



Twolgnite

I'm Sorry – The Two Most Healing Words in a Marriage

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For those of you who have never stepped foot into Woodland Hills or you're joining us online, welcome; we're so glad you're here. What in the world is Twolgnite? Ted Cunningham, Shay, myself, and the rest of the elders are very passionate about prioritizing marriage, eradicating a child-centered home. It's breathing life into marriages, as everything from there will trickle down into healthy marriages, and equipping families to be fully devoted followers of Jesus Christ. Every second Sunday of the month, we hit pause and we want to invest and pour into marriages. Most of the time, those messages will be focused on marriage. I know that you can quickly go to "Well, I'm not married; I don't want to come to Twolgnite." If you ever want to be married or pour into the life of your children for a healthy marriage, come receive what Twolgnite has to offer.

In 2015, we launched this campaign or this idea to get couples to date more. The idea was #52IN15. Through Woodland Hills in 2015, that we recorded... We're finding out there are a lot more that we didn't record because people just didn't post them online. We went on 3,267 dates right here at Woodland Hills.

Katie and I always go through my notes and everything when I first get here. She handed me a card that I got from a couple. I didn't do anything. God is just using this church to pour life in marriage and this note says, "#52IN15 and pointing us back to Jesus changed our marriage. Dating my spouse changed my marriage."

You guys want me to stop talking. You guys want to find out who won the cruise. So do I. So if you sleep in and you go to the second service, you completely lost out today. We can't redo this. So here's a clear bucket and in it, we have the Estradas, the Wangs, the Piats, the Larimores, and the Vermillions. They're all going into the bucket. I told Katie in a staff meeting this week that I do not want to be the one drawing. Carolyn Hill is going to do the honors. She's like the sweetest most honest, trustworthy person we know. She's going to close her eyes. The winners of the #52IN15 cruise are the Wangs. They win a \$2,500.00 cruise voucher. They have been through Hades and back with their six month old that just hates sleep. Don't worry; the other four didn't get left out. The other four couples are getting a two-night stay at the Chateau on the Lake and two complimentary dinners for both nights.

I posted something prematurely on my social media for 2016. We are doing something really exciting for 2016, kind of a bucket list idea with next Twolgnite. So, in February, you do not want to miss this Twolgnite. Ted has coupled with several other churches around the nation and because Twolgnite literally falls on Valentine's Day, it's going to be really special. They are going to launch the idea we have

for 2016 and what we are going to do to continually encourage and eradicate child-centered homes.

On to the Twoignite message. I've been wrestling with this and thinking about this. Any time I do a Twoignite message, my passion, my hope, my prayer is that it could also relate to people that aren't married, maybe even people who have gone through a divorce, maybe people that have been through hurtful relationships. I believe that today is that message.

The title of this Twoignite message would simply be *The Two Most Healing Words in a Marriage*. From 2007 until 2010, I had the unbelievable opportunity of traveling almost every weekend with Ted Cunningham and Joe White. Joe White had initiated this ministry called Men and the Cross, which was these men's events that we were doing all over the nation. I was living in Kansas City at the time. I would hop on a plane, go do an event with them on Saturday, and be back by Sunday.

While I was doing this, I was nearing my 30s, so this was about eight years ago. I was getting to interact with a lot of different men at all these different conferences. Some of them were ministry leaders. Some of them were bestselling authors. Some of them were in their 80s and 90s and had just lived life with Jesus well. Some of them were literally on the Forbes 300 list. Some of them were Division 1 football coaches. Some of them were Division 1 basketball coaches. I asked them a question as I was nearing my 30s. I asked them "What are three things you know now that you wish you knew when you were 30?"

For three years, I'm just doing this research and compiling all these pieces of wisdom that I received. Proverbs 26: 11 says ***As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly.*** But what if I could avoid the vomit altogether? What if I could receive wisdom from these older and wiser men and women who have gone before me and avoid it altogether? So I started compiling these notes. I probably had about 300 things. Then I started to think about what pieces of advice were biblical and what pieces weren't biblical. I condensed them down to 15 nuggets that I felt I wanted to post by my office. These top 15 sit in my office for me to see every day.

On this list of fifteen, there was one that stuck out to me. It says, "The two words I'm sorry, have great healing power when spoken from a repentant heart." Not only are they the most healing words in a marriage, but they are also the two most healing words in any relationship.

Why is it so hard for me to say I'm sorry? Why do I struggle with it? It's because whenever you say "I'm sorry," you're admitting you were wrong. You're admitting that you were in the wrong and that it had something to do with you.

In 1970, a movie came out. This movie was Love Story. I was too young to see it. Has anybody in here seen Love Story? The tag line of Love Story was "Love means never having to say you're sorry." That's not true. As a matter of fact, it's the exact opposite. My wife and I do premarital counseling all the time and we quickly do the math for them. Watch this. One sinner plus one sinner equals more sin, not less sin. So, if you take one sinner and one sinner in marriage or any relationship, you're only going to get more sin. That means the need to say "'I'm sorry'" is inevitable. Like I said, saying "I'm sorry," when spoken from a repentant heart, has great healing power.

There are four reasons why saying “I’m sorry” creates a healthy marriage/relationships, even though it’s hard for us to say. We like to hold onto that control. We like to be right. We don’t want to be wrong.

1. You acknowledge that you're behavior, attitude, and decisions impact those around you.

Regardless of how introverted you may be or want to be, decisions you make, the attitude you have, the behavior you have directly impacts your family, friends, roommates, whoever... It impacts those around you.

2. You acknowledge your pride and walk in humility as you prove you don’t always have to be right.

Instantly, when you come with a repentant heart to someone and say, “I’m sorry,” you acknowledge your pride and realize you don’t always have to be right. I realized this last week that I had offended someone all the way back in July when I was working at K2. I had an interaction while I was K2. I had no idea I offended this person. Then I just kind of dug a little deeper and asked a friend a question. I asked this person if they had any conversation with this individual and he told me that he was pretty hurt. I had no idea.

Instantly, I got a hold of this individual... Not instantly. I prayed for a second, “God, show me my sin. Is there something I’m not acknowledging, is there something I’m missing?” I got a hold of this individual and said, “I didn’t know I offended you. I’m sorry if I offended you, if I hurt you in any way. I would love to connect with you next week and take you out to lunch, face to face, to just let you know I’m sorry.”

Here’s the problem. Any time there is an apology, there’s someone on the receiving end of that apology who is usually the one sitting in bitterness. We will get to in just a second.

If you know there is an opportunity for your to apologize, that’s on you. Joe told me through Gary Smalley that when you come to an apology, even if the other person on the other end of the apology is 99.9% to blame, why can’t you take 100% responsibility for the .1%?

3. It shows others you recognize your need for Jesus.

It shows others you need Jesus. I’m willing to bet that standing up here at one point in my teaching team career, I’ve offended some of you often. It’s not my intention, but I need Jesus. I probably said something that wasn’t politically correct. I probably said something that might have rubbed you the wrong way. That’s not my intention and I’m sorry. I’m genuinely sorry. But I’m telling you I need Jesus just as much as every one of you sitting out there.

I’m willing to bet that Ted has offended some of you once or twice. But I know Ted and I know he loves you and he genuinely cares about you and if he knows he has offended you, I know his character and he is going to apologize. Even if he sometimes thinks he’s in the right, he is going to apologize. That’s what I love about that man.

4. It builds trust.

This is so important especially in a marriage. To say “I’m sorry” with a repentant heart builds trust. It builds trust with my wife when I say “I’m sorry” because I’m constantly recognizing to her that I know when I blow it and I want her to know I’m not hiding things from her, I’m not trying to win her over or control things. It builds trust and as we know, in all relationships, marital or pre-marital, trust is everything. Relationships can’t be built without trust.

Those are the four reasons why I think it’s pertinent we learn to say “I’m sorry.” I’m just curious. Maybe I’m speaking to a wall, but how many of you in here this morning would say there is somebody you could probably say you’re sorry to? That’s not a surprise. I’m telling you right now that I need to have lunch with somebody this week because I need to say “I’m sorry” to that person.

There’s the person who needs to say “I’m sorry” and then there is the person who needs to receive the apology. Then they need to decide what they do with the apology. So my responsibility this week is to take this older man out to lunch, tell him I’m sorry that I offended him, and then once I do that, I can’t do much more. I can communicate with a genuine heart that I’m sorry that this happened and then once that happens, then it’s on him to how he receives it.

If you have your Bibles... If not, it’s going to be up on the screen. We’re going to look at Ephesians 4: 29-32. Before we do that, I have to tell you this crazy story that just happened last week in the Donyes home. My wife and I literally live in a log cabin in the woods. If you know anything about a log cabin in the woods, you know that towards wintertime, everything that lives outside thinks it’s time to live inside.

I’m doing my husbandly duty, putting Aiden down. We do our prayer time and our scripture memorization and read a little bit and hang out. I’m back there doing my thing and I hear my wife in the living room, “Adam! Adam! Adam!” Unwholesome talk is beginning to come in my mind. It may not be coming out of my mouth, because I’m with a three year old. I’m trying to put our child who doesn’t sleep very well, who hates to sleep... I’ve almost got him to sleep and now he’s hearing her yell my name, what in world can this young lady be yelling about? There is a frantic “Adam” in her voice.

I go out there and my wife is frozen on the couch. She’s kind of trying to point with her eyes. I come around the corner and this flying squirrel is sprawled in between the couch and the refrigerator, just starring at my wife, frozen. Flying squirrels are nocturnal animals in case you didn’t know. I have no idea how he got in the house and still don’t. He’s just looking at my wife and I then I turn the corner and now he’s looking at her and looking at me, darting his eyes back and forth. So I, quickly, on my feet, while unwholesome talk is still coming out of my mind... I thought she was overreacting. I thought it was a mouse and I’ll tell that story later, but... I was wondering why she was screaming like that;’ it was just a stupid mouse. Then when I saw it was a squirrel, I immediately repented the unwholesome talk that was coming out of my brain.

I opened the door, grabbed a broom and just kind of came behind him. If I mess with him, I envision he’s going to spread his flying squirrel flap and come right across my wife’s face, so I have to be really

strategic about this because I don't know if those things have rabies or what's going on. So I kind of nudged him and he kind of made a beeline to underneath our stairs. I needed him to go outside. Then I get a broom and kind of nudge him and he's about to go underneath the couch on which my wife is sitting. Please Lord Jesus, don't do that. Then he stops right before he's about to go under the couch, looks back and me and then just darks out the door. I was like "Oh praise Jesus, the squirrel is gone."

The crazy thing in that moment... Was her response overreacting? I don't know; it's a squirrel. Granted, they are supposed to be outside and not inside, but honestly, I had a lot of unwholesome talk coming out of my heart. It may not have come out of mouth, but I was frustrated.

Ephesians 4: 29, says ***29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up...*** Have you ever thought about how long it takes to erect something, to build something? We all know how quick something can come down. We saw our roller coaster all across Buzz Feed, right? Something can be torn down in a hurry, but to build something up, to build a spouse up, to build a person up, it takes days and days and days. A building isn't erected overnight. There is a foundation. There is the outline, the structure, the roofing, the drywall. There is a lot to do to build something up. Similarly, Paul says ...according ***to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.***

Maybe you don't cuss at your spouse or your roommate. Maybe you just think in your head. Maybe you don't verbalize it, but do your words give grace? Does the way you speak about others give grace?

Do you know what's crazy about who is writing this? His name is Paul and he's writing to the saints at Ephesus. It's funny... you think I'm going to give a marriage talk and I'm going to grab a passage from Ephesians and address it. You think I'm going to Ephesians 5, but I'm actually in Ephesians 4 and I think this applies to marriage more than anything. If anybody understands needing grace and forgiveness, it's Paul. He used to persecute the Christians, kill the Christians. After his road to Damascus, he eventually has an encounter with Jesus. He has to go back and apologize to Peter. "Hey Peter, I know I've bashed your name pretty badly and I drug you guys through the mud and tried to kill you." Paul experienced both the need to apologize and be the recipient of forgiveness. So, if anybody has credibility to speak on this topic, I would say it was Paul.

The question I have for you, Woodland Hills, and for myself is" "When I communicate to my spouse and I communicate to others, do I speak in such a way as to redeem or to tear down? Do I speak redemptively? Do I give grace to the hearer or do I speak in a way that I'm trying to tear them down?" He gets further into why this is important.

If we know our spouse is not perfect, why is it so hard to give them grace when they prove us right?

You've heard me say this before. How many of you in here think that your spouse is perfect? No one thinks their spouse is perfect. I hope not or you're in for a rude awakening. If we all understand that, why are we so slow to speak with grace and give them grace when they prove us right? I think about that all the time. If I know that Stephanie, even though she's beautiful, amazing, sweet, and tenderhearted, is not perfect, why I am not quick to give her grace when she proves me right? That's really what Paul is getting at.

30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. For those of you that are believers, when you became a believer in Jesus Christ, you received the Holy Spirit for a reason. He gave it to you to teach you, rebuke you, correct you, and guide you. John 14: 26 and John 14: 16... "I'm going to give you the Holy Spirit and he's going to guide you and direct you. He lives inside you."

There are two things I want to mention here. One, if you have the Holy Spirit living inside you because you are a believer in Jesus Christ, he's there to guide your speech as well as your actions. If you're not a believer in Jesus Christ... Why would I ever expect someone who is not a Christian to act like a Christian? I still love you to death, but... I'm blown away by the amount of times we expect someone who is not a Christian to act like a Christian. Why would you expect any different from someone who doesn't have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? He doesn't have the Spirit guiding him.

If you married someone who was a non-believer, you pray for them as 1 Peter 3 suggests. You pray that God would enlighten the eyes of their heart, that they would come to the growing knowledge of who Jesus Christ is and what he did for them. You pray that they would come to know him and as a process, the Spirit would come to live inside them, and you would see their relationship have a transformational change. God didn't just give us the Holy Spirit because it's cool. He gave us the Holy Spirit because... One of the reasons God gave us the Holy Spirit is to think before we speak. That's unlike Peter. Peter was often known as the apostle with his foot in his mouth. Not that there are any of you in here that have that problem. ...

My wife and I know it's not wise to have serious conversations after 9:00 at night. It's just not a good idea. We just know that. It's not very wholesome and not very grace-filled and not very spirit processing. God gave us the Holy Spirit so that we would think before we speak. If you are in a tense conversation with your spouse, how often do you stop and say, "Lord, give me grace. Help me speak with grace"? How often are you in a conflict with your roommate or somebody you're dating or with your kids and their dad, because you're divorced, is somewhere else...? There's a conflict and it's heated and you want to throw their dad under the bus because he left or he abandoned or the mom or whatever the case may be... How are you going to honor the kids' father in front of them? "Lord, give me grace. Spirit, take over my tongue and take over my heart. I don't want to say something right now that would give grace to this individual, but help me to speak redemptively." That's why he gave us the Spirit and that's what Paul is saying when he says, "Do not grieve the spirit. Don't ignore the Spirit that God gave you so that we would learn to speak redemptively."

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. I was thinking about the phrase "get rid of." Some of us are really good at sweeping things under the rug. I have conflict. Some of you are people pleasers and you hate conflict. You start getting hot flashes when conflict needs to be resolved so you just sweep it under the rug. You'd rather not deal with it. But the scripture is pretty clear. It says to get rid of it.

Remember, I live in a log cabin in the woods, so I have another story for you. About three weeks ago, I'm brushing my teeth and getting ready for work. My wife has my one and a half year old in his high

chair eating and my three year old at the barstool high chair eating. She's preparing cinnamon toast for my one and a half year old. She just pops it in the toaster.

I've learned, after eight years of marriage, to identify my wife's different screams. There's the scream like somebody just jumped out and scared her, which is different than a scream if she sees a spider or a snake or a critter. This morning, as I'm brushing my teeth, I hear a scream I've never heard before in my life. It was kind of a combination of the critter scream and the somebody jumping out and scaring her scream. It was such a scream that my heart dropped.

I looked over the loft and looked down. Both my wife and three year old are standing on the couch, kind of dancing with their feet, freaking out. I come downstairs and my wife is almost hyperventilating. She can't even speak to me. I look over at my one and a half year old who is in his highchair, eating his breakfast. With diapers, if you soil them, they have the blue stripe. He had the blue stripe going. He's looking at his mom like "What is going on right now."

My wife finally calms down and she says, "There's a mouse."

I'm thinking *You've got to be kidding. She's acting this way because of a mouse?*

She said, "No! I cooked him."

I was like "Wait a minute. Stephanie, why would you cook a mouse?"

She said, "I put Anders' toast in the toaster and toasting it. When I thought it was about time to be done, I went to reach for it and a mouse jumped out of the toaster and landed on the counter."

About that time, I started smelling the burnt fur. About that time, my three year old goes "My tummy hurts."

The mouse is on the counter between our utensils and the wall. We get rid of the mouse, I look in the toaster and I see mouse fur. It was in there eating all the little crumbs. I put the toaster over the trash, dump it out, and get ready to put it back into our cupboard... the penny pincher that I am.

My wife, without hesitation, says "OH, NO! Get rid of that toaster and go buy me a new one today."

Needless to say, later that afternoon I was at Target.

I thought for a second, as I was preparing for this message, what happened to that toaster. I took it out to the trash, then it when into a bigger dumpster, a dump truck came a grabbed it, dumped it, compacted it, took it to the dump where it was probably incinerated, gone, demolished, gone. I got rid of that toaster per my wife's wishes, right? I knew that thing needed to be long gone.

Paul is saying the same thing. Get rid of it. Don't try to shake it out and put it back underneath the cupboard. That's not going to go well for you. He's saying get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, and brawling, and slander, along with every form of malice.

32 Be kind and compassionate... I'm kind of a coach so I don't do really well with compassion. He's saying be kind and compassionate ***...to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.***

When I think about the power of bitterness and what it does to us, I'm reminded of this movie of *Invictus*. I don't know if you've ever seen this movie, but it's the true story of a rugby team and Nelson Mandela who is in prison. Rather than being bitter and angry towards a country that imprisoned him... And what he had to do to overcome, to eventually become the South African President, and the forgiveness he walks through... It's unreal.

[Video plays] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHqi6ZB_FOU

It's wise for me to constantly do an inventory of my own soul. Are there other people in my life that I need to forgive? I need to forgive my wife; it's just expectations, little things. But are there other people outside of my marriage that I need to forgive.

John Ortberg, Jr. said it best. He said, *"Bitterness is like drinking rat poison and waiting for the rat to die."*

At the very beginning of this message, there's "I'm sorry." That is the sender. Then the recipient is usually the one that is bitter. A lot of times, the reason we want to hold onto that bitterness whatever it may be – a dad that abandoned us, a divorce, a child... The reason we love to hold onto that bitterness is because it gives us this false sense of control. "I don't want to let go of this because I'm in control of this." I see it on your face. You don't look happy. You look like something is weighing you down and you're just living in bitterness. I've seen people like this throughout my life. That can't be fun.

Jesus wants you to be free. He wants you to walk free of that bitterness. He wants you to walk free of that anger. Why are you walking around angry all the time? That's where Ephesians 4: 32 makes sense. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger and then be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other. Did we deserve Jesus' forgiveness? Absolutely not. We didn't deserve it. Does the person you're bitter towards deserve your forgiveness? Does your spouse always deserve your forgiveness? Probably not. But it doesn't matter because we didn't deserve his forgiveness either. Just as in Christ God forgave you of your deepest, darkest, nastiest, filthiest, thing that you ever did... It's is gone, washed away clean on the cross.

I was driving with Sutton and I said, "This message for me is easy to give, but really hard to receive."

As I asked you guys how many people need to apologize, almost every hand went up. It's really easy to receive a message and say, "Okay that was convicting for about 10 minutes. I'm going to forget about it and move on because I don't want to deal with it."

I'm telling you it liberates the soul. I carried bitterness for a long time; from the time I was about 12 years old until I was 23 years old. I promised myself I would never go back there. I never felt freer or lighter in my life.

This is what you need to know about forgiveness. Forgiveness is unlocking the door to set someone free and realizing you were the prisoner.

I want to show one more video that I think unpacks the idea of forgiveness, the fact that you and I have been forgiven, and what that means. And then I'll respond with examining your heart afterwards.

Video: Our default position as strugglers is to believe God's disappointed and frustrated, that he simply is tolerating us. The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1 says no, no, no... Before the foundation of the earth was laid, he was going to adopt you, make you holy and blameless in his sight. So whether difficult days or good days, God is at work. God has not abandoned you in this difficult season. How amazing does that make our God, that in our hypocrisy, he is long-suffering with us? In our inability to live out all that he would call us to, he continues to lavish upon us his grace. In him, we have redemption, through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight.

So I love this word lavish, extravagant, plentiful, over the top. And so now, when the Bible's talking about forgiveness, it's saying that his grace in forgiveness is lavished like it's too much, like it's ridiculous, it's a ridiculous amount. It's over the top. It's out of control. Man and woman of God, in Christ but struggling, God does not regret saving you. He doesn't regret it. You haven't surprised him. You cannot surprise him. God is not watching where you are now, watching how you struggled this week, watching how you stumble and fall, and regretting the decision to pay the price for you in full. You have no sin, past, present, and future that has more power than the cross of Jesus Christ.

This means that your salvation wasn't just a past event alone, but that Christ, even now, is continuing to save you. He didn't forgive your past sins and now leaving it up to you to conquer present and future sins, which means it doesn't matter how you came in here. It means God can rescue, it means God can save, and it means for those of us who are in Christ, you do not disgust him.

"You don't know what I struggle with and how deplorable it is." I know that Jesus would say that he paid the bill in full so what you're saying is nonsense. That is the grace with which he lavished on us in his forgiveness.

I thought about how beautiful it would be if that would be the same grace you lavish upon others in your forgiveness. God can rescue and God can also heal. As Ted alluded to last week when he talked about people going to different services just so they can avoid people that go to certain other services or changing churches... God can heal that and be glorified in that. I know it's not easy. Trust me. Twelve years of bitterness... Trust me. But God can rescue and God can heal. And if you're not in Christ, he can heal you.