



Reignite

Part 1 – Raising the Value of Your Marriage

Pastor Ted Cunningham

We start a brand-new series today, for just two weeks, called *Reignite*. I haven't taught on marriage for a year and a half here at Woodland Hills. We used to teach on marriage the second Sunday of every month in a message called *Twolgnite*. We've given over seventy marriage messages at this church in six and a half years. Last April, we just felt it was time to hit the reset button. We've been praying and asking the Lord for new direction. About midsummer, we decided we needed a marriage series, so we're doing a two-part series. It's not *Twolgnite*; it's *Reignite*.

Here's who we are trying to talk to today. If you're married, this series is for you. If you want to be married, this series is for you. If you're sitting by someone who doesn't want to get married, but you want to get married, just pray the whole morning for this message and that the Holy Spirit would call him by name. No, we never allow you to pray outside... We want it to start with you.

Maybe you're like "That doesn't hit me. I don't need this message." But, this message is also for anyone who knows someone who is married. So, if you know and love someone who is married, you can listen today. You're like, "I'm not married and I'm not planning on getting married anytime soon." But, if you know and love someone who is married, we want you to listen because you may be the only voice speaking truth into that husband's or that wife's life. So, please listen and understand.

There is a tension as we talk about marriage. I'll be honest with you; it's getting harder and harder to speak on marriage because we just seem to be redefining it and changing it all the time in culture. I love doing Date Night Comedy events. I love doing marriage conferences and seminars. It gives me great joy to do that. I know it's part of the calling God has placed on my life. What's getting harder though is guest preaching at other churches on the weekends. I get nervous pastors coming up to me all the time. "I just want to make sure you know who's in the audience. I just want to make sure you know who we're reaching." We're scared to talk about marriage for fear we are going to marginalize a large group of people. That's never our heart.

I want to share with you who has been in this room. If they're not in this room right now, I'm going to just share with you a list of a few folks who have been in this room at Woodland Hills Family Church and over there at The Chapel and online. Just so you can see the different types of people we're reaching and the different types of people that we know need a message from the Word of God on marriage and what marriage is and how you and I are supposed to live it out.

In here, we have:

Single and never dated. This would be my two children.

Single and dating. This will be my daughter in 15 to 20 years from now. No.

Single and not looking. "I'm enjoying the single life. I'm just going to do my own thing."

Single and looking. Well, this ain't going to be a matchmaking service; I can tell you that.

Single and dating, but not living together. Don't make any more comments.

Single and dating and living together.

Engaged, but not living together.

Engaged and living together.

Divorced.

Widowed.

Single parent and not looking.

Single parent and looking

Married with one child

Married with more than one child

Married with children at home

Married and fostering.

Married with adopted children.

Married with adopted and biological children.

Married without children at home.

Blended, first marriage for him, but not her.

Blended, first marriage for her, but not him.

Blended with children at home.

Blended without children at home.

Celibate/Same-sex attracted single. I'm telling you we have to think about all. This is someone who has chosen to live a celibate lifestyle because they know they struggle with the temptation. They have same sex-attraction and they don't... Again, we teach clearly here that there is a difference between temptation and sin. And they know their approach to their status in life is to remain celibate.

LGBT single

LGBT dating

LGBT living together, but not married

LGBT engaged

LGBT married without children

LGBT married with children

That was a list of 30 and I'm here to tell you that at the end of this morning's time together, someone will come up to me and say, "You didn't include me."

I sent this list to what I call the Marriage Tribe. They're just my friends around the country who share a same passion for marriage and family. I sent this list of 30 and I go, "Guys, what am I missing?" My friend, Matt Engle, who is like our data guy... He's a data expert. He thinks in numbers all the time. He was the first one to respond. He said, "If you add in personality, if you add in years married..." and I think the other was gender.

He said, "If you just add in those three variables at Woodland Hills you have roughly 143,000 different types of people." I said, "Well, we only run about 1,800 so I don't think we're getting upwards of that." This doesn't even take into account your season in life. It doesn't take into account that you've been married for 40 years or you've been married for three years. It doesn't take into account that you've been dating for five years.

Someone will always come up to me and say, "I like what you said, but how can you apply it here." Here's what we know as a church. We have to trust the Holy Spirit working in the hearts and lives of people. We want to declare truth and there is not anything in us as a church that desires to marginalize people. We don't want to do that. We want to acknowledge who is in the room and understand we're always going to have this tension. Just because there are some choosing to live sinful lifestyles, as was reflected in some of those that are on the list, there are some that are pursuing relationship formation in a godly, biblical way and we understand all are present in the room today. We want to open the Word of God and hear straight from him on the value of marriage because we are talking today about Raising the Value of Your Marriage.

We believe for your marriage to reignite, you've got to get back to a place where you say marriage is a good thing. Marriage can be a joy. Marriage is to be modeled for our children that they grow up to say, "I want Mom and Dad's marriage."

Hebrews 13: 4 says, ***Marriage should be honored by all...*** Whether your young or old, married or single, we are all called to esteem marriage as highly valuable ***...and the marriage bed kept pure***. I can give you a lot of reasons today why, as a culture, we need to get back to honoring marriage. I'm only going to share a few and I get this from The Institute for American Values. They put out a great little book on how if you want to solve the problems in our culture of homelessness, of poverty... And you can go into all the issues we deal with as a culture. At the root of all of them, it's marriage and family. Let me just give you a few:

When marriage is honored as a culture, it increases the likelihood that Mom and Dad will have a good relationship with children. It decreases poverty for children and mothers. It increases the likelihood children will graduate from college and get good jobs. It reduces rates of alcohol and substance abuse for both adults and teens. It lowers the risk of teen suicide. It reduces the risk that adults will be either perpetrators or victims of crime. It lowers the risk of child abuse.

We, as a church, honor the biblical definition of marriage which is "one husband, one wife, for one lifetime." If you're here and you've been married two, three, four, five times, I hope today there is a fire in your gut. You get in the parking lot and you look at your wife and say, "This is it! You're it! We took a vow. One of us is going to have to die to get out of this thing right here!" Say it with passion! Don't go on a guilt trip with this message. Ask God to redeem your remaining days. And look at your spouse and go, "You better tell the gravedigger to dig two." Get one plot ten feet down for the first one and six foot down for the next. This is how serious we're getting about this. It's till death do us part. "We're going after it for the long haul, till one of us lays the other in the arms of Jesus or the Lord returns." But that's not what's happening.

We must not lower the value of marriage to accommodate and validate our sinfulness.

The main point we want to develop today... We must, as a church, follower of Jesus, not lower the value of marriage to accommodate and validate our sinfulness. I personally believe churches are lowering the value of marriage by not talking about it. That list I gave you a moment ago, that's keeping us from talking about it. We're so afraid we are going to offend someone or run someone off. I think you know at Woodland Hills... I want to say this in a healthy way. We don't obsess over offending people. We've got to guard our hearts from taking joy in offending people because sometimes that becomes very easy and it keeps us at a manageable number of people at Woodland Hills.

We don't want that, but we also don't want to say... I call it the two-strike member. There are a lot of people that attend church and you're always at two strikes with them. They're waiting for the third strike so they can be gone. They're not waiting for the third strike; they're looking for the third strike. It's not our issue. I want you to know you've got to deal with this issue. When something is said or spoken, we live in a culture where everybody is so easily offended and everybody is so soft and everybody is vomiting their opinion online all day long. Here, we don't change what we believe about marriage, we're not lowering the bar to accommodate for this.

When the Pharisees asked, "Is it still permissible for a man and a woman to divorce for any and every reason?" We're not talking right now about addiction or abuse. We're not dealing with that. What we're talking about is it okay to divorce for just the trivial stuff? ***Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning."***

What we want to do today is go to Genesis 2 and look at marriage from the beginning. As we look at the first wedding, we are also going to see how you and I, all these years later, are still to be carrying out marriage this way. We want to look at it from the beginning because we raise the value around here. We must raise the value of marriage to promote and encourage faithfulness.

In Branson... A sacred echo in my life right now, through some of the stuff going on this summer... I know everybody can have a joke about Branson, but I think one of the campaigns or messages that were going on here in a few months is "It's hard to say you love a community when you're constantly rolling your eyes at it." This is starting with me. I'm asking the Lord to soften my heart because we can talk about the workforce and we can talk about struggles, but I was thinking about it this week in line with the message.

Amy and I just visited a brand-new restaurant opening in Branson. I get excited for new restaurants and I love going into new restaurants. It's clean, the attitudes are incredible. It's like they just got done with their motivational workshop. Everybody has smiles and they're happy to see you. The food quality is incredible. The service is fantastic.

Amy and I will sit down and go, "How long do you think it's going to last?" It's a lot like dating in a marriage. It's fun up front; it's exciting. I was eating at one of these new restaurants and it was incredible. I just loved their attitude and their "go get it" and all that.

I said, "I think I need to encourage them on my way out." Amy's always like "I'll meet you in the car."

I asked the Lord to bridle my tongue as I shared with them. I didn't really feel the bridle kicking in, so I don't know what He felt. I went up to the stand and I told the lady, "Great job! This is fantastic. I love your smile and your attitude."

She said, "It's a great place to work!"

I was like, "Alright! I love it!"

She said, "Are you going to come back and visit us?"

I said, "Oh, a lot. I love it. Can I encourage you with something?" Here's where I thought I needed the bridle, but it didn't find its way in. I said, "I encourage you to have the same level of enthusiasm six months from now. I challenge you with it. I go into a lot of restaurants and there's no one even standing at the front to help you get a table." Have you ever seen people in restaurants hide from you? You walk into a restaurant and they're hiding from you.

Martha!?

She just looked up and said, "They're hiding from you."

You just think you're in a living room right now and you can just chit chat all you want and come back at me with any comments. Martha, you're done. If you're new to Woodland Hills, we do this all the time. Martha in the second service and Pat in the first service.

I told her she had to keep it going because this is what is sad to me about relationships. The honeymoon is like, "Whoooo!! Life is good; it's never going to get any better. We can't stop touching each other." Then you become that senior couple lying in bed 50 years into marriage, facing the opposite direction.

I heard the story of one such couple. One night, right as she's dozing off, she feels his hand on her shoulder. It comes down her arm to her hand and then up the inside of arm and to her neck with a gentle touch and then down her back to the small of her back and then over her thigh and then stops.

She thought that was great, so she leaned over and said, "Honey, that was wonderful. Why did you stop?"

He said, "Oh, I found the remote."

Some of you are like, "That is us! That's totally us!" But, from the beginning that it would stay... That you and I would have a marriage that reflects the marriage we're going to see in Genesis 2.

18 The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man (Adam) to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

19 Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals... Your translation may say “the beast of the field.” ...and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So, he’s just pointing out animals and calling them by names, just speaking that. 20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep... This is the very first surgery. ...and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and then closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man... Now watch; this is the very first wedding. ...and he brought her to the man. This is the first processional. He brings Eve to Adam and their marriage begins.

23 The man said... It’s better translated “The man sings” because he had been calling out the names of the animals, but when he sees the woman, his heart leaps. Do you have a song for your wife? I hope you do. I hope when your wife walks into the room, guys, you’re first response is, “Wow, I can’t believe I’m married to you. I can’t believe we get to spend all this time together. We’ve got 40, maybe 50 good years, if the Lord allows.” Get excited. Sing to her. If you don’t have a song, come up with a song. “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman,’ for she was taken out of man.**”**

Now this is important. Martin Luther gives great commentary on this. He says God could have taken a bone out of the foot of Adam, thus implying that man would rule over woman. He didn’t do that. He could have taken a bone out of Adam’s head, thus implying that women would rule over men. He didn’t do that. He took a bone out of the side of Adam, implying there that now man and woman would walk side by side with one another, along the way with each other. And this is important because it’s speaking here not of roles, but of value. Men are not superior or inferior to women. It’s speaking here of equality of value and mutual respect, of how God created the female and how he brought her to the man.

Now, in your Bible, some of you may have a translation that says “Therefore.” This says, **24 That is why...** I love the “therefore.” The “therefore” is always in between a teaching on a doctrine or an account and then you move from the doctrine to the “therefore, this is what you and I are supposed to do with it.”

This is beautiful. Here’s the first wedding, the first marriage. Therefore, all these years later, this is how you and I are to carry out marriage today. This is God’s plan and may we stick with it and not move towards the cultural lies as all the voices in our culture want us to do. This is the first marriage.

I’ve talked about this at this church for a long time. Therefore parenting. I use the therefore parenting style, which is reminding my kids, “Your dad loves you. How much does your dad love you?” When they were young, I would make them show me with their arms. I’d say, “Go wider!”

I would really build the point. "If a car is coming down the street, jumps the curb, is headed towards our family, what am I going to do?"

"Dad, you've told us..."

"Tell me again."

"You're going to pick me up and throw me out of the way and you're going to take the hit for our family."

I go, "That's right. That's how much I love you, therefore, go clean your room." Use the therefore parenting style any way you want. Therefore... fill in the blank.

We go a bit further with our kids when we establish something. Josh McDowell has talked about this for years. "**Rules with no relationship leads to rebellion.**" So, establish that relationship, remind them of that relationship before just jumping into barking orders. I love the therefore.

So, here's the first marriage, therefore, this is how you and I are to do it. It says, ***24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.*** You and I are supposed to leave Mom and Dad as adults, not on a journey to become one. We're to leave Mom and Dad's side to join the side of our spouse when you take all of this text together.

So, I have a 12 and a 14-year-old and right now and I'm walking alongside them. I pay for their meals, I give them a room, I give them clothes, I give them a phone. I mean I give and I give and I give. Now, we teach here in our children's ministry that with every year of your child's life, you're losing control.

Hopefully, you're replacing that control with influence. I'm still influencing my 12 and 14-year-old, but the day is coming when they're going to leave my side. Amy and I are going to go over there. My 14-year-old is going to join the side of her husband. I remind her of this all the time. "When I'm standing at the back of the church with you one day, looking down the aisle and some pervert..." No. I don't say that. I say, "Your mom and I want to make sure that as you leave our side, you're joining the side of someone who can care for you the way we've been caring for you."

I'm not talking about trips and buying things, but that they are able to come alongside. Young people, you've got to break away from Mom and Dad relationally. When you get married, Mom and Dad are no longer your priority relationship. You break away from them emotionally. Your mom is not your go-to person when something good happens to you at work. You can tell her eventually, but not first. That's your spouse. If you have a rough day, you don't call Dad, you call your spouse. Financially, you leave the side of your parents and get your own phone bill. Friends and Family is over. You leave them. The word *leave* actually means to forsake, to move on.

This isn't speaking of dishonoring your parents; it just says... You honor parents, you care for parents, you have extended family, but for the bond of oneness to work, it requires separating over here, no

longer walking alongside your parents, but coming alongside your spouse. The scripture says it and here's how we summarize it.

The bond between a husband and wife is stronger than the bond between a parent and a child.

I want you to know God gave you your spouse to walk alongside you, to be for you through the grind of life, not to be the grind of life. To be with you through the grind of life, not to be the grind of life. This is the mistake we often make. We turn each other into opponents, rather than teammates. We are side by side teammates and whatever life throw at me, it throws at her. Whatever life throws at her, it throws at me. We're not on opposite ends of the field, charging the issue or the topic, we are together on the same end of the field, on the same team, charging that issue.

One of the practical things we've picked up over the last few years from hanging around with comedians is this thing called the callback. I love the callback and as I've been studying comedy, I see it more in shows. The entertainers here in Branson have taught me much about this. I was in Michigan with Paul Harris on Friday night and he's got great callbacks in his set. All a callback is... You establish a premise then there's the punch line and then you go back and forth with premise, punch line, premise, punch line. A callback is taking a punch line from earlier in the set and bringing it back later. No one sees it coming and it gets a great laugh.

When I heard this and was studying this from a speaking perspective, I told Amy, "We've got to turn all of our conflicts and disagreements and frustrations into callbacks. We've got to find a way to have fun because we've made the decision, according to Ecclesiastes 9:9, to enjoy life together. Our marriage is full of callbacks. One of our favorites is a callback I can still use today, sixteen years after this event happened. I'm able to use it sixteen years later. The bond is just there and we have fun with it. We don't allow conflict to destroy us; we see a conflict, we see an issue, we see an event in life hitting us going, "This is going to ignite something big."

We moved here 16 years ago. We bought a house about five miles down T Highway. One of the first couple of nights we were there, we were lying in bed, about to fall asleep. It's pitch black in the room and all of the sudden, we hear this flip, flip, flip sound. I'm from Chicago and she's from Nebraska. We didn't ever have issues like this. I'd hear it again. It was just in a pattern. Amy asked what was going on and I said, "I don't know. I think it will go away."

I hate investigating sounds in the middle of the night. Is anybody with me. I'm exhausted. If it's something breaking, it'll be broken in the morning. If it's a pipe breaking, we're on the second level; we'll be fine. But, it started getting louder because it was getting closer. Then we started to feel it; this wind would rush by our hair. I realized what it was.

Amy goes, "Ted, what is that?"

I go, "Okay, listen. I'm going to tell you what it is, but I need you to promise me that you will not freak out."

“Ted, what is it?”

“I think it’s a bat.”

Amy grabs all the blankets, rolls herself up like chicken enchilada on the other side of the bed, leaving me completely exposed to the bat. I jump up like every man would and I raced into the bathroom for protection. On the way, in I turned the lights on and there, around our ceiling fan, was a bat making circles and coming a foot from Amy every time.

She’s screaming and yelling at me. “What are you going to do? Get it! Get it!”

I’m not going to tell what I did... If you’re visiting from California, I caught the bat and I released it in a forest preserve down the road the next morning. But, if you’re from the Ozarks – and understand this church kind of has a Bass Pro theme going on – I gave the thing a horrible death. I always love that. Again, keeping the church to manageable numbers. That’s what we’re talking about.

She yells, “What are you going to do?”

I go, “I don’t know, but I’m safe.”

Two Yankees in this room trying to figure out what to do. We took care of it however you feel we should have taken care of it. Just let your mind run with that. Here’s the callback... Here’s why I love those events. We’re not making the most of those events because 16 years later... like tonight... Do you know your spouse well enough if you’ve been married for a few years? I know when she’s about to fall asleep. All I have to do is get up and up and over the pillow a little bit, get about three inches from her ear and make that flipping sound in her ear while I blow on her forehead and she goes crazy. Marriage is fun and all God’s people said... Amen.

We’ve been collecting these callbacks. We’ve been getting some of the best from around the country. One of my favorites came from Family Kamp a couple of years ago. I said, “Hey, at the end of the week, share your callback. Think through some controversy, some conflict, some events that have hit your marriage, and find a way to have fun with it and share it with the group.” They took it. I hope you take hold of the challenge I’m going to give you in a second.

They were like, “We are teammates in this. Why can’t we have fun with this and enjoy the bond that we have.”

A guy stood up at the end of the week and said, “My wife called me one day at work and the toilet was running. I said, ‘Babe, take the top off the toilet, look down. The chain is going to be wrapped around the ball.’”

Sure enough, it was. He said, “Reach in there...”

She goes, “No! Disgusting! I’m not reaching in there.”

He goes, "Honey, it's like tap water; it's clean water. Nothing is going to hurt you."

He finally convinces her to do it. As she is reaching in, she goes, "Am I going to get electrocuted?"

That's not even the callback. He came up with the most brilliant callback. He said, "Oh, honey, you've got to unplug the toilet first." Enjoying life together.

The bond between a husband and wife is stronger than the bond between a parent and a child. May you teach what we've been teaching our kids for years. I say to Carson, "What does you dad say is the definition of maturity according to Genesis 2: 24?"

He goes, "I will not be with Mom and Dad forever, so plan accordingly."

"That's right. We love you, but we've got big plans. When you leave our side, life is going to begin. Don't think we're waiting around for phone calls. Before you come home for the holiday, be sure to call us so you know where we're at and whether or not you're welcome."

You may think that's harsh. It's just understanding I want to do everything in my power to be an advocate for my child's marriage, not just my child.

Mother-in-laws and father-in-laws, with this teaching here, you help your child understand you're not the priority relationship anymore. Advocate for your child's marriage and not just your child.

Jesus went on in Matthew 19 as he was explaining this. **6 "So they are no longer two, but one flesh."** So, this idea of one that Jesus is teaching in Genesis 2: 24 is the central theme, the central text in the scripture for marriage.

"Therefore what God has joined together..." Can we please not forget that marriage is something God does, joining a husband and wife together is something God does. It's why, for centuries, before a couple would exchange vows, a pastor or a priest would say, "If there is any reason why this couple should not marry, let the speak now or forever hold their peace." It's become a punch line in movies. The idea there wasn't that some romantic relationship could form if you just break up the wedding. The reason they said that was because they understood this is something God is doing. That's how seriously we take this. You gather before God and gathered witnesses. He joins a husband and a wife together because marriage is not only his design, but it is something he does in a covenant relationship. **"...let no one separate."**

So, the question to ask is this: "Is your spouse your priority relationship above your children, above your parents?" You need to have some conversations about how to bring some priority back to this relationship by eradicating the kid-centered home and maybe having boundaries conversations with your mom and dad. "Hey, I'm not going to be calling you every day now."

I remember a mom coming up to me in a wedding saying, "How dare you tell my son not to love me anymore."

You know me and I can be snarky at times, but would I actually tell a child to stop loving their parents? No. I said, "Mam, I didn't say that. I told him to stop calling you every day." She interpreted that... She said that was her love language. I said, "But he can't give all of that energy to your relationship anymore: relationally, emotionally, spiritually, or financially." And I told him, "If necessary, geographically." "He doesn't have to move out of your city, but if you don't back off, I'm going to encourage him to."

Amy and I moved 1,000 miles away from our parents and our parents... We grew up with parents who wanted us gone. I don't know if you know that, but they were excited. It was just a different time. Now, parent hover over their kids. I was telling Corynn the other day. We were talking about her grades and stuff. I go, "I remember bringing my report card home to my dad and going, 'Dad, do you want to see my report card?' He said, 'Do I have to?' I said, 'Yeah, you should probably keep up with how I'm doing in school. Dad, do you even know where I go to school?'" And I had deeply loving parents, but they understood we did not have a kid-centered home. We were a welcomed addition to the home, but not the center of it.

For some, reigniting your marriage, raising the value of your marriage is getting back to prioritizing it.

I can share this with you because Paul shared it Friday night. They had a hard time having children. And when little Hanalee came along, they said, "We did what our pastor told us for years not to do. He said not to give her everything and leave nothing for each other." I'm not sharing anything he didn't share in front of a group of 1,000 people. He said, "We had to get back to us. We had to get back to this priority."

I love hearing that because it's so easy for those of you with small children to be like, "It's just too hard right now. We'll get back to us later." Get back to us right now. Choose now. Have the conversation with your kids. You know this is a big one for us. Set them down on the couch and explain to them how everything's changing. They'll be like, "I'd like to go to another church. Everything was good until that message today."

Dad, you say, "Yeah, there's only one queen in this house and it's your mom right here and it ain't you." When your kids bad mouth their mom, do you step in, Dad, and say, "Hey, you're talking to the queen right there. It ain't going to happen." Is your wife your priority relationship? Is your husband your priority relationship?

We've been meeting all summer talking about how to solve the issue of our community with poverty and homelessness and all that. John Baltis gives three things required for people to change, for life change to take place. Non-profits share this information and the ministries share this information. Here are the three things that are needed.

The first one is **knowledge**. Today, we've opened the Word of God, we see the first marriage. Therefore... This is how we're supposed to live so we have received the knowledge.

We talked about **skills**. Sometimes marriage ministry becomes so much about kills that we forget the knowledge, but the callback was a skill, finding a way to just have fun with something that happened years and years ago. Communication skills. Intimacy skills. All sorts of skills that we can go through. Most ministries are geared towards giving people knowledge and skills like give them job skills. We want to help the homeless get jobs and permanent housing. We have to give them knowledge and skills.

Here's the big struggle with life change. It's giving people **willpower**. We can't do that. As a pastor and as a church, we believe Jesus still breathes life into dead people. And we believe a relationship with Jesus Christ is where you find willpower. You find someone in your life that wants to change. They want to break this addiction. They don't want to be homeless anymore. They want to have a job. They've made the decision and they have the drive. Then you combine that knowledge and skills and we can get somewhere. What's frustrating and hard is when you're pouring knowledge and skills into someone that doesn't have the willpower.

We've been talking through all of this. The first tier of working with someone is working with the willing. The people who are ready to go, invest there first. Give energy there. Give time there. But there's one that is a sacred echo in my life and it's the idea of voices. We've talked for years here out of the Song of Solomon 1: 4 when the daughters of Jerusalem are speaking over the bond developing between Solomon and the Shulamite woman. The daughters of Jerusalem say, "We rejoice and delight in you. We will praise your love more than wine." We took that to say we believe every marriage is a duet in need of great backup singers.

One of my friends who is over in The Chapel right now was an Intake Director at a residential care facility for teens. Troubled teens would come and he would receive them in and they would be there for a year. He said, "Ted, what was frustrating was to see... Maybe they didn't have the willpower because a lot of them were tricked into getting there, but if they found a relationship with the Lord during that year and we were giving them knowledge and skills and then the voices came in, that's where we would lose them. We would send them back to the home that was part of contributing to their struggles. That's why we tried to work with everyone in the family."

For some of you, you're going to reignite your marriage, you're going to go to a new level with your marriage, but you're going to return to bad voices that you need to turn down or mute altogether. Man! The power of voices.

You can't have a message on marriage without country music. I know I love country music, but I do have my song. Do you have a song? When your wife walks into the room, what do you have going on? What do you sing. I remember, Rick, when you sang yours. I passed the microphone around and asked them to sing us their song. It was only professional musicians that stood up to sing. I asked if we had any average people in the room that could sing a song. We have our song. And Amy's not as much into country. When I walk into the room and, again, it's become a callback for us. When I walk into the room and simply start singing, "Now I had the time of my life. No, I never felt like this before," I don't even

have to use the words; just the emotion of the song. I'm like, "Come on, Baby, we got this. Jump to me." You would love to see a video of that wouldn't you. That's ain't going to happen, I can promise you that.

A few weeks ago, I started an Honor Marriage Playlist. They're country songs that honor the exclusivity of marriage. I'm sure everybody has one of these on their phones. When I hear a song and it promotes marriage, it's going to the list. After the first service, a lot of people said they didn't know all the songs on this list. The seniors did, so this is to help the young people. We're going to take you back a little bit to classic country. I couldn't find a lot of modern country songs. "Body Like a Back Road," I don't think is really promoting the exclusivity of marriage, okay? I hate to break that to you.

I can't share my whole list with you, so I want to give you some. I love *She's My Rock* by George Jones. I love this song because when you first start hearing it, it's a buddy telling another buddy, "You shouldn't be with this woman. Do you know her past?" And George Jones... I like what Vince Gill says about George Jones. He says, "George Jones taught us how to sing with a broken heart." I love that. He's basically telling his buddy off in the song. He says, "Who are you to point your finger?" He basically says, "She's not now like she was." How many of you can say amen to that? You're not now like you were. We all can talk about our past, but he gets to the chorus and it's "She's the rock that I lean on."

Garth Brooks – *Two of a Kind Working on a Full House*. "She's my lady luck and I'm her wildcard man..." That one doesn't turn Amy on. I've tried that one for years. Nothing like the Time of My Life.

Stand by Your Man by Tammy Wynette. She was married five times, but it's a great song. When that song comes on my playlist, I always sing, "Stand by your man, man, man, man, man." I count it off five times. Again, this is a playlist that honors marriage. *Stand by your man*. "She's my rock. I ain't throwing her away."

"I cross my heart and promise to give all I've got to give to make all your dreams come true."

I can cry with *When I Said I Do*. "When I said I do it meant that I will." "When I said I do, I really meant I will. I'm going to stick this thing out."

Love, me by Collin Raye could be the best country ballad. "I read a note my grandpa wrote back 1923"

You've got to stand for something by Aaron Tippin has absolutely nothing to do with marriage, but I play it after I come out of a bad counseling session. Honestly, it's my go-to song because I'm like, "You've got to stand for something or you'll fall for anything. Grow up and get a job and maybe this marriage will get a lot better for you."

Honestly, there are times... This is why I'm not a licensed counselor. I can't get a license and if I had one, I wouldn't be able to keep it because I sit there in counseling sessions sometimes and I'm looking at the guy going. *You know what? If your parents would have spanked you as a child, we wouldn't even be in here right now.* It's going to be a fun email week.

Why am I sharing this? Every entertainer in here right now, can I just tell you, every singer, every musician, you have a major responsibility with your platform. I know people don't like you preaching, but grab a good song, lead into it, promoting the exclusivity of marriage, honoring marriage. You might get negative feedback, but I'll teach you how to handle negative feedback, don't worry about negative feedback. Don't let that stop you from doing the right thing.

Forever and Ever Amen. Yes.

Through the years by Kenny Rogers.

Waitin' on a Woman. The video version with Andy Griffith, you've got to do it.