the secret is to do it without expectation, to do it without expecting something in return. When I did that Gary Smalley move last night, I didn't want anything back from that. It was a moment to go Gary's not here, but I know exactly what Gary would do.

Some of you won't do this because your spouse hasn't seen this in you for twenty years so they are going to think you're being fake, or they're going to think this isn't real, or they are not going to buy it this week because they know it's not going to happen next week. They know it will just be kind of a high you'll ride for a few days after a message, like a lot of folks do, and then it will just be gone and you'll be on to the next subject. So some of you won't even try.

You are going to see a story of extreme generosity to the point of extravagance today in someone who is pouring it out on Jesus. Then you are going to see how people respond to it. I love this story, so we are going to spend a little time with it. I want to kind of set the tone for it. I want us to do something maybe you don't do when you read scripture, but I do. This scene takes place at a table. I just want to encourage you to grab a seat and pull it up to the table. Now you're sitting at the table as we look at the characters, as we look at the people who are at the table. I want you to see what your place is and then just ask the honest question: "How would I respond at this moment. If I were there right now, who would I look most like?"

Here is how the story begins. **<sup>1</sup> Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany...** now this is very important to understand in these first two verses. **...where Lazarus lived...** Now this is after Jesus had raised him from the dead. This is very important in Verse 1. So, at the table, we have Jesus and we have Lazarus and Lazarus *was* a dead man. He was dead for days. It's very important to understand that he is now sitting at the table. Think for a moment the conversation you would have with a guy who was dead a week earlier and what you would ask. Would your thoughts turn to *Certainly he has bathed since he came out of that tomb. ...whom Jesus had raised from the dead.*

**<sup>2</sup> Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served...** So you know the story of Mary and Martha. Martha was the servant and busy and we can make the argument that a great way to show our love to Jesus and to show our love to others is to serve and pour ourselves out.

I love this and I can picture this. **...while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him.** *Reclining* is a great word. We see this in the Song of Solomon as well. The Shulammite woman speaks of Solomon reclining at the table. In other words, home was the place where they relaxed and kicked back to enjoy conversation together. They were having fellowship together. They were enjoying the presence of one another. This meal was in honor of Jesus. So Lazarus was among those seated at the table.

Here is where the story really begins to take off. <sup>3</sup> ***Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard... If we didn't have the next three words, most of us would be repulsed, but it describes what nard is in Verse 3. ...an expensive perfume... It was a very expensive perfume. It was a perfume that most people, in that day and in that culture, would not have sitting around their home. ...she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair.*** Another very important detail to understand here is you begin to see the intimacy of this act. It's nothing sensual. But in that day and in that culture, the only person a woman would let her hair down for was her husband. So we see this act of intimacy; we see this act of extravagance; we see this act of spontaneous love literally poured out on Jesus. ***And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.***

We are only a few verses in, but I'm thinking "So Lazarus, how did your week go?"

"Well, I was dead on Tuesday, came back to life – thank you, Jesus – and now we are here. Could you pass the salt please?"

So this conversation is taking place and they are fellowshiping, enjoying the company of one another and Mary gets up in this spontaneous act, this very expensive act, this act of extravagance, and she is going to show love to the savior. She is going to return to him nothing close to what he has poured out on all of us, nothing close to what he has done and what he is about to do on the cross. It's not even close, but she takes all that she has available, all that she has there with her... The scripture goes on to say there were some objectors to this.

<sup>4</sup> ***But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, – Now another character at the table – who was later to betray him, objected...*** We've talked about this. Last Twolgnite Sunday was all about the backup singers in your life, those people who are backing up your marriage. We looked at how many of those voices in our life that we need to mute. How many of us begin to take steps forward, doing the right thing, taking the right steps, and there is always that one person...

Isn't it something that the person... Do you have this person in your life? They have an opinion with no action. They will explain to you everything they have going on in their lives and then they look at your life and they're like "I wouldn't do that."

Well, what would you do? I had kind of a situation like that this week. I kept throwing out ideas for this certain project that was going on and everybody kept shooting it down. It wasn't anything to do with our church or the staff. I finally said "Before you shoot down the idea, could you have an idea?" We all have those people in our lives that when they watch our lives, they have strong opinions about the way we're living, but there's no action in their life that backs it up.

Jesus is going to point that out. Judas objected and said <sup>5</sup> ***"Why wasn't this perfume sold... Now watch the pious attitude creeping in. ...and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages."*** <sup>6</sup> ***He did not say this because he cared about the poor... He didn't say this because he really wanted to tend to the needs of those who were hurting around him, but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.*** He was the naysayer, he was the one that looked in and said "No, it's just not worth it."

I'm going to make the case today for some of you to begin lavishing love and pouring out love on your spouse and to do that without expectation. Some of you are like "I'll do it maybe this afternoon" or "I'll do one of these acts we are going to talk about in a few moments; I'll do that, but I'm going to wait and see how it's received." That's because the naysayer in your act of extreme generosity may be the one you're pouring it out on, you may say "This isn't worth it; just let Ted go and do his thing once a month with Twolgnite, but don't get all caught up in this." And you're going to allow one person, the person you're trying to lavish love on, to keep you from doing it.

You do the right thing no matter what. What's great about this is it's lavishing love on your spouse. I'm talking to the spouse today. I'm not talking to the couple, so you don't have to wait for your spouse to begin. You don't have to wait for your spouse to give you the right reaction that you're looking for or to respond in kind. You can do this without their participation. Judas just had an opinion with no action to back it up. He was just going to call it out and be like "Oh, why is this taking place?" but now watch what the one who is receiving it says. Watch what Jesus says in Verse 7.

<sup>7</sup> ***"Leave her alone,"*** Some of you need to hear that. You need to hear it, as you begin to do this. Your kids may look at you and wonder what's going on. Your spouse may wonder what's going on. Your friends may think it's ridiculous or silly. ***"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial."*** <sup>8</sup> ***You will always have the poor among you..."*** So if you want to do something, you're going to have that opportunity, ***"but you will not always have me."***

So here's the question. In your marriage, who do you look most like? Mary or Judas? When you see an opportunity, do you jump in to be a part of it and to pour something out on your spouse? If you're not married, you see opportunities all the time. Are you one that's going to jump in and show honor to another person? Are you going to be the one who sees it happening and say it's not worth it?

This is so important. **Don't wait until all of your expectations are met to express extravagant love on your spouse.** I want to challenge you with this story today to act immediately, to act spontaneously, to make it unexpected, and to just have the impact in your marriage that's been missing for a long time.

Okay so I wanted to figure out how to really build this idea out and how to bring it two thousand years to today. I started thinking of the word luxury, the word extravagant, the word extreme. There was a hotel that came to mind. We have slogans for it, we apply it in a lot of different ways, but the hotel that first popped into my mind was the Ritz Carlton. Can I just see the hands of anyone that wants to admit they have stayed at a Ritz Carlton? You don't have to have stayed at a Ritz Carlton, but I'm hoping by the end of this morning, there are a lot of men in here that get the nickname of Ritz from their wife. On Wednesday, you're taking some steps forward in your marriage and she looks at you and says "This is pretty cool, Ritz; I think you should keep this up."

So a guy by the name of Joseph Michelli wrote a book. He was given unprecedented access into the Ritz Carlton Company. They usually don't allow a lot of reporters or a lot of academic types in to study their backend operations, but they allowed Dr. Michelli in to study it. He wrote a book called *The New Gold Standard*.

He found five principals that impact this company that just make them stand out above all the rest. He went in and studied the operation and let me give you one thing that he says: "The Ritz Carlton Hotel



Company, with ceaseless attention to every luxurious detail, have set the bar high for creating memorable customer experiences in world class settings.”

Whenever I read stuff outside of the marriage and family world, I always try to apply it back to marriage and family. When I read his five discoveries of what made the Ritz Carlton over the top awesome, I went, *Okay, I'm going to take everywhere he uses the word customer and I'm going to replace it with spouse, and I'm going to see how this works.* I'm going to give you those five key principles that he found and see how you can apply them this week as you pour out extravagant love, as you lavish love on your spouse in a way you've never done before.

**DEFINE AND REFINE:** Understand the ever-evolving needs of your spouse.

Begin to make mental note of what your spouse enjoys and what they need. I've always been freaked out when I go to a hotel. This happened to me in Atlanta. I had to stay at a hotel by the airport last year and I don't know how this happened, but I walked out of the train in between the rental car center (where I did not get insurance) and the airport. I walk over to the Marriot and a lady walks out of the hotel with an iPad and she goes “Mr. Cunningham?”

“Whoa, wait a second; how do you know me?” She wouldn't tell me and it was spooky. Did the rental car people call her and tell her I just dropped off the car? How do you know me and what else do you know about me? Did I give you my thumb print at some point I don't know about. It was weird.

I must have told them something online years ago or I experienced something there years ago. When I checked in, they started asking me questions about my life. I'm like “Listen, I'm just staying here for the night; we don't have to become best friends.” What did they have on their computer? I don't know how they got it and it freaks me out a little bit. They have a history of my life and they use that to serve me.

No one does it better, they say, than the Ritz Carlton. They keep a history of your stays there. So those of you who have stayed at a Ritz, if you've stayed there a bunch of times, they know everything about you. They've got your credit card information, they know where you work, and they know what kind of pillow you like. This is what sets them apart.

I wondered what would happen if we, as spouses, really started to step up to the plate and keep a good history of what our spouse likes. I know when Amy Cunningham's coffee cup is half full... We're so in tune that she knows I like to have my coffee sit there for five minutes before I drink it. I'm a gulper, not a sipper. See, you didn't know that about me. Amy knows that about me, so she does my coffee first, sets it aside, does some other stuff in the kitchen like either retiles the floor or paints while she's making hers. Then she makes her cup of coffee and she brings it in. To me, this is what makes marriage so much fun when you begin to define and refine and you're constantly learning about your spouse and you're constantly wanting to know what makes them tick and what their fears are and what their goals are and what their dreams are and what their passion is and when they are asking deep life questions and when they are changing. What's interesting, if you really do this, there are times when I'm going through something emotionally and Amy knows why I'm going through something emotionally, but my kids

haven't quite figured it out yet. They're like "What's wrong with dad?" and Amy will be like "It's a good thing; he's going through a good season right now."

Do you have a list of your spouse? In our marriage, we call it the *Fun Loving You List*. We each keep a list of all the reasons why our spouse is so highly valuable and what it is we love about them. Off that list, we're always getting new ways that we can serve one another. Gary Smalley did this years ago. He called it *The Honor List*. He kept a long list of all the reasons why Norma was valuable. The goal was whenever they would get into conflict or whenever they would have some tension or some distance between them, he would pull that list out and read all the reasons why she was valuable. It wasn't for the purpose of looking at the list after a fight and going "I don't know when I put that on there, but that's definitely not true. That's was the case five years ago."

No, it's a list of decisions that you've made. Remember what we believe around here. Decisions have power. You make decisions and then you look for the evidence to back them up. The Ritz Carlton keeps a history on you so they can better serve you. Are you keeping a history on your spouse so that you can better serve them?

**EMPOWER THROUGH TRUST:** Empower your spouse by treating him or her with the utmost respect.

Not to go all Joel Olsteen on you, but it's believing the best in your spouse. It's avoiding the germs or the relational deterrence to marriage of withdrawal. It's avoiding negative beliefs. It's avoiding the negative narrative that you've placed in your head about your spouse. It's getting rid of that negative narrative. The first point of making a list begins to put a positive narrative in your head and you begin dwelling on that which you love about your spouse and that which you can begin to grow and that which you can build.

**IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU:** Anticipate your spouse's unexpressed needs and concerns.

In other words, one of their core values at the Ritz is that you would anticipate a customer's need before it's ever stated. I still don't know how they do this 100%, but in marriage, you begin to anticipate something in your spouse before it's ever expressed. You know the coffee situation. You know when they need a little bit of a break from the grind. You don't wait until everything is falling apart before you say "I know you need some time away." "I know you may need a nap." "I know you may need to get out for the night." "I know you just need a couple hours in the room, reading a book by yourself." "Let me provide that for you" before it's ever expressed.

Too often in marriage what happens is we just kind of wait for the wheels to fall off the bus before we start to do something. But one way you can lavish love on your spouse is to begin to look for the signs and before it progresses to this point, you stop it right there and you ask the question "What can I do for you right now?"

If you're a spouse like Amy, she loves a clean house and an empty sink when we leave in the morning. I know that's huge for her. We built this breakfast bar high enough... I tried to do that to hide the sink from her as we leave the house. But I know that's big for her. I love getting in there and taking care of

that quickly. It's what I'm trying to teach my son. "Carson, let's anticipate. You know Mom loves coming into the family room about 8:30 every night and sitting down after working for 18 hours, running around the house doing everything, by the way, for us and you know she loves to have this cleaned up and picked up. So if you would go brush the Doritos off the couch a little bit, fold your knives up carefully so she doesn't sit on one of those, pick the Legos up off the floor because every mom in here loves stepping on Legos. You know this about your mom, so let's take care of it before she has to ask you to clean up. Let's do that." It's a simple way and let me remind you that it's free. It doesn't cost a year's wages to do this.

**DELIVER WOW:** Give your spouse a personalized experience.

Think through this. You know we're big around here on the date night. If you are brand new to our church, you can go to our church website and you will see a link that says Date Night Challenge. We have all these date themes: play, dream, laugh, adventure, curiosity, fascination. You can click on one of those dates and it will pull up date ideas and 52 questions for you. You can download those questions and you can personalize a date this week. Guys, be the hero. Take her out and say "I know we do Applebee's and a movie and you think that's awesome and we are going to still do Applebee's, but I thought it would be great if we focus the evening on adventure." "We haven't laughed in a few weeks and we need to bring that back, so let's focus on these questions that bring us to tears with laughter." Deliver WOW; do something unexpected, something they're not planning on.

I have a list. Again, it's simple. I call these unexpected, unaffordable, immediate acts of love that maybe could deliver the WOW. You take these and make these personal. They are super simple. Let's start with chivalry.

∞ **Pull back the chair and offer a seat at dinner.**

∞ **Ask if there is any assistance needed before you exit tomorrow morning.**

That's huge. Guys, I get it. This was me for a lot of years. I wanted to exit as quietly as possible to get out of there and then I'd get in the car and breathe a sigh of relief. And then you'd get behind me in traffic because I was driving very slowly into the office, just enjoying the quiet. But maybe instead of exiting quietly, five minutes before you leave, ask if there is anything you can do. Ladies, I'm not talking to just the guys today. Yours can be on the other end of the day. He'll clean up around the house in the morning and you can say thank you later that night. And it's not manipulation. It's heartfelt serving.

∞ **Give a complete detail to the family vehicle.**

This one is huge for Amy, but it may be the opposite in your home. It may be the wife doing this for the husband. It's interesting to me how people think about cars. There are some of you in here that would rather have a nice house and cars mean nothing to you. There are others of you that so long as you have the F350, you'll live in a trailer, so long as it has room for your trampoline. It's always amazed me the difference people have with cars. I've never been a car guy. I've never been that into cars. They don't

have to be awesome. They can have dings and scratches. But maybe your spouse is, so stop off today and, in 30 minutes, give a complete detail to the family vehicle. Get the high powered vacuum and suck out all the Skittles and the Starbursts and wipe down the dash and clean the inside of the window, get on the outside... Whatever it is, serve them in that way. Again, that may be the WOW for you. If you don't ever do it, you're delivering the wow.

∞ **Offer to take your mate's car so they can get the newer one.**

You're like "But my car has the oldest mileage on it and it's time for me to get a new car," but maybe you take the next car and let her have the new one. I plan on doing this with Amy. Our van has 150,000 miles on it. I'm going to ride that thing until the wheels fall off, so I'm going to be a minivan owner all by myself here in a few years so she can get the new car.

∞ **Just grab his or her hand as you stroll across the parking lot.**

∞ **Call before you come home and see if there is anything that they need.**

∞ **Bring home one flower.**

Guys, you don't need to bring home 12 flowers. Bring home one. Most guys think a dozen flowers are necessary to achieve the WOW affect when one will do the trick just as well.

∞ **Maybe for your husband you want to give him a week off from raking all the leaves and you hire some of the teenagers at Woodland Hills to come over and rake all the leaves.**

∞ **Hire a maid service to clean the house from top to bottom.**

I know Amy loves having a professional crew do the windows. So every five years, I get our windows cleaned around our house. That's the WOW. A clean window is a WOW for her.

∞ **Give up lattes or whatever your drink is for a month.**

Drink regular coffee and save up that extra fifty bucks that you're spending. Use that money to buy him a round of golf or a spa treatment for her.

∞ **Plan a date day, not just an evening.**

Rent a boat over at State Part or one of our resorts. Drive there slow and maybe pick something up to eat on the way. Pack a lunch or a dinner to eat while trolling the shoreline.

∞ **Try a sport you've never tried before.**

Bowling, tennis, hiking, fishing; all of these are reasonably priced in the Ozarks.

∞ **Just rent your favorite movie and make popcorn.**

Whatever it is, make it a personalized experience. You know what your spouse loves and you know I know what Amy loves more than anything. Amy loves quiet. Going to a concert with 4,000 or 5,000 people won't deliver her the WOW, that will deliver her the POW. She likes to get somewhere quiet and just talk.

**LEAVE A LASTING FOOTPRINT:** Develop and conduct unsurpassed training that studies your spouse.

Reading books together. Doing a couples devotional. We're coming up on a new year. Maybe you could by a book. Greg and Erin Smalley... I love what they share. They share that they are constantly, every Christmas, looking for a new book to go through together all year, leading up to December 25<sup>th</sup>. For some of you, it's going to a conference. For some of you, it's listening to a podcast. For some of you, it's listening to a sermon. For some, it's coming to Twolgnite Sunday. We know we have people that travel here for this Sunday. Again, wouldn't it be fun if the new nickname this week for your husband is Ritz? You're thinking *I don't know... By Wednesday, I'll probably be calling him Hotel 6.*

If you go another chapter to John 13, Jesus says this about what we are talking about this morning. Your marriage is a testimony to the world about God's love. Everything we are talking about today is very practical, very simple, but Jesus says ***your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.***

So this isn't just a warm, fuzzy, feel-good type of message; this is discipleship. This is "I want to show my spouse love in a way I've never showed them love before. And I want to be a backup singer to the marriages around me. I want other people to see what a good and healthy marriage should look like."

If I can give this word of caution as we close because it's about accepting it. I think we all, to some level, struggle with entitlement and receiving these acts of love and this lavish love that's poured out.

I don't know if you remember when Extreme Home Makeover came out, but we dove into it. We had to watch it every Sunday night. We loved that show; it was amazing. Why? It's because it was extreme and extravagant and lavishing and luxurious. But here's what we found after a year or two of that show being on. We would sit there at night and watch it. We would cry those first five or six minutes where they told the story and then we would feel like that family deserved whatever they wanted. Then we would watch them tear the house down and then build this gorgeous home. They would furnish it from top to bottom, from the furniture down to the utensils in the kitchen.

Then they would bring the family in... Talk about moments. They would bring the family in and they would walk through the house. They would walk into every room and the WOW was there and everybody started crying because they couldn't believe they did all that. You are into it for that hour. Then they go out into the garage and Chevy wants to give them a brand new SUV! They just kept

overdoing it and they were over the top. Then they would bring in some guy in a suit and he would walk in with a piece of paper. They'd introduce him as their friend from Purine Dog Chow and he gives them a check for \$100,000.00 and we would just be blown away. We couldn't handle it emotionally. It was one thing after another.

Then they would take them in the backyard and the whole thing was shot for me because there was no pool. They're giving them playground? Talk about bringing the ball to the five yard line and fumbling. That's called entitlement. That's called "WOW, WOW, WOW; I can't believe that's it."

I want to encourage you as maybe you outdo one another this week in acts of lavishing love that maybe as your spouse pours out love on you, you respond with "WOW, thank you," not "When is this going to end," or not "Is that it? Is that all you got in you today?" I think what happens is a lot of spouses give up because they are discouraged and defeated.

At volleyball yesterday, Corynn's team (awesome) had six serves in a row they scored and then they stopped because "We want every child to feel like a winner," but we can get into all that later. So they gave the ball to the other side. I'm like "What just happened right there; we were going to cream them."

They didn't want to discourage the other side. Discourage the other side? We want to demolish the other side! We want to take them out and bring them to their knees in tears. I'm looking at Jeremy Mabe because it's his team. But Jeremy said something that I thought was powerful. He said, "It's a really fine line because you want it to be an encouraging time and get really fired up, but when you go to a game where the one team is winning..." That's why sometimes, if it's baseball and the score is like 40 to nothing, they stop the game at 20. He goes, "It's so discouraging." Listen, that's how it was with all the teams I was ever a part of. I was on the zero points' team and I turned out fine. I cry a few times a day, but other than that, I'm okay.

I walked away... because again I'm always thinking about the message on Sunday. I walked away thinking how that is true in marriage. There is a husband or a wife who is trying and trying who will leave here today convicted. Maybe the heart of their spouse is hardened and the heart of their spouse just isn't in the mood to receive it. If I can talk to the spouse right now whose heart is closed to everything we've talked about today, I'm going to pray right now and ask that the Holy Spirit calls you by name and I'm going to ask that you receive this lavishing love this week. If you're thinking deep down that you will not let him have the upper hand, I'm going to pray that the love of Christ in your spouse breaks down some walls in your heart and you begin seeing it, receiving it, and then weeks or months from now, I pray that you're giving it out freely and lavishing it on your spouse and your kids and those people around you.

Father, what great love you have lavished on us that we should be called your children. Thank you for sending Jesus as atonement for our sins and that we have placed faith in Jesus. I place faith in Jesus, the source of all life. I pray for the husband right now who is going to go home and lavish love on his wife and for the wife who is going to lavish love on her husband.

This may be brand new for them, but I just pray that by the end of the week, they have built their list up and they are anticipating needs, they are delivering WOW, their doing these small but unexpected, immediate, spontaneous acts of love.

We are grateful for what you are doing in this church. Continue to bless Woodland Hills Family Church. As we head into the holidays, we are grateful for this time and we celebrate this time as a family. We are grateful for your love and we receive it today so that we can pour it out on those around us this week.

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