



**Twolgnite**  
**Part 3 – Until Death Do Us Part**  
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Twolgnite is simply hitting pause every second Sunday of the month to focus on marriage. We believe in a marriage/family driven home and we want to eradicate child-centered homes. We believe that when a home is child-centered, it begins to take away from the marriage, so today is a Twolgnite message.

We started a new little competition. It's not a competition, but it's similar to #52IN15. We've started #20IN16. You've probably seen some of the social media. If you haven't seen some of the social media, I strongly encourage you. That is where the majority and of the prizes and the giveaways will be done this year. There will not be many giveaways from the front like there were last year with #52IN15. The majority of the interaction and the giveaways and the prizes are going to be online. However, since we hadn't announced that yet, I do have some things to give away from the stage.

Last service, Kristen and Justin Chandler got to enjoy a Visa gift card to eat at the Flame Restaurant in Springfield, Missouri. We said we appreciate their consistency and leadership here at Woodland Hills. We are inspired every Sunday as you use each of your gifts to serve Him. Then there are Tori and Danny Zeligman. If you're in the chapel, come see me afterwards because I have a Zen 3 Spa Gift Voucher for a 60-minute couple's massage in Springfield, Missouri. We adore the partnership, we cherish backup singers in your marriage, and the additional spiritual voice on Stella's journey. Last service, Shawn and Brittany Watt got to make their trampoline date come true. You and another couple of your choice get to go for an open jump of 120 minutes. I promise they will not last 120 minutes. I've done it and your legs are on fire by about 40 minutes. Please contact Katie at [Katie@woodhills.org](mailto:Katie@woodhills.org). Then Kelly and Kristen Malloy also get to enjoy a Treehouse getaway. Woodland Hills is making it come true. They are gifting them with a one-night stay at the original Treehouse Cottage in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

Woodland Hills wants to continue to pour into marriages. Today's Twolgnite message is simply *Until Death Do Us Part*. Last week, my wife and I were on a double date in Springfield with some friends of ours, the Lemleys. I was just chugging the water. I must have worked out earlier that day, so I was drinking lots of water. As soon as we got into the restaurant, I had to go to the restroom. If you look at their logo... It's the Black Sheep up in Springfield. You guys know that most of the restaurants in Springfield are very vintage, trendy, and hipster. The hipster, trendy restaurants always want to be funny with their bathrooms now. They kind of get you guessing. They're almost leaning to unisex bathrooms anyway. This is Black Sheep's logo. They have it on all of their glasses. They have this upside down A.

The women's restroom is in the main part of the restaurant and then the men's restroom is down a darker hall, off to the side by itself and to the right. So I just go over to what I see is a restroom. There's an M on the door except it's upside down. I'm serious that it's an M; it has that little hook on it. I could tell they couldn't find a W obviously, so they just turned an M upside down. I was thinking *Oh cute; they're trying to match their logo and get me confused...* Another one of those hipster restaurants.

Sure enough, I do what I should have done. I knocked then peaked in. There weren't any urinals so I was still kind of confused. There is a lock on the door so I go in, shut the door, and lock it. Thankfully, I wrapped up my business quick enough because as soon as I was done and I started to walk out... The door wasn't locked; the lock obviously doesn't work. A girl walks in and she obviously wasn't expecting to see a guy inside the women's restroom. She kind of jumps back and I hide by face with my hand. She keeps going because she was committed to what she had to do and I kept going. I don't want that... "Teaching Pastor at Woodland Hills caught in the women's restaurant up in Springfield, Missouri." That's a great testimony.

I sit down with my friend and I go "Hey, Jeff, is there a men's restroom."

He's like "Yeah, it's just down the hall and up the ramp."

I go "Great, I just went in the women's restroom."

Right as I'm saying that, the girl is walking out, so now I'm crouching down in the booth. But I was committed. As soon as I walked in that door, there was no turning back.

Commitment has consequences. Whether they are good consequences or bad consequences. Sometimes we hear the word *consequence* and we assume bad. Consequences can be really good. For me that was a bad consequence. I was extremely embarrassed and felt stupid, but shame on Black Sheep for using the upside down M.

The reason I'm dressed up today... Trust me, you are not underdressed; I'm extremely overdressed. If you know anything about Woodland Hills, the more casual the better on Sundays. We believe Jesus takes you just as you are. I get the unbelievable privilege every year of marrying couples and doing pre-marital counseling. My wife and I have been married for eight years and almost every year, we've gotten to do pre-marital counseling, and I've been able to officiate weddings. I think it's one of the most special things I get to do in my ministry.

I just did a wedding this last summer. As a matter of fact, Garvin hooked me up with these sweet Roshes. I actually got to wear these in the wedding. I got to wear sneakers in the wedding as I was performing it. Just like in any other wedding I've ever performed, sometimes they want to do their own vows. I get to share in the vows or whatever the case is, but it never fails when you get to the part that we've all heard in the movies and we've all experience – in sickness and health, for better or worse, until death do us part. You can't make a more committed statement. Here's the crazy thing; you're making this statement not only before witnesses, but you're also making a covenant before God.

God takes his covenants very seriously. We have the Noahic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant. We see all of the covenants that God has followed through on. God doesn't break a covenant. You're making a marriage covenant with God before him and witnesses and saying "Until death do us part." That is a deep, deep commitment.

Then the groom, who's over here trying to remember what you're saying because he's thinking about what's about to go down that night and not really listening to the words very well. Then you have the girl that's thinking about a million different things. *How does my dress look? How do my bridesmaids look?* If you ask any bride and groom, they'll tell you they don't remember the wedding ceremony at all. They have to go back and watch the video to see if they even said what they were supposed to say. It's true. Then they say "I do" and they make a commitment until death do they part.

What's crazy is we don't understand how much culture is influencing our commitment. Everything is instant gratification now. Burger King – have it your way. Nike ID, Amazon 1-Click... All these things are instant gratification, which actually hurts our commitment. Look at all these statistics I found as I was doing research on millennials. Here are the millennials... By the way, we are on the cusp of a new generation. Generation Z is now entering in. They believe that Generation Z will be the last labeled generation in our history because there is so much technology and social trends and everything is changing so fast they won't be able to clump a 15-year time span together because the beginning of that generation will look so radically different towards the end.

**The Church** – Each year, one out of seven adults change his or her church membership while one out of six rotates between different churches. - Millennials by Rainer

Three out of five millennial Christians (59%) disconnect either permanently or for an extended period of time from church after the age of 15. - Barna Group 2015

**Careers.** What do these millennials look like in commitment? What does commitment look like to them? Millennials stay only two years at a job, compared to baby boomers average of seven years, and Gen X for five years.

Think about that. By the time they are 40 years old, they would have had nine different jobs. New research reveals that people in the 18 – 30 age range are jumping ship after two years on the job, a stark contrast to the retention rate of previous generations.

So how does this carry over into their relationships? How does this carry over into what their marriage will look like? The baby boomers, meanwhile, spent an average of seven years at one specific place. Gen X workers get five years.

**Relationships** – The US adult marriage rate is at an all-time low of 51%. Why? They are afraid of commitment. Compared with 72% in 1960 according to PEW social trends.

Today, just 20% of adults, ages 18-29, are married, compared with 59% in 1960. - Millennials by Rainer

In Time Magazine's recent survey, Beta Marriage (July 2014), 43% of millennials said they would vote for marriage to be performed on a temporary, two-year trial period.

That is where culture is shifting. Why are they so skeptical of commitment? It's because of what they've seen before. They say the generation is so burnt and feel so lied to and has heard all these things that they are so skeptical. "Why should I commit?" "If I only have to do it for two years, I'm in."

My wife and I just got back from the Bahamas. We got to serve down there for four weeks. I know what you're thinking. *Oh, really roughing it for the gospel in the Bahamas.* There are two sides to every post card, okay? We went down there and we served, and when we weren't doing concrete slabs or ripping shingles off a roof, we did get to go to the beach. My older son has been to beaches all over: Hawaii, Florida, and California. This was the first time my youngest son had experienced the ocean. My older son was rocked by some waves in Hawaii this past summer. He knows not to mess with the waves because there will be a consequence, so he just kind of dabbles. Now my 18 month old thinks the ocean is awesome. He's not sure what it is, but it looks fun to him. So he was bee-lining it towards the ocean. I had to grab his little swim diaper and slow him down because he didn't know what was store for him. He hasn't been hit. He hasn't been rocked by the effect of the ocean. There was nothing in there that made him think it was dangerous.

Millennials are seeing marriage before them and they are seeing divorce and all this hurt and pain, so they're asking why they should get married.

Eventually, one day, when my wife wasn't with us at the beach, I decided to let my 18 months old go do his thing in the ocean. He'll learn quick. I didn't let him go out too far. Come on, I'm not a bad dad. But he went out and a wave hit him. It was just enough of a wave to rock him. He was snorting up salt and his eyes are all salty; he just got a taste of it. The rest of the trip, he didn't want to go out there anymore. It was the best babysitter I could have created. He got a taste of how powerful the ocean is.

First service, I met a couple in here that have been married 62 years. We need more couples like that and we need to honor more marriages like that, realizing what commitment does and the impact it can have. I don't want you to be discouraged if you are on your second or third marriage. Be committed now. Learn from the past and be committed now. Show younger people that you've learned from your mistakes and you are committed to the marriage you are in now. There is no second option – until death do us part.

So many times, we get caught up in how we feel, rather than what we have committed to and it creates confusion.

Check out this video [video plays]:

*What do we do when we no longer feel the presence of God? Or what do we do when we don't feel like following him? We've got to be careful to allow our feelings, our emotions to dictate our relationship with Christ. As a matter of fact, in the scriptures, we see Jesus show a great example of where he is*

overcome by emotion, but he doesn't allow his emotions to trump what he knows God has called him to do. He doesn't allow them to negate his commitment to the Father.

Turn with me to Matthew 26, beginning in verse 36. **Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."**

What a powerful moment in scripture where we see this beautiful commitment that he has to God regardless of how he is feeling. He's saying he's so sorrowful even to the point of death as Jesus knows the betrayal, the whips, the scourging, the lashes, the stripping of flesh, the piercing of the side, the crown of thorns, the crucifixion, the dehydration, that despite all the things he is about to go through, he doesn't feel like doing that. But in the midst of that, he says it doesn't matter what I feel like, Father, I'm committed to your will. Your will be done, not mine.

Our commitment for God must be so similar because we live in a feeling oriented society. And sadly enough, this spills over into our relationship with Jesus and we must remember that even though our feelings are real, they are just not reliable. Emotions are untrustworthy. Remember this. The person who stands strong is the man or woman grounded in the truth and not governed by their feelings. We must be careful to constantly ask questions like "Do I really love God?" "Does he really love me?" "Am I good enough?" "Why don't I feel God?" What we need to do is stop thinking about ourselves and focusing on our feelings and, instead, redirect our focus to God and the truth we know about him from his word.

Let me quickly elaborate because emotions and feelings are healthy. God gave us emotions; he gave us feeling. A lot of times, they can be an indicator of what's going on. We know this from scripture. Jeremiah 17: 9 says the heart is deceitful above all things. We also know from Proverbs 28: 26 **it is the fool who follows after the lust of his own heart.** We also know that in Proverbs 4: 23 is says **above all else, guard your heart for it is the wellspring of life.**

Pay attention to those emotions, pay attention to those feeling, but what I want to reinforce is be careful to make decisions in the midst of those emotions or feelings. A lot of times, they can lead us astray. The apostle Paul says in Ephesians 4 **in your anger, do not sin.** Anger is not a sin. He's saying you can have the emotion of anger. God has given us all these emotions so that we can know. Emotions are God-given and we should pay attention to them. Absolutely pay attention to your emotions and your feelings; just be careful not to allow those emotions and feelings make decisions that are sinful. It doesn't mean that we have to act on them.

If you're in a marriage and you say, "I don't feel in love with this person anymore. I want to get a divorce." That is not a valid emotion or feeling that God would support. God will never contradict his word. So regardless of what you are feeling... Feel it, process it, get counselling, and talk about it. God's word will never contradict itself. So, you can't say, "I feel this way, so God must be telling me this." No.

God will never ask you to do something contradictory towards his word, ever. We have to be careful “Okay I feel this way; is it biblical?” No, but I still feel this way. I want to validate your feelings. Let’s get a counselor and work through this. When we start to say, “Well I feel like God is telling me to do this” and it contradicts his word, I promise you God is not telling you to do this. It’s important to know that emotions often operate as an x-ray on the heart. Your feelings are real; they are just not always reliable.

When I’m doing counseling with millennials, I never ask them “Hey, do you feel in love? Do you have that Bambi, twitterpated, thumper feeling right now, as you’re going into this? Are those feelings there? Do you have all these butterflies in your stomach?” I don’t ever ask them that. I always ask them this question. “Are you ready to be committed to this person the rest of your life? Can you commit yourself to this person for the rest of your life?” I promise you that the way she looks on your wedding night won’t be the same way she looks 20 years down the road after four kids. She’ll still be awesome and smoking hot in your eyes, but I’m telling you time changes things and if you’re basing your marriage off feelings and emotions, you are in a lot of trouble. Those feelings and emotions change. My feelings and emotions towards my wife are different. They are stronger, but different, especially when I saw her have our first child. My feelings and emotions just grew in a way I can’t even explain. Those who have been there know what I’m talking about. I will always have to be careful to filter my emotions through God’s word.

When we talk about commitment or lack thereof, we have to look at a passage of scripture. It’s in Exodus 32. I’ve been grinding the Old Testament this spring and I thought this just tied in exactly. We see Moses go up on the mountain. He’s going up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments as God’s going to scribe with his very own finger.

***1 When the people saw that Moses delayed...*** Let me talk to you about this word *delay* for a second. Moses was up there for 40 days. That’s it. They were in slavery for 430 years, stomping straw and tar all day, building pyramids that you can still go to Egypt to see today for someone they were enslaved to, and they kept focus. They were committed to the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, the God of Noah. They believed God was going to deliver them out of Egypt. Then they get out and God brings ten plagues, which would be awesome enough. Then he parted the Red Sea. He keeps leading them out and into the wilderness. Then they are out and they literally watch Pharaoh and his army die right before them. They see all these amazing things that the God of the universe is doing for them. He delivers them out of the wilderness, but their commitment to him was so fickle. Moses is only up there 40 days and watch what happens.

***...to come down from the mountain, the people gathered themselves together to Aaron...*** By the way, Aaron was one of the first high priests. He was in charge of all the Levites. He was Moses’ brother and there’s no way he’s going to fall for this...

***...and said to him, “Up, make us gods who shall go before us. As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.”*** I think, *Idiots, he’s being obedient to your God and doing exactly what God said for him to do. Why are you so impatient? Why are you living in a world of instant gratification?*

Then I think... *That's me. Holy cow, that's me.* I told you I did a devo with the Indiana Wesleyan Basketball Team. Coach Clark said something that just hit me so hard. How many times in our own marriage do we see God part the Red Sea? We start praying with our spouses or we start doing devos with our spouses or we start spending time together or we start being focused on weekly date night and we just see the Red Sea part and this intimacy because we are allowing God to be the center of our marriage. We see it grow and things are going great and then all the sudden, not 40 days later, we're back to being too tired to pray or don't really want to do a devo...

When Coach Clark told me that this week, I thought how true that is. How many times in my own life have I seen God literally part the Red Sea for me and then I'm back to wanting to build some other idol.

He says, "**...we do not know what has become of him.**" They are worried, anxious, but the greatest prescription to worry and anxiety is remembering what God has already done and is going to do. Woodland Hills, I don't know where your marriage is at today. I don't know where your singleness is at, millennials. I don't know where your widowed life is at. But I know that Psalm 37: 25 says, ***I was young and now I am old. I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his children beg for bread.***

He has gotten you this far. It's not like you hit 40 and your over the hill and on your own from here. No, no, no. He's batting 1,000. He's with you all the way through. The reason we get so anxious and start worrying about what's going to happen in our marriage, kids, bills, future... "Am I ever going to get married?" "Am I going to be a widow the rest of my life?" "Am I going to get remarried now that I've been divorced?" You start asking all these questions and you're worried and anxious. Hold on! You're sitting in Branson, Missouri, inside a castle, listening to God's word. He's gotten you this far. You might be in a difficult season right now, but I'm telling you if God brings you to it, he's going to bring you through it. You're not going to get through it; he's going to bring you through it. Keep your eyes fixated there.

***2 So Aaron said to them, "Take off the rings of gold that are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me." 3 So all the people took off the rings of gold that were in their ears and brought them to Aaron.*** Right here, we see a lack of commitment. A lack of commitment is not a personality issue; it's a character issue. You should never want to be called flakey or fickle. That's not a personality issue; that is a character issue.

Think about a Christian who never shows up or says something with their mouth, but never follows through. Then one day, they actually do follow through and they want to tell someone about Jesus. Why would they want to know about your Jesus when they see no commitment or consistency in your life? It is a horrible witness. When you tell someone you're going to do something, you do it. It's called follow-through. It's called let your yes be yes and your no be no. Anything beyond this comes from the evil one. So when you commit to something... When you say you are going to be there at 10:00... If I call my wife and say I'll be home at 5:00 and I'm not going to be because something did come up, I quickly call her and say, "Sweetie, I committed to be home at 5:00. I'm not going to make it. Will you forgive me? Is it okay if I'm home 20 minutes later?"

Sometimes what happens with millennials is they commit to something until something better comes along. It's FOMO, fear of missing out. You should respond by saying, "I know I committed to serve at church on Wednesday night, but there's a really awesome Justin Bieber concert up in Springfield, so I'm wondering if I can go to the concert instead." If that person releases you from your commitment, you can absolutely go to the concert. That's how you should handle it and keep your integrity intact. There are people that help serve at The Fort with me on Thursday night that I know if they tell me they are going to be here, they are going to be here every week. Then there are other people that say they will do stuff and I'm not relying on it. I need to ask somebody else as a backup plan. It's a character issue, not a personality issue.

***4 And he received the gold from their hand and fashioned it with a graving tool and made a golden calf.*** Are you kidding me? Do they literally think that this gold calf is going to part a Red Sea, bring quail from heaven, water from a rock...? Do they really think a golden calf could do this? I'm thinking there is no way they are that dumb.

Then I think how I'm not too far from that. As a matter of fact, when I was working on my graduate studies, we had to read a book and then write a process paper on this book called *Soul Searching*. Christian Smith went all across the U.S. and researched the spiritual pulse on our nation. He coined a term called Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. We have conjured up in our minds a God... We will do morals to feel better about ourselves, not because we love God and we want to obey God, but we create this moralistic God that makes us feel better about ourselves, hence the Therapeutic. The Deism is a God who is not really wrathful, with no real judgment or consequence. We have created who we want God to be, rather than the I Am that he is.

Any time I see big words in graduate school, I want to figure out how to dumb it down for a stupid athlete like me. My paper wasn't on Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. The title of my paper was *Mr. Potato Head*. Bring it down to a three-year-old level, right? This is what we do in culture, by the way. And this is how we treat God. We don't like the obedience, but we really like the prosper and health and wellness. We don't like one thing, but we really like other. We begin to create who we want God to be. It's like Ted said a few weeks ago in the prayer series. As we decide how we want to live life, we try to find scripture to justify our living.

We do the same thing with our marriage. "I don't really like my husband's hat, but I really like that other guy's top hat. I wish my husband had that." "I wish my husband was a great listener like that other husband that listens every time we're in small group." "Why can't you be more like him?" "Why can't you be more like her?" We even treat our marriages like Mr. Potato Head. We shouldn't even be looking to the left or to the right.

Singles, you shouldn't even be trying to conjure up or find "the one." You should be focused on becoming the one Christ has called you to be. It's not about creating your spouse to be who you want them to be. You married him or her with all their little peccadillos and you made a commitment until death do you part regardless of how frumpy they may get in the lower region of their body. Beware of Mr. Potato Head theology, both in your marriages and in your relationship with Christ.



Christ is so much more than a Mr. Potato Head. Who we are trying to create? It's not Moralistic Therapeutic Deism. It's not about you feeling better; it's about you being faithful to what his word says.

***And they said, "These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!"*** They are worshipping a golden calf and they are saying the calf brought them up out of Egypt? Are you kidding me? We have to remember that we all need to be reminded of our commitments. I need to be reminded of my commitments.

I have a friend that won a national championship in football. He is very humble. Whenever he travels now and speaks, he puts his national championship ring on. He has a big ole national championship ring. He'll just kind of rest his arm on the armrest. You know how your packed in on planes. He does this on purpose, hoping a guy will sit next to him because a girl wouldn't even notice. If a guy sees a big ole ring like that, he's going to ask about the ring. Then this is what my friend does: He'll take off his wedding ring and say, "Oh, yeah, this reminds me of my commitment to my wife. This reminds me that I am committed to one woman."

"No, no, man, not that ring. I'm talking about the other ring."

"Oh, this? This is stupid." He says as he turns it around. "This is nothing, but this reminds me to get my butt home at night. This reminds me that I have eyes for one woman. This reminds me that I'll be faithful until death do us part, for better or worse, in sickness and health. This is a reminder." And then he goes into sharing the gospel.

We all need to be reminded of our commitments. God knew this. What happens when we've made commitments with our heads, but our hearts aren't in it? What happens when one day you went to the altar and you got married and your head was there, but your heart wasn't following?

Check this out... [Video plays]

*What do you do when your mind is there, but your heart isn't? What do you do when you know what sin is, you know what's right, you know what's wrong, you know what you need to be doing verses what you don't need to be doing and your mind knows, but your heart isn't there yet? So you don't feel remorse over your sin, even though you know something is sin. Are you with me on this? What do you do when there is a gap between your head and your heart?*

*Throughout the scripture, there is this phrase. Wait on the Lord. Waiting on the Lord isn't pleasant at all. In fact, in one of the most gut-wrenching Psalms in the Bible, Psalm 42, David is literally in a fight with himself. He screams, "Why are you so downcast, my soul? Put your hope in God!" So, his mind knows. Don't make a God of that. Put your hope in God. Put your trust in God. Bow down before God. Serve God. Walk with God. "Why are you downcast, oh my soul? Why aren't you buying into this?"*

*So how do you wait on the Lord if this is you? You position yourself under the waterfall of grace and wait while you walk in obedience. One step at a time. One day at a time. Asking for God to break your heart. Asking for God to restore the joy of your salvation to you. Asking God to make him your treasure. Asking*

*God, being honest about where you are, whether that be the desert or part of a struggle, and you wait. Why? Because they who wait on the Lord he will renew their strength they will mount up with wings like eagles. They will run and no longer we weary. They will walk and not grow faint.*

The other day, I got to go watch a basketball game with a good friend of mine who is also a Division 1 Coach down in Arkansas. He was talking to me about this. It was so encouraging to hear his perspective. He knows that right now, he is in a season of waiting. He's not seeking prosperity; he's just waiting on the Lord. Lord, what do you have for me? What are you doing? But he's not allowing his commitments to falter. I was so encouraged by my time with him because it's so true. There are so many times where we don't feel like spending time with the Lord. What about our commitments? What do our commitments mean?

**5 When Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it. And Aaron made proclamation and said, "Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord." 6 And they rose up early the next day and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings. And the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.** Do you see how far their commitment is from God? They're committed to a golden calf. That's what they are committed to at this point. Their eyes have shifted so much that now they are committed to worshipping and eating around a golden calf. I would love to have seen them say, "Hey, go part the Red Sea, calf."

What we learn from this is that we have freedom because of committed men and women. I'm talking about men who left their fiancées, their wives, their jobs, their families, and went to fight wars for us. All of our veterans. That's why we have freedom. I'm not pessimistic at all; I'm an extremely optimistic person. But we will lose our freedom because of uncommitted men and women. If the older Gen X and baby boomers don't set the examples of commitment for Millennials and Gen Z to see and they don't think commitment is worth anything, why would this next generation commit to anything unless they start seeing the commitment in the church body? Learn to follow through; learn to do the right thing even when it's hard. Learn to stick to your word even when it's not easy.

My wife says it's called March Madness because it drives her mad with how much basketball I watch and am a part of. That's not why it's March Madness; it's March Madness because it's awesome. When I was down in the Bahamas, I was running a basketball camp. These kids don't have very many fundamentals at all. By the way, I'm allowed to give sports illustration because Ted doesn't give any.

I'm teaching these kids how to shoot a basketball. No one has even taught them how to shoot a basketball. I was thinking how much this parallels into marriage. When you teach someone how to shoot a basketball, you use an acronym called BEEF.

The first thing is **balance**. You want to teach a kid to have their feet shoulder width apart, with a little bend in their knee. They want to be balanced. They don't want their feet together when they shoot.

I thought about that in your marriage. You want balance in your marriage. You don't want a child-centered home. You want to spend time together. You want to spend some quiet time with the Lord. You want to spend some prayer time with your wife. You want balance in your marriage. You need to

have balance. You need alone time away from the kids. You need time alone for yourself. All those things are called balance.

The first E is for **Elbow**. So, you have balance and then you tell the shooter to get their elbow in tight. You don't want the elbow sticking out in a chicken wing. That's bad because then you're pushing the ball. You want to get your elbow in tight so it rubs against your ribs.

I thought about that in our marriage. As a married couple, you need to keep everything in tight. It needs to stay in the family. You don't need to be talking about all your problem to your girlfriend or your mother-in-law or your father-in-law. You need to keep everything tight. Granted, if you need to bring in counselors to help you process, keep in where it's tight and trusting. When you start getting it out there in your marriage, you're letting too much traffic in and it convolutes stuff. You start venting on social media to try to get attention and affirmation and now you're losing trust from your spouse. Just keep it tight. So, you have balance in your marriage and you have everything tight between you.

The second E is for **eyes**. You teach kids to put their eyes on the back of the room, not the front of the room because if their eyes are on the front of the room, it's going to be short and they are not going to make the shot.

For married couples, your eyes should be on Jesus, not Mr. Potato Head, not Mr. Right, not somebody else. Your eyes shouldn't be on what this person is or isn't doing. Your eyes shouldn't be on your spouse. Your eyes should be on Jesus, the only one that can sustain or fill or satisfy the deepest longings of your soul. Your spouse would made a horrible savior and that's why Jesus did what he did. So, you have balance in your marriage, everything in the family, and keeping your eyes on Jesus.

The most important thing is the F, which is for **follow through**. Nothing else matters if there's no follow through, no commitment. You could say. "We are going to be a balanced family. Donyes' sermon rocked us. We're going to be balance and we are going to keep everything in our family and we are going to commit to that and we are going to have our eyes on Jesus," but with no follow through, it doesn't matter. It's just in one ear and out the other just like any other sermon. When you teach kids to balance, keep their elbow in, get the lift here and follow through, it's a beautiful thing. It's poetry in motion. Just like your marriages. When you learn to balance work, kids, quiet times, church, serving, the eyes on Jesus, keeping a commitment to keep things in the family and not letting everything else in there... I'm not saying don't be transparent in community. I'm saying make sure you communicate with your spouse before you ever share any other information that's going on between the two of you. That's honoring your spouse.

We close Exodus with this: ***7 And the Lord said to Moses, "Go down, for your people, whom you brought up out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. 8 They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them.*** Forgetfulness leads to a lack of commitment.

My wife and I are committed to going to a wedding or officiating a wedding every year. If we don't, we've made a commitment that we will go back and watch our wedding every year. Why? It reminds us of the commitment we made. Watching our wedding or attending other weddings or officiating other

weddings and going through the vows and the commitment that they are making is so healthy for my spouse and I just to remember. It would be a healthy practice for you to go to a wedding once a year. Or to go back, if you have your video, and watch your wedding video. Just remind yourself because forgetfulness leads to a lack of commitment.

That's why the late Gary Smalley, who we love and honor and who just passed away this last week, created the Honor List. What was the purpose of the honor list? It was to remember all the things you love about your spouse. You can go to [woodhills.org](http://woodhills.org) and see more about the honor list and why we do the honor list. It's to help us remember these things.

My passion for all the married couples and the singles and the widows is that your commitment would be that of the great theologian, Winnie the Pooh. He said, "If you live to be a hundred, I want to live to be a hundred minus one day so I never have to live without you."

Think about that. If your marriage isn't tight, you might think *I don't really want them to die, but if Jesus took them, I could start exploring other waters.* You never verbalize this, but some of you in here are thinking *How does he know? I would love to start over, but I don't want to get a divorce.* No, no, no. I pray that our hearts are so much like Winnie the Pooh.

Maybe some of you in here are in a tight spot. Your marriage is struggling and it's been rough. Or maybe some of you are just kind of floating. Coach Tongal and I grew up on NES. Young Millennials don't even know what this is. It's an actual video game system, for you young punks that don't realize it. You actually played video games on this. We didn't have the headsets where we could talk smack to a bunch of second graders, but there was something beautiful about the old school Nintendo that you PlayStation 3 punks don't have anymore. There's this thing called a reset button. If you miss something, you can hit the reset and you get all your lives back instantly. The game would go right back to the beginning. You didn't have to wait for anything to load. You just hit reset. It was the greatest thing ever, Millennials. You would never understand, but it's okay; I still love you.

Maybe some of you in here would like to hit reset. Jesus offers that reset button. There's no limit to his reset button. Today is a new day. ***His mercies are new every morning.*** – Lamentations 3: 22-23. His mercies were new this morning when you walked in here. Whatever addiction, whatever struggle, whatever porn, whatever drugs, whatever alcohol, whatever affair, whatever hate, whatever tension, whatever bitterness, whatever work issues, whatever is going on, he says ***"My mercies are new every morning. My grace is sufficient for you."*** Even when you don't feel like following through with your commitments, he followed through with his so that you can lean into him when you don't have the strength. His power is perfected in your weakness. He'll be your strength when you are weak. He will help push you through your commitments. He will help you to navigate whether your feelings are biblical or not. Just keep pressing into him and keep your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.

I was thinking about how we could remember that. God was so passionate about us remembering. If you read Leviticus 23, that whole chapter is about him instituting things so we would remember him.

The Sabbath, the Passover, the Feast... Everything he was doing was because he knew how prone we are to forget, how prone we are to wander, and he wants us to remember things.

I believe there are four people in here today. There are the singles. You are single, widowed, or divorced and you wonder if you ever will get married. Your commitment today looks like being faithful to God's word, abstaining from sexual immorality, so that you don't bring that into a future marriage. God will redeem it even if you've made mistakes in the past. He will redeem in now, but you get to make a commitment today.

The other person is your marriage is rocking. There are a lot of Woodland Hills' marriages that are doing awesome. Your marriage is flourishing and it's going well. Be careful, husband, to think about how awesome you are. Your marriage is awesome because it's centered on Jesus and because Jesus is there, not because of anything you are doing. Don't forget that. That's what the Israelites did. They thought they had something to do with who they worshipped. If your marriage is rocking, praise God. Remember who is rocking it.

Some of you may be ready to pull the divorce; you don't care about your commitment, and you're done. You need to get with R.G. and Karen and Marriage 911, Divorce Care, and everything else we do at this church. You need to be reminded of your commitment. You need to be reminded what God is doing. You need to be reminded how far he has brought your marriage, how far he has brought you up to this point. What he is doing. Ted me just showed me a statistic that says we are seeing more people past 50 and 60 getting divorced than ever before in history. They are becoming empty nesters and they no longer know how to date and love or what they are doing. Maybe you are just in a tough spot in your marriage. You just need to be reminded of the commitment you made. You need to go back to a wedding. You need to go back and look at your wedding photos and stir those affections.

Maybe some of you in here are just kind of floating. Not really in a tough season, but not really rocking it. You're just kind of floating. There are really no eyes on Jesus. You're not keeping it tight. You're kind of balanced. Look what Numbers 15 says. ***37 The Lord said to Moses, 38 "Speak to the people of Israel, and tell them to make tassels on the corners of their garments throughout their generations, and to put a cord of blue on the tassel of each corner. 39 And it shall be a tassel for you to look at and remember all the commandments of the Lord, to do them, not to follow after your own heart and your own eyes, which you are inclined to where after. 40 So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and be holy to your God. 41 I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I am the Lord your God."***

Mr. Potato Head is not your God. The God of the universe, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob, the God who created you, the God who sustains you, the God who sent his one and only son to die on the cross for your behalf, defeating the grave three days late, ascending to sit at the right hand of God so that you and I could have strength in our commitments – that is your God.

I have a bunch of blue tassels that I got for all of you today. As the worship band comes up and you sit there and think about what commitments you aren't following through with and where you have lost sight of your commitment to your spouse, where you have lost sight, as a single person, to your future

commitment, where you are just floating, where you're not remaining true to your commitments, I pray you put this in your car on your review mirror. I pray you use it as a bookmark in your Bible. I pray you put it up on your bathroom mirror. I pray you put it by your nightstand. I pray that as you see this little blue tassel, you remember Numbers 15 as a reminder of all that God is, all that God was, and all that God is going to be. He loves you. Despite of how you came in here today, he loves you. I pray you never forget that.

Father God, thank you so much for your word. We are prone to wander. We are prone to forget. Thank you for never forgetting us. Thank you for following through with your commitment despite of the emotions that you were feeling at that time. Thank you that you do give us feelings to help us navigate what is going on. We pray our feelings never trump the truth we know about you in your word.

God, we confess that we often create potato heads in our life. Forgive us of that sin, Lord. Give us strength in our commitments where we feel weak. Give us the resolve and the fortitude to follow through even when it's hard.

I pray for marriages in here that are struggling. I pray for marriages in here that may just be floating. I pray for the singles in here that don't even know if they ever want to commit to a marriage. God, refresh our hearts on the beauty to being committed to something and following through.

We love you. It's in the matchless name of Jesus we pray. Amen.