



Twoignite
Part 2 – Honor Marriage Sunday
Pastor Ted Cunningham

We're glad that you're here for this big day. It's Valentine's Day. Happy Valentine's Day. This is *Honor Marriage Sunday*. Focus on the Family has been putting a lot of energy into this day. There are thousands of churches participating. I've heard from churches saying thank you to Woodland Hills for our part in it and providing content. I've heard from Minnesota down to Texas and from California to North Carolina. So, we want to welcome all of them who might be watching this later as we talk about what it means to honor the marriages all around you. Whether you're single or married, young or old, this message is for everyone. Hopefully, we're going to send you out of here today prepared to bless and speak blessing over every marriage around you and to be a marriage advocate.

I want to start with this because it's just changed my life this week. A friend of mine, who used to be a Branson entertainer and is now in California, sent me this picture from Burbank, California. It's become my new ministry mission statement. It says this: *Don't get a divorce; get a donut*. This has changed my life. Think about this for just a second. In 20 years of marriage, Amy and I have never fought while eating a donut. Raise your hand if that's true of your marriage as well. We may be on to something here, folks. I stopped by today and I got Valentine's Krispy Kreme. For a dozen... Somebody has gotten into these. Look at that; there's nine of them. This band... This is a snacky band; they are always getting their hands on stuff.

You say "Ted, we're committed to each other. We're married; we love each other, but this week... It's not been the greatest. We've been fighting a little bit and over some petty stuff and before our church family, I have no problem admitting that today if you give me those nine donuts." Don't make up a fight just because you want nine donuts. I just want to see if the healing power of donuts really does work this morning. Can I get an amen and a Krispy Kreme. That's what we should be saying. You raised your hand a little bit so I'm going to go ahead and pass it down. If you eat all of these by the end of the service, I promise you that your marriage will be thriving.

I shared this picture this weekend and a divorce attorney came up to me afterwards. He said, "I know you did a whole bit off of that, but I have to tell you something." Now this is a pro-marriage divorce attorney. He said, "I spend \$1,500.00 a pop on radio ads promoting marriage because I want people to stay married, not get divorced. My goal as a divorce attorney is to get you to reconcile, not go through with the divorce." He asked me if he could use this.

I said "Well, you can't copy write a thought and it's not my thought, so take it, use it, make an ad."

He said, "When we do couples mediation, I always make sure there is a box of donuts on the conference table between the couple because I can't explain it, but it does calm people down." We can't overlook this value right here.

My Grandma Mary Jane passed away two years ago at the age of 90. She gave me my love for donuts. I've told you this before, but she was a good size woman. In her 70's, she was in the doctor's office and she sat down next to the doctor who was filling out the chart. On her chart, she watched him write down the word "obese." That ticked my grandma off. She made the doctor cross off the word "obese" and write the words "little chubby." I saw it again this week and I thought to myself *My grandma was a little chubby, but she had a great marriage.* Her marriage ran on Dunkin and this is true. Let me explain to you why. She was the one that would take us to get Dunkin Donuts and open up on the middle of the table... Let's move on. I could spend a lot of time on this, but this is a whole message in itself.

Here's what today is all about. We believe here that **every follower of Jesus is called to esteem marriage as highly valuable.** Whether you are single or married, young or old, still in your parents' home or out of your parent's home, it just doesn't matter. All of you know a married couple. All of you have marriages in your family. All of you know a marriage that could use encouragement. All of you know a marriage that is doing well to where you should just say, "Hey, great job." We all have marriages that we can esteem as highly valuable.

Here is the primary text for this morning that we are sharing all across the country. **Marriage should be honored – esteemed as highly valuable – by all and the marriage bed kept pure.** I love the word "honor." The word "honor" has so many different meanings as well as so many different uses. Let's look at some of them.

It can be part of your reputation. A man of honor. He's a man of his word. We know from scripture that a good name is better than fine perfume. So, honor can refer to your name. It's also something we use when we are giving recognition. If you've ever been to a banquet or maybe an anniversary party, you'll hear them say, "Tonight, we are here to *honor* Mr. and Mrs...." We're here tonight to esteem as highly valuable this couple.

It's also privilege. If you go visit someone in their home for dinner and the dinner is over and you had a lovely time with them, you'll back away from the table, head towards the door and say things like "It was an honor for us to be here with you tonight. Thank you." It's a way we give thanks. It's also one's word. I give you my word. "On my *honor*..." I will stake my name on the commitment that I'm making to you right now." We understand *honor* that way.

Golfers will get this next one. It's also a social courtesy. When you win the last hole, you get honors on the next hole. You get to go first. We teach our kids this when we have guests over and when we have the grandparents over and there's a buffet set up. How many of you your kids want to run to the front of the line. No, grandma and grandpa get the honors. They get to go first.

Where I want to focus for just a moment is on this idea of the military honors. If you've ever seen an Honor Guard... I'm sure you have at a funeral. I want to give you how the military describes it because I

don't want to try to summarize it or paraphrase it. Here's how they would describe it: *An Honor Guard is a ceremonial unit composed of persons who are highly motivated and maintain exceptionally high standards of appearance and conduct. A primary role for Honor Guard in the United States is to provide funeral honors for fallen comrades and to guard national monuments. An Honor Guard may also serve as the guardians of colors by displaying and escorting the national flag on ceremonial occasions at official state functions.*

A couple of years ago, my family and I, with friends, for the very first time in my life... At the age of 40, I was able to go to Arlington National Cemetery. I had never been there. I had studied it and heard about it and had been to Washington D.C. a bunch, but had never taken the journey over there. I can't explain it, but there were probably thousands of people there that day, walking on these 20 feet wide paths or roads through the cemetery. We were walking through and it was quiet. It's not really a social environment; it's somber. You really understand where you are and what's going on.

I was walking with my kids and we're walking with family friends and this is the first thing we see and then everything stops. They are treating the fallen men and women who have served our nation with such respect. Something comes over you. It's an experience like you've never had. And I've been to plenty of military funerals. They are just taking such care, being so careful, and being so honoring of the ones who have sacrificed so much.

Then we had to make the journey up the hill to The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. I have to be honest with you. I didn't even feel comfortable taking these pictures. I know everybody was taking pictures and there were video cameras and there were hundreds and hundreds of people gathered around this viewing area to watch the walking back and forth with excellence and precision and care during the Changing of the Guard and multiple wreath layings.

I told Amy that, to me, this is what it should feel like for us standing guard over the marriages among our family and friends. We maintain high standards for what we believe about marriage and we shouldn't be lazy with it. We should be on it, watching and standing guard. This is what it means to me and I submit to you that we begin honoring marriage with such excellence and passion and care, saying this is important. This marriage matters not only to me, but this marriage matters to God.

We have another expression we use around her and it fits more with the Branson theme. We believe **every marriage is a duet in need of great backup singers**. We believe a couple on stage singing... This is what we get from the Song of Solomon. Solomon and the Shulamite woman are going back and forth, singing these lyrics. They are creating this duet, this young, budding love that's coming out in them. I view my role with every couple in my life as a backup singer, called to bring harmony to this duet, not take it off key, not bring discord to it, but to come in and say what the daughters of Jerusalem, the backup singers in the Song of Solomon, said to Solomon and the Shulamite woman's duet.

In Song of Solomon 1, here's what the backup singers said to them: ***We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine*** (sparkling cider). That just puts all the Baptists at ease in here. We want to keep this all clean. This is what a good backup singer does. A good backup singer, as they are standing guard over the marriages in their family and among their friends, spots them and they say,

“I’m going rejoice, I’m going to celebrate what I see God doing in you. I’m going to delight in this. I’m actually going to enjoy your marriage. I’m going to enjoy being around you.”

You know the couples you are around that you can enjoy and the couples where you’re thinking *that was rough*. At that moment, when I’m around that couple, I begin praising. I actually want to speak blessing over them. That’s where we are at today. We want to share with you a gift that you can re-gift this week. I want to share with you the gift and then I want to give you five different couples to think through. You don’t have to rush out and give it today on Valentine’s Day, because you’re going to want to go to lunch, take a nap, and do your own Valentine’s thing, but sometime this week, bless a couple. We will look at five different couples that you can bless. T

The inspiration comes from... you’ve probably seen this online. I don’t know if you know this, but all of your internet searches are being tracked. Do you know that? You should, because Mark Zuckerberg is the Director of the FBI. You don’t know that, but the FBI and the CIA follow everything you do, report it to Facebook, and then they take all this information about who you are and they target you with ads. Raise your hand if you know what I’m talking about. Raise your hand if you have no idea what I’m talking about. Well, now you’re informed; you have to be more careful. It’s amazing some of the ads that pop up and your like *That hits me because they know me? They know where I am this very moment and they are targeting me.*

I’m 42 and I’m a man so that adds to it. I tell Amy all the time I never get any Facebook ads for health related products. I never get ads for exercise equipment popping up on my Facebook. But let me tell you the number one ad I get and maybe you guys get it too. It’s this thing called Trunk Club. Has anybody seen it? Let me explain Trunk Club to you. It’s a great idea. Men hate shopping for clothes. We can’t stand it. Dressing rooms in stores are like purgatory. We don’t ever know when we are getting out and which direction we are going... We hate it. This is why I kind of laugh at the teaching team at our church. Have you ever noticed that they all kind of wear the same thing? It’s because we get tired of wearing new things. So, we wear the same thing over and over again.

Trunk Club is kind of the solution to that. They know your size. You get a stylist. Every month, they send you this box and in this box... I’m not making any of this up. You get underwear, socks, shoes, belt, shirt, sweater, tie... You get everything in this box. When I saw that, I thought I had to do it. Then I found out how much they charge for that. Do you know how much they charge for that box on the low end? It’s \$800.00!! How do you people sleep at night!?! It goes from \$800.00 to \$1,700.00. And it’s only one outfit. I told Amy if I had that kind of money to spend on clothes, I would hire people to surf the web for me. I wouldn’t even have to do that anymore. So, I can’t afford this.

This next one, I can afford. It’s the Dollar Shave Club. How many of you buy five razors at a time in the pack when you go in the store and get Gillette. What is it, like \$63.00 for those five razors? It’s like this ridiculous amount of money. When I saw this, I thought I could afford that. Let’s just see in here... This is fun. How many of you can make one blade last two months? Of course we can. They recommend every week. You’re kidding me! Again, I’m not getting another job so I can shave. I am going to stick with this and I’m going to wear the thing out.

Here's another idea. So, you're getting the whole box idea. We believe and one of our teaching pastors believes because he connected to a friend that kind of got this started. This has inspiration from #52IN15. If you go to getdatebox.com... Two guys started up this company and every month they send a date to your house. Again, men, we're getting all these boxes sent to us. This one is actually between the \$20.00 to \$40.00 price range. That's a great idea. We said we wanted to do the same thing, but we wanted to keep it cost effective so we created for you today the More Than Wine box. You are going to leave with this today. We want you to grab one on the way out and since you're the last service, just take them as you go if you can think of couples to give them to. Inside, there is a card. This card has the Song of Solomon 1: 4 on it. It says ***We rejoice and delight in you; we will praise your love more than wine.*** There are instructions in it. It has this nice little padding.

It doesn't have the bottle. The reason it doesn't is because this got very confusing for us. We knew some of you are Baptists and you would want the sparkling cider. Some of you are biblical and you would want other stuff. We preach God's word literally at this church. Now, if you personally abstain, we honor that. For whatever conviction you have, great. If you're part of an organization, great. But, teaching the Bible, we can't get away from it. Then we didn't know if you would like red or white, if you were eating steak or chicken or fish. It got very confusing so we want you to go get Welch's grape juice, you to go get the sparkling cider, we want you to go get the Merlot, Pinot Noir, or whatever it is you're getting and we want you to put it in the box. We want you to take some time with writing the card. For inspiration with that, we are going to jump into these five ways to honor marriages around you, and what you can do with this box.

1. Honor your child's marriage by picturing a special future.

The first way is going to seem odd, but stick with me for just a little bit. You can honor your child's marriage by picturing a special future. Think about it. I have a 10 year old and a 12 year old. I want to picture a special future for them. I want them to know marriage is a good thing. I want my daughter and my son to get a different message from me than maybe some of you got from your parents when you were 13 and you went home and you told your mom you thought you were in love. Maybe your mom responded like that mom back there who is giggling. Or some moms might say, "You're not in love. He's of his father the devil and a child of darkness; you stay away from him." How about this mom? "You don't know what love is. LOVE IS WHAT YOUR FATHER AND I HAVE!" And the daughter says, "Yeah, I don't want that. What I'm feeling, I've never seen between you and dad."

How many of you want to be involved in the decision to marry when your child gets to that age. How many of you want to be a part of it? I'm not saying an unhealthy part, but I'm just saying you want them coming to you and leaning in to you to speak.

I want you to picture the Proverb about the dad that just sits on the edge of the son's bed. That's where we go in Proverbs 5. ***18 May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. 19 A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.***

We've always prayed over our kids since being involved in men's ministry and Samuel Rodrigues giving me this outline. "Father, cover them in the blood of Jesus, protect them from evil, fulfill your purpose in their lives." We've now added one. A friend of mine added one for me because she now prays this over her daughters and I think it's beautiful. "Cover them in the blood of Jesus, protect them from evil, fulfill your purpose in their lives, and do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires."

There is a day coming that we want to arouse and awaken love and we want to be a part of that. I want to be a parent who's picturing a future for that.

I have a 12-year-old daughter who will be a teen this year, so I don't get to share stories with you like I used to when they were younger. Amy is telling me I have to be careful. So, I heard about a father this week who was talking to his daughter... No, but for some, maybe you put something in here and you save it for your child. Maybe it's for your child and maybe you prepare the note. Think about this for a moment. I sit down and I start writing a letter to my daughter on the More Than Wine card. I put it in this box. I tell her that I want her to open the box on the day of her wedding. I hope to be there; I don't know. I hope to be the one – I pray the Lord allows me to be – standing at the back of the church with her, looking down the aisle at some pervert. I won't put that on the card. I'm assuming Focus on the Family will edit that part out. But, I want to picture a special future. Corynn and Carson have been asking about this. They've seen the pictures and everything that we have up there and they're asking what it is. I just explaining that "I want to rejoice and delight in you and praise your love more than wine, when it so desires, when you are at that place."

How many of you parents, when your daughter or son starts expressing emotions toward the opposite sex, want to be the one they come to? The conversation begins now; it's not something we wait for.

2. Honor your adult child's marriage by separating from them relationally, emotionally, and financially.

Who is another couple you can give it to? You can give it to your adult child. It doesn't have to be a 12-year-old with a bottle of Welch's grape juice in it waiting for the next 10 to 12 years. It could be an adult child who you are going to honor their marriage by separating from them relationally, emotionally and financially. It's time for them to leave. It's time for them to move out.

I had the opportunity this week to sit down with a young friend in his early 20s. He's getting married this year and he just got the news of what the monthly payment of his fiancée's school debt will be for the next ten years. I saw it sitting on him. The amount is that of a mortgage. This was the simplest of statements that kept coming to me as he was talking and sharing with me. He's going through a lot. He's separating from his parents relationally and emotionally and financially, and now he is bearing this weight of this responsibility.

Most people would say, "You have to get a job and save some money; get that debt taken care of before you get married." I just felt it was of the Lord that I said, "You've got this! You can get some jobs. You can make it happen." Amy had school debt. It wasn't a lot, just a little bit on her senior year. We didn't know about Dave Ramsey at that point. I can remember from 10:00 to midnight, I got a part time

programming job to do some coding. I wasn't even good at coding, but they taught me exactly what needed to be done. It actually turned into Logos Bible Software, but this was almost 20 years ago. I would stay up from 10:00 to midnight.

I told him "Just get a part time job you could do from home or something outside of everything else you're doing and just go after it for 10 years. Then in 10 years, you're going to get a pretty good raise." Again, he's feeling overwhelmed. I get it, but where are the people that are helping? Let me tell you that they would get this on the wedding day? What a wedding gift for me to say to him "You've got this."

There are a lot of backup singers in his life saying, "You ain't got this; there ain't no way you can make this happen." Or, when he gives them an amount, they respond with this shocked look on their face and say, "I wouldn't even marry her."

You understand this is going on. Young people are not getting married because of the college debt. Or, they're getting married and then they aren't having children because they can't afford \$1,500.00 a month with their first job.

I said this to him: "Doesn't it just excite you, though, just a little bit, as a young man? Don't you feel a little bit like Braveheart that you get to marry this woman and then give all your money to her?" I'm being serious with him.

He said, "I haven't thought about that."

For how many of you other guys in here it's just great joy for you to make money and give it all to your wife? Raise your hand if you're praying the Lord works on you in that area. When we go out shopping, the only real conflict Amy and I get into is when she wants to try to buy clothes for me. I am happy with what I have. Those sweatshirts I've had for the last 16 years are awesome. I love my socks.

I told the guy "You've got this!" I think this is a moment to that engaged couple, to the one getting married to say I know there are a lot of backup singers out there telling you not to get married or that you shouldn't get married; marriage is bad. I have to be honest with you. I heard it in first service from someone. They said we have too much marriage talk.

Do you understand we live in a culture where marriage is becoming obsolete? For many, it is no longer necessary and no longer needed. For me to hear, out of the mouths of pastors and Christian parents, that we shouldn't talk about it this much... We are the last ones talking about it. If we stop talking about it, no one will be talking about it and it will be dead. You've got to keep talking about it. You've got to keep sharing. Singles, you've got to get it out there in the forefront. You can take this box to your single friends who are thinking about marriage. Why don't you be the first backup singer in their life that celebrates marriage with them?

Genesis 2: 24 says ***That is why a man...*** not a child, not an adolescent. It's the goal of parents to make sure our children leave home as adults, not on a journey to become one. ***...leaves his father and mother***

and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. That's the biblical definition of compatibility. They need to leave Mom and Dad to be joined. So think of that engaged couple that you can bless with this box to say, "We're one backup singer in your life; I'm a backup singer in your life that wants to bless you and let you know you've got this."

3. Honor newlyweds and seasoned couples by encouraging quality couple time.

How about this? Give the box to a newlywed or a seasoned couple. Just encourage quality couple time. You can put whatever you want in the box. Maybe you can put gift cards in there to say "Here's some conversation starters we downloaded." We have a lot of conversation starters on our church website so feel free to download all that you want, print them out on your computer, edit them however you want. We have hundreds and hundreds of fill-in-the-blanks and conversation starters. Put them in the box and put a gift card in there and just go up to a couple you know... They're doing okay; they're not leaving any time soon, but "I just want to rejoice and delight in you and praise your love more than wine." Write that on the card.

Our new initiative in 2016 is based off #52IN15 and it's based on Song of Solomon 2: 10. Solomon is not yet married to the Shulamite woman, but he's picking her up for a date. He's taking her out. This is the Shulamite woman sharing his words. ***My beloved spoke and said to me, "Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, come with me."***

We had a whole initiative last year with #52IN15. We had thousands of couples dating. This year, we're doing something new, something different. We're calling it 20in16. You received this card on the way in. There are some instructions on the back. We'll have all the instructions and guidelines online. With 20in16, we want you to create your bucket list of dream dates. These are things you've never done.

We're not doing monthly prizes, but Woodland Hills reserves the right to surprise and bless a couple at any moment we want. So, you say, "We've never had Andy's Frozen Custard." I just made that up; I have no idea why I went with that. It doesn't seem like a big deal, but you should try Andy's Frozen Custard. If that shows up online and we see that you've never tried Andy's Frozen Custard, we may be the first ones to say, "Hey, go try Andy's Frozen Custard." Now if the next one says, "We'd like to climb the Eiffel Tower in Paris," we probably won't make that one happen for you. You shouldn't be going to Paris anyway; you have student debt. You need to get that taken care of before you start backpacking through Europe. That's a whole other message with the young people.

Pick this up on your way out, get online, post it, and let us see what you're doing. It also inspires those around you. Your dating can inspire other couples to date. We're just going to have fun throughout 20in16, finding creative and fun ways to bless you.

How about a couple in crisis? Now we are getting more serious. This is the backup singer who says, "Okay, I know this couple struggling and I know there have been problems. I know there was an affair. I know that he's cheated multiple times or she's cheated multiple times." "They are dealing with addiction. I know they are about ready to give up and there is no one around them telling them 'you've got this.' There is no one telling them 'you can do this.' I hear from other family members and other

friends that are telling them they don't have to put up with this anymore; that they should quit. You've dealt with this long enough; he or she is never going to change. He or she has changed."

Your hearing all the bad backup singing. You become the first healthy, strong, excellent, professional... "I'm on this; I'm going to be your backup singer and I'm going to say things to you that I've never felt comfortable saying before, but I'm going to say it."

Maybe your card just gives them all the reasons why their marriage... As you rejoice and delight and value their marriage, let them know they've got this. Take it to that couple.

Maybe you're going to save the box and take it to the next family gathering. We have Easter coming up. Maybe this is going to be an Easter box that you give someone. Again, make this box your own. Put chocolate in it or something tailored to the couple. If it says More Than Wine and you don't want to put Welch's grape juice in it, you can put anything you want.

4. Honor couples in crisis by advocating for both spouses, not just one.

Maybe it's a parent in here who has never spoken blessing over the marriage. We believe you honor couples in crisis by advocating for the marriage, not just your child, not just one person. Maybe you've only advocated for your child and you've never blessed your child's marriage. Maybe this is a first step for you. You are going to bless their marriage. You are going to honor and esteem their marriage as highly valuable.

We have this from the Song of Solomon 6. They're now married. They got married in Chapter 3. They had their honeymoon in Chapter 4. Then they got in their first big fight in Chapter 5. He leaves and she goes after him. Then she's looking for Solomon and it's in this very poetic, lyrical language. She looking for him and on her search, she finds the daughters of Jerusalem. She finds her backup singers. She finds *their* backup singers.

Look at what the backup singers say. ***1 Where has your bum gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did you're*** the good for nothing ***turn?*** You should dump him. That's not what they say, but maybe that's who you turn to when marriage gets tough – the person who will validate what your feeling rather than one who will encourage you and bless you. Look at what they say. ***1 Where has your beloved gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your beloved turn, that we may look for him with you?*** We want to help you be reconciled so for some, this box is going to become a box of reconciliation.

I'm reaching here maybe just a little bit this morning, but maybe you're blessed financially in a way that a couple you know that's hurting is not. Maybe you go to the National Institute of Marriage, nationalmarriage.com, and you download their logo or the information about it and write at the bottom of it "If you'll sign up for one of these, we'll pay the cost for you and your spouse to take a marriage intensive." Roll it up, put it in the box, send it in the mail maybe to a couple you know. There are all different ways that we speak life and blessing over a couple.

5. Honor senior couples by recognizing their commitment and following their example.

The last one we want to look at is we want to honor senior couples by recognizing their commitment. We do this all the time around here. But, we don't just want to recognize their commitment; we want to follow their example. We actually want to put into place the blessing of their marriage. Maybe it's Grandma and Grandpa that get this box. Maybe it's an older couple. Maybe it's a widow or widower who when you get around... There is a widow in this church and every time I'm with her, she tells me story after story of her husband who has been gone for 25 years. This box could go to her. You can rejoice, delight, and bless her marriage and remind her or him. There are so many ways you can use this.

Ecclesiastes 9: 9 is now my new "Don't get a divorce; get a donut" passage. In Verse 7, it says, ***Go, eat your food with gladness, and drink your wine with a joyful heart, for God has already approved what you do.*** Then in Verse 9, it says, ***Enjoy life with your wife, whom you love, all the days of this meaningless life that God has given you under the sun—all your meaningless days. For this is your lot in life and in your toilsome labor under the sun.***

Do you know what seniors around here get? They get toilsome labor. My grandma understood something called The Depression. My grandma understood something called World War II and every war that followed. She understood having no money. She understood strangers knocking on the door and saying, "If you feed me tonight, I'll work for you all day." They got toilsome labor.

Do you know a couple that went through very difficult, challenging, painful times and yet you see nothing but joy in their marriage? How many of you can think of a couple like that? The box can be for them. Have you seen this picture? It's been floating around online for a long time, but I love this; I keep it on my phone. Together since 1951.

Yesterday, we took to heart the death of Debbie Sue Harrell. It was a great day. We did it at the 3:00 pm matinee time. I start every funeral the same. I have the same outline for every celebration service that we have. It starts with Ecclesiastes 7: 1-2 that says ***1 A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth. 2 It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of everyone; the living should take this to heart.***

Yesterday, we took to heart the death of Debbie Sue Harrell. It was a beautiful service because Debbie Sue taught us how to live and she taught us how to die. I loved, in the last couple of weeks of her life, watching her husband of 43 years take care of her. Debbie Sue was the one that took care of the finances and R.P. took that over. He then was taking care of her physical needs. The first time I went to the hospital, there were two chairs there. He had two leather bags sitting there; they were kind of like briefcases. I went to reach for them and he went "Don't touch my stuff!" You need to know that's his love language. I love the guy.

I sat him down and I go "What's in these?"

He goes “Well, one is her medication and the other is the show.” He’s the music director for Clay Cooper Show. He said, “I’m supposed to be working on the show right now.” And then he said these words: “But none of that matters.”

That has stuck with me for a couple of weeks now. Why is it better to go to a house of mourning than to a house of feasting? Why is it better to go to a funeral than to a party? It’s because funerals are recalibrating events. Funerals get you asking all the right questions. “How am I living?” “How am I loving?” You ask great questions.

When R.P. said none of that matters, let me tell you... they are two very talented individuals. They had great music careers, but all of it’s trumped by their marriage. All of it’s trumped that in the end, R.P. was there and he said, “None of it matters. This is the most important thing.” And we prayed.

He had a friend that came in and prayed with her once while he was there. To start the prayer, he said, “Let’s clear our hearts. Let’s examine our hearts. Let’s just get it all out before we pray to our Father on behalf of Debbie Sue. We need to examine our hearts.”

R.P. goes “That could take a while.”

I honored them yesterday and I honor them today. R.P. watched online during the first service and texted me. I said “Hey, thank you for your 43 year example. Thank you for the example that you set for Katie (their daughter). Thank you that she has that to look forward to.”

Here’s the question for you to ask yourself about your marriage. Do you have a marriage worth repeating? All my Herschend Family Entertainment employees know that I stole that. Do you have a marriage worth repeating? I want to take this box to some couples I know in here that I would love nothing more than to repeat their marriage. I’m probably not going to go through everything in life... I may or may not, but we have couples in here who have gone through devastating business failure and devastating news to their finances and their income. We have couples in here who have been through years and years of litigation that’s just been weighing on them. We have couples in here that have had terrible, terrible news from doctors from one thing to another. Then you hear what Debbie Sue said when she was told there was nothing more they could do for her and they sent her home for her last days to say, “I got this, I got it.”

Katie said it yesterday. She said, “Mom would not want this funeral to be about her.” I absolutely love that. “She would want you to know about her Lord.”

So is your marriage worth repeating? Does your marriage reflect the “Hey, he’s got this. God has had it all along.” I’m excited. I don’t think one box will do it for me because I can think of so many couples that I want to bless with this. I want to just say “Thank you for the example; I hope to live up to it.”

Maybe for some of you, it’s questions you need to start asking them. Right now, the weight of finances and weight of health and weight of jobs and the weight of raising kids and living in an economy that they

say may be going even further down... Let me ask you about your marriage, not all of that. How will you do in that toilsome labor and who will you bless as you walk out of here today?

Father, we are grateful for our time. I'm thankful for this Sunday where many across the nation are focusing on esteeming marriage as highly valuable. I pray that as we leave here today, we are mindful of the couples around us, and not just being with them, but speaking to them, speaking life over them, speaking blessing over them.

For those not yet married and those in young budding love to those who have been married, as some in this church have been married, going on 70 years, I pray that we would learn from them as well as repeat many of these great marriages. I pray a blessing over every follower of Jesus in this place today that they would leave ready to advocate for marriage.

For those who have never placed faith in Jesus, I pray that today they would know clearly that we believe Jesus died and rose again and we believe that Jesus breathes life into dead people and we believe that Jesus breathes life into dead marriages and dead families. I pray that today they would cry out and call out to the name of Jesus and that they would confess with their mouth and believe in their heart that Jesus has been raised from the dead and they would receive that resurrected power into their life, into their marriage, and into their home.

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