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**Twolgnite**  
**Why Date Night Could Save Your Marriage**  
Adam Donyes

If you didn't know, we were in a series that was interrupted by Twolgnite as we usually do interrupt a series with Twolgnite. That series was *Thank You Notes*. Mesa and Katie and all of them have been working their tails off on #52IN15 and asked me to help them with some stuff as the voting came down to a close this week. So I haven't been able to get any of my thank you notes done this week so would you guys mind if I got some of those done quickly?

Thank you, Kansas City Royals, for reminding us that there are two major league baseball teams in Missouri. What's that other one up by Illinois? The St. Louis Red Birds? Oh, that's right... Cardinals. That's right; I almost forgot. I know you guys have 11 champions to our two, but what have you done for me lately?

Thank you, social media, for helping us improve our stalking skills and showing us that our minimal prayer life and scripture reading is not from a lack of time. (Too much conviction for something funny?)

Thank you, Pinterest, for allowing my wife to believe I can make anything and everything out of pallet wood. (I'm an athlete not a carpenter, Steph.)

Thank you, Bachelor and Bachelorette, for proving to us that extravagant dates with multiple partners does not equate to marital success. (You've got like a 1% chance of succeeding on that show.)

Thank you, City of Branson, for giving us Christmas a month longer than anyone else in the world. (Did we miss Thanksgiving? Thanksgiving is still coming, right?)

Thank you, Donald Trump, for proving to us that not even a billion dollars can cure the comb over.

Thank you, Bobby...

We are an afflicted church; that's all I know.

When you walked in here, you received a ballot and that ballot has a lot of names on it. You might not know any of those names. That's okay. Just do the same thing you did with the ACT. Just let the Spirit lead. At the end of the service, you'll turn those in at the back in the box and we will figure out who our finalists are for the cruise. But, like I said earlier, everybody won. Everybody that dated their wife weekly won.

Today we are going to look at *Why Date Night Could Save Your Marriage* and why research suggest that a weekly date night could save your marriage. I'm going to share a couple of stories from #51IN15 and how it has been saving and breathing life into some marriages.

## It's Time

It's never too late to start doing the right thing. It's time to start dating your wife. It's time to start making it a priority. I've learned this quickly in my own marriage. We always make time for the things that are most important to us. It's not that you don't have time to do a weekly date night. The reality is it's just not that important to you. We have time to get the kids to all their practices. We have time to go to all their athletic events. We have time to watch our favorite episodes. We have time to do all these other things so it's not that you don't have time; it's just not that important to you.

Two months ago, I got to do a vow renewal service right over in this beautiful chapel with a church couple, Michael and Crystal Thompson. Michael and Crystal have been married for over 18 years and they were just going through their marriage. Michael tells me they have a Tempurpedic mattress. He says that she created her sink in the mattress, he created his sink in the mattress, and that there was literally this mountain right in between them. He says that one night he rolled over and he looked at it and he realized that same wedge was what had happened between them in their marriage.

He had been spending all his extra time tinkering and fine-tuning an automobile. He says he was out in the garage... He's telling this story in the vow renewal service and I'm just getting choked up listening to it. It was so impactful for me. He said, "It was like I was sitting there tinkering and fine-tuning when God spoke to my heart and said 'Why don't you start tinkering and fine tuning your marriage, Michael.'" It was amazing as he was standing there and watching his wife, Crystal, come out in her brides dress and she was crying and she was realizing that this man had made his marriage a priority. They have two kiddos and it's beginning to impact their kiddos lives. They are seeing how their dad loves their mom and how that's going to impact generations to come. It's not that we don't have time for date night. Either we don't see the value in it or it's just not that important to us, right?

So the other side of that... Because there are two people in here today. There are those that are married and then those that are unmarried. All my unmarried people are ready to get married and I would tell you to wait, just wait a second. There is a lot of value in waiting. Scripture tells us about this. Psalm 46: 10 – ***Be still and know that I am God.*** Some of you are so focused on trying to find the one rather than becoming the one Christ has called you to be.

The other part of that is... God even says to Moses... Moses is disarrayed and so perplexed as to how to get all those people out of there and he's grumbling and the Red Sea is in front of him and he doesn't realize what God is going to do. God just says, in Exodus 14: 14, ***Be still and know that God will fight for you.***

I know that's not in a marital context, but I still believe, singles, be still and know that God will fight for you. He is going to prepare a man or a woman, if you are patient, that will fight for you and will fight for your marriage.

In Isaiah 40: 31, it says ***Those who wait on the Lord will renew their strength. They will mount up like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not be faint.***

So we see this value in waiting, but in the culture we live in, that is so counter to everything that teaches us. We want it now, we want it instantly and we are going to talk about that by looking at three passages of scripture that are basically the same thing out of book of the Bible called Song of Songs; also known as Song of Solomon. Solomon wrote it. He was the wisest man to ever walk the earth. You might be wondering how he was wise since he had 700 wives and 300 concubines. That doesn't sound wise to me. I agree; it sounds like a whole lot of headache. But he was wise and perhaps he was wise because he learned from all of his mistakes.

In the Song of Songs, which is referred to as the greatest of songs, he writes this poetical book that talks about courtship, marriage, and then how you live post-marriage. He says this and it's the key verse. It's the only verse in Song of Songs that is used three different times. I'm not repeating the same verse; there are three different verses in the same poem.

Song of Songs 2:7 - ***I adjure you...*** I strongly implore you, I'm adamant about this. Listen to the wisdom I'm about to give you. ***O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the wild does: do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready.***

There are really two people to look at in this verse. For those who are not married, do not awaken or stir up love until it's ready. Don't drop the "L" bomb because trust me, the second the girl is born, she's already pinning her wedding dress on Pinterest. She is already planning her wedding. Fellas, you don't need to help her to awaken love by saying "How many kids do you want some day? What kind of dress are you going to wear? Where do you want to get married?" Single guys, you don't need to ask those types of questions.

Similarly, if you are married, you get to awaken; you get to stir up love because it's ready. You're in the right context; you're in the right covenant. So you don't stir it up before marriage; you get into marriage and now you get to start stirring it up. You get to start doing exciting things and honoring marriage the way God said to honor it. The problem is we have to understand that when we don't follow this, we realize that...

### **Instant gratification is the enemy of true intimacy.**

We live in a culture that is instantly gratifying everything. I have friends in Dallas that can order groceries on Amazon in the morning and the groceries will be at their front door that afternoon when they get off from work. None of you walks into Walmart and looks for the longest line possible to get in. No, we're going to do the self-checkout; we're going to go through the drive thru. We're not going to sit. We don't want to wait. We want to be instantly gratified.

But when it comes to marriage and pre-marrieds, this is destroying true intimacy. Here's the reality. Women, you are crockpots and fellas, you are microwaves. So do with this what you will, but I know if I take a pot roast, carrots, and celery and put it in the crockpot and let it simmer, when I walk in the

house at 5:00 in the afternoon and Stephanie has just had that sitting in the crockpot, I just start salivating and anticipating how good it's going to taste. This is verses throwing something in the microwave called a hot pocket. What do you want to eat? You want the delicious pot roast that's been simmering all day and cooked just right. Understanding that our wives are like crockpots, it would serve us greatly to not achieve our own instant gratification.

Look at Song of Song 3: 5. ***I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles or the wild does: do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready!*** Again, this is a different verse. He's just saying it a second time because it's pretty important for singles to know to guard hearts and protect hearts by the way you communicate, by the way you protect physical boundaries in dating relationships. But so married people can know they can stir it up, baby; have fun and enjoy it. Marriage is to be enjoyed; that's what Solomon is telling us. Yes, it's to be revered and yes, it's to be enjoyed and yes, it will sanctify us, but do not forget it was meant to be enjoyed. Ecclesiastes 9: 9 says ***Enjoy the wife of your youth whom you love.*** Enjoy marriage. And marriage is a lot more enjoyable, single people, when you don't awaken it before its time.

### **Instant gratification is the enemy to a healthy marriage.**

If a husband is only concerned with his sexual appetite or his pleasure or what he wants and his needs, that will be detrimental to a healthy marriage. That's because women aren't wired that way. Women are crockpots, which means they need to be heard, they need to have conversation.

"Hey, Sweetie, how was your day?" I just turned on the crockpot. "Hey, is there anything I can do? Can I sweep around the house? Can I help out in any way?" Now it's starting to bubble. This crockpot is starting to smell good. This verses "Hey, this is what I want and this is how it's going to be." She's not engaged. She can turn the microwave on, but she's not engaged. That's not healthy.

Not only that, but, young single people, your instant gratification, your unwillingness to wait for the time where God designed it within the right covenant and context will have effects on a healthy marriage. Think about that. How anticlimactic will your honeymoon be if you're willing to let instant gratification destroy your intimacy now? Think about that.

For a third time, in Song of Songs 8: 4, he says forget the does and the gazelles, ***I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, do not stir up or awaken love until it is ready!*** Girls, you protect your heart by not reading Nicholas Sparks' novels. You protect your heart by not watching his movies or Twilight or whatever else romanticizing fiction that is not helping your heart and guarding it. Guys, you don't help by allowing her heart to go there.

Husbands, stir it up all you want. Awaken it. You're married to her. What makes her heart tick? What turns that crockpot on? What gets to the depths in the inner chambers of your wife's heart? I'm telling you that it forever changes. They're growing and they are changing which means we have to continually be growing and changing.

## **Instant gratification cultivates compromise rather than waiting for God's best.**

How many times are we just like “ready, aim, fire” with what we want rather than waiting for God's best. I tell this to young guys that I mentor and disciple all the time. They want to go after potential rather than proven character. “Oh, but Adam, she's so hot!” I'm like “Bro, so is hell; I don't care!” You don't date potential, you date proven character and you wait for God's best. Sometimes I know it's not great waiting, but I promise you it is well worth it.

My wife and I do pre-marital counseling and post-marital counseling and so much of the stuff we have to work through is because of the instant gratification, sinful nature with people unwilling to wait for God's best. I can't encourage you young single people enough. Trust his timing. He's batting a thousand, his timing is always perfect and he has the best in store for you.

## **Dating cultivates delayed gratification.**

Now the flip side of that for dating couples and single people is that dating cultivates delayed gratification. So I can do one or two things. I can come home at night and start making demands, wanting all these things, or I can go on a date weekly with my wife, connect with her, ask her questions, and engage her heart. All of the sudden, I'm not looking to instantly gratify myself; I'm trying to delay what I probably want as a husband. I know I'm not the only husband in here that wants that. So I can delay that, engage my wife's heart and begin cultivating and brewing that crockpot. Dating your spouse cultivates delayed gratification.

Focus on the Family has done a lot of research on this. There are two things I want to point out today.

**1) Couples who are actively involved in the church are 46% less likely to get a divorce.** A key word here is *actively*. They are going to church, are plugged in, have background singers, and have community. They are not just showing up, checking off a box, and not being involved in a local church. There is value in being actively involved with a church, with pouring into the church, with allowing the church to pour into you, with allowing the church to help your marriage. Whether it be through DivorceCare or Marriage 911 or whatever other ministry that we have here at Woodland Hills that helps support your marriage.

**2) Ninety-two percent of married couples who make date night a priority have increased satisfaction in all areas of their relationship.** That all, fellas, all areas of their relationship: physical, spiritual, emotional, sexual.

Let me share some stories with you from #52IN15 that have allowed this statistic to ring true.

*To be perfectly honest, our marriage was on the rocks. In September of 2014, I had asked my husband for a separation. After 16 years of marriage, I no longer wanted to be married to him. From the outside, our marriage looked great, but it was dead on the inside to me. We had tried counseling already and it helped for about four years, but I wasn't willing to try it again. My husband, being a godly man, said*

*that he wasn't going to let Satan take our marriage and hurt our children. He was going to fight for our marriage. I will admit that he was the only one fighting for some time. I did agree to counseling.*

*When the contest #51IN15 came up, it was my suggestion that we really try hard at this. God knew exactly what he was doing. #52IN15 saved my marriage. We learned to love each other again, learned to pour into each other, and learned to love ourselves last.*

*I rediscovered the man that I married and I thank my heavenly Father and Woodland Hills for giving me that opportunity. There is not a day that goes by that I don't thank my heavenly Father for helping me get Satan out of my heart and give me the chance to fall in love with my husband again. I'm not saying our marriage is perfect. It is work, but we are committed to be with each other and we are committed to continue to date each other long after this contest is over. I've had so much fun planning these dates with different themes, finding the different outfits, being sneaky, planning things for him that are fun. I can't thank you enough, Woodland Hills, for making this happen.*

Not all of them are crazy testimonies that have literally pulled marriages from the depths, but some of them are beginning healthy routines. That's what #52IN15 was all about: the weekly date night. It was creating a rhythm, a theme. I pray that all these 28 couples that are eligible for a cruise have created a theme in their life that will carry over to the years to come because of the value of the weekly walk out.

*Our marriage was great before #52IN15, but I think our biggest struggle was we let our roles as Mom and Dad take priority over our roles as husband and wife. Sometimes we were just too tired to make the effort to plan something, find a sitter, and actually go out. Our two year old is too young to really get it, but our nine year old has even noticed how important these times alone are.*

*When we first started dating, our conversations over dinner mostly revolved around something to do with the kids. We weren't used to talking about anything else.*

All their conversations revolved around a child-centered home, but here you go.

*Now our conversations usually gravitate toward life goals and future adventures together.*

We're passionate about eradicating the child-centered home. Kids come into a home and you quickly forget your wife's heart because everything centers around the kids.

*Our marriage was fine, but it was easy to get distracted by all the things we have done with work and the house and we would forget to spend time with each other and to be honest, we didn't realize how important it was. When we first started, it was really difficult and sometimes inconvenient to try to squeeze in a date every week. Our schedules are so full. There were even times when we weren't looking forward to having to put any thought into it. It was just one more thing we had to do. But over time, it has become easier and something we look forward to each week. It's a lot of fun putting thought into how we are going to spend time together. We thought we were close before, but intentionally spending time together has brought us so much closer. We've even gotten to know each other better than we thought possible.*

You might think you know your spouse. You may have been married for 40 years. Imagine going on a weekly date night with them and seeing how much they've changed since the kids left home or whatever the case may be. There is value in a weekly date night and we don't just think so; the research says so as well. It's bringing health into your marriage.

I'm not telling you to go post it and be a part of some competition that Woodland Hills is doing. I'm telling you to go on a weekly date night because it's healthy for your marriage. It's producing results. It's connecting with your spouse. It's doing what God has called us to do and get into the chambers of her/his heart.

A four-letter acronym that I want to share with you guys that I've learned in research, and Ted has helped me, that really helps make an effective date night.

### **D – Disconnect**

Since we have singles and married people in here, I want to talk to both. For a married person to disconnect, it might simply look as easy as getting away, unplugging, not talking about the kids, not talking about work, but engaging one another's heart. That includes getting rid of social media. Because we've been part of the #52IN15 deal, you'll see all our pictures. Usually, when the plates are full and it's at the very beginning, the phones get put away and we don't touch them the rest of the night and we engage for the next hour to hour and a half. That's how we disconnect. That's how I'm engaging Stephanie's heart.

For singles, young adults, it might mean just putting the cell phone away and learning how to have a face-to-face conversation. For the young male who is 24 who can't wait for Madden 16 to come out, he might realize that it's maddening that he's acting like he's 16 and he needs to learn to engage a girlfriend and disconnect and learn to ask her questions.

A couple that has done this really well... All the #52In15 couples have learned the value of disconnecting. Check out this date night they all went on a couple of weeks ago. So all the #52IN15 couples got together and they dated and they disconnected and they were just sharing stories about what has happened in their marriage this year and just how God has blessed it. But they are disconnecting and connecting with community. Remember we are called to be actively involved in church, actively involved in community. They created this mega #52IN15 date to just encourage each other. They all realize it's not about the cruise. They all realize what it is about. You see what it's all about in this picture. You see life in these marriages. You see joy in these marriages. None of these marriages would tell you that they are perfect, but you just see what a date night, a weekly date night has done to marriage.

### **A – Ask Questions**

On a date, ask questions. Don't just tune out, guys, and go into your nothing box and listen to her tell another story. Similarly, be intentional with the questions you ask. Stephanie and I love asking great

questions. As a matter of fact, Ted wrote a book called *Fun Loving You*. All throughout the book, he has questions for you to ask your spouse. Singles, I definitely I wouldn't encourage you at all to read the questions in the last chapter, but if there is a married couple in here that feels like they've just hit a rut in their dating and they are dating, but it's just kind of blah because they're not asking great questions, I have gift for you today. That book has a list of great questions to ask your spouse. If you didn't get a book, Ted has a bunch of them for sale in the foyer when you leave.

The questions that the married couple is going to ask are radically different than the questions that the unmarried couple is going to ask. Young people, you don't need to ask how many kids she wants. That's like a level 10 conversation. You need to ask her what her favorite candy bar is. You don't need to ask her about all her past relationships or how far she's been physically. That's a level 10 conversation. You need to bring those questions down to a more... Do not awaken love... Back to Song of Solomon. You don't need to be asking about marriage. That's awakening love.

For marrieds, there is no limit to the questions you can ask. Get into the depths of her heart. Get as deep as you can. When you ask questions, fellas, you don't have to listen to the same story four times. When you ask questions, you don't have to worry about either not listening or hearing the same stories. That's why there's so much value in asking each other question; questions away from work, away from kiddos, question in matters of the heart. Get into your wife's heart. Get into your husband's heart. What makes them tick? What are they passionate about? What are their dreams? What do they want to do in five years? What are things they've never done? What are their bucket lists?

### **T – Thoughtfulness**

Be thoughtful. Single people... First of all, Dude, if your still living in your mom's basement and you invite a girl over to watch Netflix while your mom pops you popcorn, that's not thoughtful at all. Girl, that's a red flag. Get out and make that dude get a job; don't even give him the luxury of dating him. Can I get an amen? Fellas, be thoughtful.

When I was dating Stephanie, she was delayed gratification. She was really hard to pursue which was attractive. She understood that treasures don't do the hunting; they are hunted for and the greater the treasure, the harder it is to find.

She would not date me, so I tricked her. I was house sitting for Joe and Debbie Jo White and as I was housesitting for them and watching their dog, Dakota, that was just a pup at the time, I was putting a puzzle together on their table for an illustration. Joe has this piano that plays itself. It's almost like a ghost. It's this thing that plugs in, but there are no fingers and the keys are just going. So I put on this really beautiful music and I had this puzzle and I was grilling some steaks and I bought some twice-baked potatoes from Sun Fest. I was going to pawn them off like I made them.

She said, "I'm not going on a date" and I was like "No, I just really need you to help me with this puzzle."

She agreed to come in a help me with the puzzle for a little while. She walks into their house which overlooks the sunset of the Ozarks and it's gorgeous. She walks in and the piano is playing and she was about to walk right back out.

I said, "No, I really need help with this puzzle."

She said, "I'm not dating you."

I said, "But I need help with this puzzle."

She said, "I'll help you with the puzzle."

Eventually I go "You're going to get hungry." So then, we pulled out the steaks and we pulled out the twice-baked potatoes that were cold because I didn't read the directions well. I said "Okay, I confess, I didn't make these; they're store bought. I thought I was just supposed to heat them up." She was polite, but I knew they were disgusting.

I had to kind of back off my intensity a little bit and realize she was being dead serious. I needed to be thoughtful, but I didn't have to be intense. I didn't need to be level 10. So then we just started doing thoughtful dates, things that didn't require much money that were just thoughtful and they really began speaking to her heart.

As I was doing all these fun, thoughtful dates, one of them was an Italian theme dates. We went to an Italian restaurant. The Plaza up in Kansas City has a little Riverwalk and you can get on gondolas. So we took a little gondola. This was as dating progressed; this wasn't the first date. Then we got married and I was thinking *Man, I've been really thoughtful in my dating process with her. I don't want it to go downhill from here.* That's what we do. We try to dig and dig for the treasure and when we finally find the treasure, we're like okay it's good. That treasure still needs to be polished and taken care of and pampered a little bit. I began to think how I could keep being thoughtful in marriage.

Through this whole journey of #52IN15, our favorite dates have been thoughtful dates. Not necessarily lots of money, but that I knew she put a lot of thought into and vice versa, her favorite dates are the ones I put a lot of thought into. It's really easy to just rent a movie and hang out and that's okay once in a while, but how can you be thoughtful... Jesus always told us, even beyond marriage, to be thinking of others, to be thoughtful of your spouse, to be thoughtful in how your guarding her heart, to be thoughtful in how you navigating those emotional waters, to be thoughtful in how you can keep stirring her heart's affection for Jesus, to be thoughtful in how you can show that you thought about her throughout the day. Sometimes when I just leave a little Post-it note on the fridge that says "Love you, you're the best mom ever" that's thoughtful; that means a ton to her.

I was watching ESPN's 30 for 30. I love documentaries and ESPN 30 for 30 came out with a documentary last week. It was *The Gospel According to Mac*. It was the story of Coach Bill McCartney who founded and started Promise Keepers. There was a quote from him that just really challenged me and this is

what he said: *"You can tell the depth of a man's walk with God by looking at the countenance of his wife's face."* I woke up the next morning and tried to say something really sweet so that she would just blossom. "Hey, Sweetie, you look beautiful today."

She smiled and said "Thanks."

That was a great countenance. But what it really caused me to do is ask myself what her countenance is when I'm not trying to butter her up. I wouldn't ask any of you to do this right now because that would be awkward for you, but when you leave here today, look at the countenance of your wife's face. As a matter of fact, if you are dating someone, look at the countenance of your girlfriend because the reality is if she's chasing the Lord and you're not honoring her physically and you're not protecting boundaries, I guarantee you there is a distraught countenance in her face. She knows something's off and something is not right.

If you're not being thoughtful and you're not disconnecting and you're not continually pursuing your wife and you're not washing her in the word and you're not praying with her and for her, just look at her countenance. I challenged myself in this. When I heard the quote, I thought about my wife's countenance. When I look at her face, what kind of countenance does she have?

## **E – Experience**

Create experiences. You don't have to have lots of money. You don't have to be extravagant. We've learned that from Bachelor and Bachelorette. Just create experiences, great memories. When people are on their sick bed and about to die, they don't ask for all their materials. They don't ever ask for those things. All they want is their relationships and their memories and they hold on to lifelong memories.

So, marrieds, I would ask you, even in dating, what lifelong memories or experiences are you creating. For unmarrieds, I would say wait. Don't make the experiences too crazy. Sometimes you do experiences like you go and share Thanksgivings and Christmases with other families. Now when you guys break up, you're not just breaking up with that person, you're breaking up with the whole family. You create these experiences that are so extravagant and just so intense like sharing holidays together and vacations and just different things and then it's like your mom is dating the dude and it's just awkward.

Just be wise in your experiences. Create smart experiences, but save the great experiences for marriage. And keep creating those experiences. I'm not saying anything about money here. It doesn't take money to create new experiences. Steph and I created a lot of fun experiences this year that did not take a lot of money, but were just super intentional and thoughtful.

As matter of fact, Ted referred to this a couple of talks ago from an article he and I read from Fast Company. This article sited some research on the science of why you should spend your money on experiences, not things. The basic premise of the whole article is how experiences create lifelong memories. You're going to want the new iPhone and then you're going to want the next one in a year from now. The new car will get old. All these things will have no ground in your heart. But when you

create experiences with your spouse and you're 89 years old, writing them love letters, you're going to reflect on these deep memories you had with them that may or may not have cost very much money. I know there is a lot of research behind the fact that experiences are much greater than materials.

In loving your wife, I bet she doesn't care if you get her roses as much as she cares that you create an experience for her. I bet she doesn't care if you get her chocolates as much as you creating an experience for her. Ask her if I'm right after the service. She'd rather you be thoughtful and create an experience for her than give her some roses that are going to die in a week. That was a waste of money. But if it's thoughtful and it comes with a note, great; do that. I know they don't remember those flowers you got them two years ago, but they remember some of the experiences you've created for them.

Let me close with this story. You may or may not know that I grew up in a broken home. My parents got divorced when I was eight. It's one of the reasons I'm so passionate about marriage. From our deepest pains come our greatest passions. My dad has been married three times and my mom got remarried after they got divorced. She got married to a guy who didn't have a relationship with the Lord at the time and it was really rocky and tough. There was a lot of emotional abuse and a lot of fighting and a lot of hurt on both sides. There wasn't one person to blame over the other. They were both not living in a healthy marriage and they were both being dishonest and they were both being unfaithful and it just wasn't healthy.

About seven years ago, they were at wits' end and ready to get a divorce again. So they moved to Virginia Beach. There, he is laid off and they are evicted from their house. She calls me crying and says, "We have nowhere to go."

Well I would come down to Branson and work all summer long. I have for the last 14 years. I said, "Here's the deal, Mom. We have our house in Kansas City and no one is in it all summer. You can go stay in my house, rent free, utility free for three and a half months to get your feet back on the ground and figure something out. But there is one condition. You have to go to our church every week. I'll know if you're there because all my friends are there. I'm going to introduce you to them. I'll know if you are actively involved and if you're not, you have to move out."

She agreed. They started going to church every week. They hear the gospel. They get plugged into a home church. All of the sudden, everything in their lives starts to change. It's not perfect; they have a lot of stuff to work through, but they are in authentic community; they're actively involved in the church. They start dating each other again.

This was seven years ago. Two years ago, my mom called me and asked me to baptize her. They moved back out to Utah from Kansas City because my stepdad's mom was sick. My stepdad is serving in a ministry in the prisons out there in Utah. Their marriage is healthy. They just celebrated 27 years of marriage. They posted a picture. I can't explain to you the amount of joy that was on their face. Why? They got actively involved in a church and they started dating each other again.

Don't think your marriage is beyond hope. I said this three weeks ago when I finished the *Trip Around the Sun* series. John 10:10... The thief comes to steal your marriage, kill your marriage, and destroy your

marriage, but I (Jesus) came that you may have life and live it to the full, live it abundantly, that your marriage would be lived to the full, that your marriage would be abundant, that it would produce fruit, that it would cultivate gratitude in your heart.

I told my mom she was allowing the enemy to kill, steal, and destroy. I said, "Listen to me mom. Jesus came and died on that cross and was buried and was resurrected and ascended into heaven and is sitting at the right hand of the throne of God so that you would experience the fullness and abundance in your marriage. That's why he came, mom." I could tell she was crying. We hung up and it hasn't been the same since. She hasn't allowed Jesus outside of her marriage since and they are experiencing a full and abundant marriage. It was nothing that I did. It was understanding the need to disconnect, ask questions, be thoughtful, and focus on experiences, the fullness that Jesus promised us through him.

Father God, we thank you so much for a pastor that leads from the front on the importance of marriage and prioritizing marriage. God, we don't just pray for Woodland Hill, we pray for this entire nation of ours. Marriage is in the crosshairs, Lord. We just pray for that covenant, that commitment. For any marriages in here that are struggling or hurting, God, we pray for reconciliation, we pray for you to do a work that only you can do.

Thank you for date night. Thank you for showing us how date night could literally save our marriages through you. We love you. It's in the matchless, mighty, holy and high name of Jesus we pray and all God's people said... Amen.