



## Summer at Woodland Hills

### Part 2 – Twolgnite

Pastor Ted Cunningham

Today, I'm going to be sharing a little bit about that as part of the message, and that's really what sparked us to do Twolgnite Sunday. I had a completely different message planned for today, but about halfway through the week in Africa, we said, "Let's do Twolgnite," and that will be the way that we share today's message on picturing a special future for your marriage.

I was invited to speak to Tanzanian, Kenyan, Ugandan pastors on marriage and family. I had a plan when I got over there and then I met with the interpreter, the translator and completely changed what I was going to share. I want to share some of that with you today.

In the 10:00 service, I want to share something that happened at 8:30. This is Skip and Linda Holmberg. Today, they are celebrating 50 years of marriage. We always celebrate this big, so if you're celebrating a 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and you would like a \$75.00 bouquet, just let us know and we will be happy to provide that for you. This is a great couple. The biggest Chicago Cubs fan on the planet right here in Skip. We usually give a \$75.00 bouquet to Cubs fans and about a \$50.00 bouquet to Cardinals fans. That's how we work that, Russell. Russell, just keep that mic muted back there. The sound guy thinks he has all sorts of power in this church. But we are grateful for the Holmbergs.

I don't know if you've ever heard someone say this: "I'm not happy with my marriage." If you've ever heard anyone say that, would you raise your hand. I'm not going to ask you if you've ever said it. I've heard this a lot and I'm convinced – as a church, and the church, not just here, but around the country and around the world – we can do a much better job with how we answer this person. The idea that's out there today... Maybe you've even heard pastors say this: "Happiness isn't the purpose of marriage." "Happiness isn't the goal of marriage."

Think about this. A couple comes into the office and tells me, "We're just not happy in our marriage," to which I respond with, "Well, you're not supposed to be." Is that a good answer? Then they look at each other like, "Well, then, we're killing it, right? I thought we had something wrong here, but he says we're nailing it." I think we can do a much better job encouraging couples to enjoy life together.

Ecclesiastes 9: ***9 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.*** You don't have to choose between life and a wife; you can have both at the same time. We believe high levels of marital satisfaction are available for every single couple in here today. No matter what season you're going through.

Maybe you've heard pastors, authors, or marriage speakers refer to marriage as a season and talk about seasons. Almost every marriage speaker I've ever heard has related marriage to a season somehow. I want to show you this picture and I want you to start painting a picture today. You don't have to discuss it now, husband and wife. This could be a discussion for later at lunch or at home tonight. But, ask yourself the hard question: "What season are we in right now?" Spring? Summer? Fall? Winter? One thing I love about living in Branson is we get all four seasons, sometimes in the same day, sometimes in the same week.

My wife loves the seasons. She loves winter up until December 26. As soon as Christmas is over, she is done with winter. How many of you are on her page? My wife loves fall. I won't tell you who it is, but she has a favorite author, a lady author. She has a blog and podcast and all that. Amy came home one day super sad – because fall is one of my wife's favorite seasons – and she said, "You're never going to believe what so and so said." I said, "What?" like it was some deep spiritual truth. "Today on her podcast, she said that she hates fall." I'm not joking... She hasn't listened to that woman since. My wife is passionate about the seasons.

Something I've heard and I think I agree with... Almost every marriage speaker and friends of mine in marriage and family ministry believe that most marriages have experienced all four seasons at some point. Now, where this word picture breaks down is it's not the cycle that we're used to because the good news for you today, if you find yourself in fall or winter, is you can choose to go into spring. You don't have to wait for it. **Marital satisfaction is not something you hope for or wait for; it's something you choose.**

Gary Chapman wrote the best-selling marriage book of all times. It's called *The Five Love Languages*. He also wrote a book that a lot of people don't know about and have never read... That sounds terrible. He sells millions of copies of his books, but it's not like *The Five Love Languages*. He wrote a book called *The Four Seasons of Marriage*. Here's how he describes each season.

**Spring: Anticipation, excitement, and hope.** Another term we have for spring is called *newlywed*. Another term for spring is *honeymoon*. But this is what Solomon refers to in the Song of Solomon as young, budding love. You're excited about the future. Talk about picturing a special future. You've got a big picture. You're excited for what the future holds for you.

**Summer:** This is the season we find ourselves in here in Branson right now. Does this not fit Branson perfectly? **Fun, commitment, and connection.** People are coming to this town for this season right now to connect with other family. I've met them in the first service and in this service. In marriage, it's your commitment and fun. If you're not in this season right now and you want to be in this season, ask a friend to invite you on their boat. Because the only thing better than owning a boat is having a friend with a boat.

**Fall:** Dr. Chapman describes it as **sadness, apprehension, and depletion**. We're still committed to each other; we're not going anywhere, but we don't have what we once had. We want more for our marriage.

**Winter:** It's described as **cold, harsh, and bitter**. I don't know about you, but by about January or February, as I'm looking at dead trees in my yard (I think they're dead), especially the Crepe Myrtles. You've got two sticks sticking there and you drive pass them and you think, *They've got to be dead*. And then what do I do? I go over to them with my thumb nail and I scratch the bark a little bit and it's like neon green coming out of there. There's still life in this tree. Some of you are in a cold, harsh, bitter season. Would you be honest today with admitting the season that you're in?

Amy and I talked about it this morning. I had to verify this before I shared it. I said, "Amy can we say that we have experienced all four seasons in our 23 years of marriage?" We both are here to tell you that we've experienced all four seasons. But here's what I'm super excited to share. Twenty-three years in and I'm here to tell you right now, and for the last several years – and we've done this with teenagers – we're in spring and summer. How did we get there? We made the decision. And not only did we make the decision to be in those seasons, we're guarding it so we don't head toward fall or winter.

I think there are a lot of factors that lead couples into the seasons. I wrote some of them down last night. You may add to this list.

Sometimes you head toward fall and winter with **kids**. I have two high schoolers, a freshman and a junior. So, I have four years of high school left and four years of college. We have big plans for year nine. How big of a raise am I getting in nine years? We tell our kids all the time, "We love you, you're a welcome addition to this home, but we've got big plans after you leave." They're like, "Well, what are you going to do?" "Well, first of all, we're going to Disney World. That's where we're kicking the whole thing off. All that money we've been spending on you..." But kids. Somebody came up to me after the first service that's getting ready to have their fifth kid. "How do we stay out of fall and winter?" We're going to talk about that.

Your **job** can come into a stressful time and it can take a toll on marriage. A **move**. Some of you moved to Branson. You had big plans once you got here, but it didn't really shake out like you thought it was going to. So, that's created stress and maybe you're in the fall season. **Your age. Years married.**

**Health.** I hear this often from couples. A health challenge with one or both spouses can take you into a new season. I believe **your relationship with Christ** and where that is. If that's in a young, budding, exciting, anticipating, like you're moving forward in your faith, it has a lot to say about where your marriage is going to end up.

Here's the declaration we want you to make. If you're in fall or winter today, make this your declaration. "**I want a new season with you, not someone new.**" The mistake we make is we think / *want spring again, but I can't have it with this person. I'm going to go online, fill out a test, and hopefully an algorithm will put me with somebody more compatible, somebody I can enjoy spring with.*

You'll enjoy spring for a little while because of all the chemicals going off in your brain, but then, eventually, you'll have to pay a mortgage with that person, you'll have to blend a family with that person. Challenges will come in that you don't experience early on.

You can have a new season with the person you walked in here with today. I think we could stay on this the whole morning. You could experience high levels of marital satisfaction with the person your sitting with right now, and you're going, *No way! Not possible! He has said this. He has done this. She does this. She's taken us into debt. She spends too much money. He's passionate about his hobby. I can't get him to stop fishing long enough to look me in the eyes and want to talk to me. He golfs all the time.* I hear it all. *He's passionate about everything else, but me. I'm not a priority for him.* I see it all the time. And guess what? It's happening in this church right now; people looking for new seasons with new people.

As your pastor and on behalf of the elders of this church, stop looking for new seasons with new people and start pursuing a new season with the one you're married to right now. Commit to that. Make your decision. Today, as we picture a special future for that, we want to give you some practical ways in which you can do that.

I want to encourage you to turn to Ephesians 5. We're going to go to one of the clearest passages of scripture Paul gives us. He goes all the way back to the beginning. Jesus does the same thing in Mathew 19 when he's being questioned about divorce. "Hey, are we allowed to divorce? Moses permitted this." Well, yeah, in Deuteronomy, you see those provisions in there, but it wasn't this way from the beginning Jesus said. Jesus said, "I'm here and I want to make sure you're clear on this. It is one man, one woman for one lifetime." He declares that boldly. "Moses permitted it because your hearts were hard, but haven't you read? It's not the way it was in the beginning." And he quotes Genesis 2: 24.

Paul is going to set up this beautiful picture of Jesus and the church and he's going to lay it out and he also is going to quote Genesis 2: 24, taking it back to the beginning. So, I want to share Ephesians 5. It's a little bit different this morning, so we're just kind of going with it, wherever the Lord leads it, but I wanted to share about our time in Africa in the context in which I shared it in Africa. So, I'm asking that the Holy Spirit takes the message and continues to use it in Africa, but also then helps all of us apply it here as well.

I want to start by bragging on Bob and Dee Dodson for just a moment. Many of you don't know them, but they have been to our church several times. I know they watch online as well. I am very proud to call these two friends. We obviously became even closer in the last week, but you, as a church family, have supported Bob and Dee for the past 17 years. Their work has much fruit. They have done an incredible job for the Lord there. Bob is now 62 and I believe he's been there 27 years. We've had the opportunity to support them since day one of our church. They were the first missionaries that we supported. They run a camp called Highlands Camp. Last year, they had 17,000 young people come through the camp. It's 100% funded by the John Rawlings Foundation. There were 1,700 decisions made for Christ from those 17,000.

I got to be there on a week where they had 500 pastors from Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda. They were really trying to encourage these pastors that week to become missions minded. It's hard for us to think of missionaries leading nationals to Christ, but then trying to get these 500 pastors to think about doing missions outside of their own country.

To me, Bob is like Indiana Jones. This guy is crazy, and he knows how to get around this country. We got pulled over by the police I think five times on our first ride with him from Dar es Salaam Airport to Morogoro. The policeman would come up to you and they would put their fingers up to their mouth, which means they want water, which is their symbol for a bribe. They wanted us to give them some money. I was pulling out my wallet, ready to give them anything they wanted because I'm not built for prison. I don't know if you can tell. I wouldn't do well in an American prison and I definitely ain't surviving in an African prison; it's just ain't going to happen. Bob knew what to do. He says, "You can't pay them because then they radio everybody up ahead and you get pulled over every couple of miles." I'm like, "Pay them whatever they want." So, he is doing a great work for the Lord there.

Bob asked me to come speak to these pastors on marriage and family, a topic that's not usually discussed in their churches, as I found out. I asked them about certain passages. "When is the last time you taught them this?" They would say, "We don't teach on that passage." Bob put me with Eugene. This is a great man. We've sent a gift, as a church family, to Eugene and his family as well. He was my interpreter for the week. We sat down in the morning with my notes and he asked me, "Do you stick 80% with your notes or 50% with your notes or 20% with your notes or do you tend to go off script?" I said, "Yeah, good luck with the whole thing, Eugene, I'm going to try to do 50%, but I've got to learn about your culture. You have to tell me about it."

He started to share with me about his own marriage and the bride price, which is something we're not very familiar with in our culture. The bride price is what the man pays the father for his daughter. Eugene had dated his wife for seven years as he saved up to pay the bride price. I asked him what determines the bride price. He said, "It's family status, it's education, employment, and it's also the complexion of the skin."

It was right there I know the Lord completely redirected everything that I was going to share with these pastors because I stood up and I declared among the 500 pastors... 300 of these pastors are from Kenya, a few dozen from Uganda, and the rest from Tanzania. I stood up and I started with Ephesians 5 and I just said, "You know the Bible begins and ends with a wedding." In Genesis 2, God walks Eve down the aisle to Adam and Adam says, "This is now bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh." And then you go to Revelation 19 and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

There is a day coming – on God's timeline, not ours, Jesus doesn't even know the time – when God is going to turn to Jesus. We don't know the day or the time, but he's going to turn to his son and say, "Go get your bride," because from beginning to end, we get this beautiful picture of the Church and Jesus. That's what marriage is, Jesus and the Church. I said, "And the bride price for the Church was the blood of Jesus. It was the precious blood of the lamb that Jesus shed on our behalf so that we are now what we call "blood-bought saints." Does anybody remember that term growing up in church? We're blood-bought saints and I said, "Pastors, I'm here today to encourage you that your marriages would reflect this picture of Jesus and the Church, not the demonic teaching of the culture that you live in. That your marriages would reflect the gospel of Jesus between Jesus and the Church and not the teaching of Muslim culture."

I said, "I'm going to be praying, as this message goes out, that we will push back the darkness on every demonic teaching that oppresses and enslaves women. And your wives aren't here this week, so we're going to talk to you, the husband, and talk to you about what it means to love your wife as Jesus loved the Church. What it means to love and care for her as Christ loved the Church."

I was reminded this week of the time Gary Smalley went to India to teach. He sat down with a bunch of wives... It's a similar culture with the same influences. He just asked the wives, "What one thing do you want me to teach your husband? What's one thing I can really give your husband this week before I go?" Many of the women told Gary, "If you could just get my husband to stop hitting me." This is what we're pushing back on, the devaluing and the dishonoring of women in this culture.

So, we started in Ephesians 5. For the sake of time, I have to kind of go through this text quickly and spend a little bit of time where we spent the time in Morogoro. In Ephesians 5, we get everybody's favorite word in our country today and that is *submit*. This is a great word. I actually have had people tell me at their weddings, "You've got to leave out the part of me submitting to my husband." To which I'm like, "Well, you've got to find yourself a new pastor because I'm not leaving out that part. That's an important part."

The word *submit* here, it's very important that we understand the Greek word behind this. The Greek word for submit here is not placing yourself under the total control of another. The Greek word here has military origins and the Greek word means "to voluntarily submit under the authority of another." So, we'll read it with that in mind - voluntarily submitting the authority of another. **21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.** He's going to address wives and then husbands. Watch what he does in this text. He gives the husbands role as he's addressing the wife, but when he gets to the husband, he doesn't give the husbands authority or role. He talks to the husband about how to treat his wife. He talks to the husband about his responsibility, but he starts with the wives.

**22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.** Let's say that again. **Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.** By the way, from Verse 21, everybody submits. This isn't just one or the other. Everybody in here, we all submit in relationships. When you get to the parent/child relationship in a little bit, children, submit to your parents. At work, you submit to human authority. As Americans, we submit to a governing authority over us.

**23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church...** And I do believe the scripture is clear on this and this is why I teach it this way. The husband is the authority in the home. I am to carry that authority, as we're going to see in Verse 25, in a way that loves and cherishes and cares for my wife. But this is not teaching mutual submission. I don't believe that's this text at all. It's teaching that yes, I have a covering, I have the authority in the home, and I'm supposed to carry that. **...his body, of which he is the Savior.** **24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.**

I told the pastors, "Your wives aren't here, so I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this text. I want to get to Verse 25 and I want you to stick with this in your culture and pray, as I'm sharing it, to press back on every demonic teaching that oppresses and enslaves women and children."

I talked to a friend this week who had just adopted two young children from Ghana. I said, "Have you ever thought about what you rescued those children from? I'm not just talking about trafficking; I'm talking about potentially marrying one day and being oppressed and enslaved in marriage and in family."

**25 Husbands, love your wives...** It doesn't say, "Husband lord over your wives. Husbands, rule with an iron fist. Husbands, every day, when you wake up, remind her you're the boss applesauce." That's not what we're getting out of this text. You don't have to tell her. Do you know why? You get to show her. "Ted, this is good, I'll write this part down. How do I show her I'm in charge?" **25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...** This type of sacrificial laying down your life... The chances of some husband in here actually dying or laying down his life for his wife is probably not going to happen. But for you to sacrifice goes way beyond just, "Honey, I got the dishes tonight." It goes way beyond, "I'll run the vacuum." It goes way beyond, "Honey, I'll put the kids down." This is going beyond yourself and your hobbies and what you want to do and what you want to accomplish.

We joke in our home all the time. We have a fake list in our home. It's a list of all the things we want to buy. It's just a joke. We don't have list; it's metaphorical, so just go with it. But when I say I want something, I'll go, "Hey, Babe, where is that on the list?" And she'll go, "It's like 1,423." Like I'll say, "I want a golf cart." "That's like 2,300." We have a lot of other things we're getting. I want a snorkel for my truck because I want to drive through rivers. If you have a snorkel on your truck, you aren't ever going to use it. I'll go, "I want a snorkel for my truck; where's that?" It's like 8,426. It's a joke for us. There are things I always talk about that I want, or I want to get, but am I willing...

I'm never going to get that. Why? It's because I have kids and kids are expensive. Do you know what the best check you'll ever write is? It's so much fun to go in and write that check for the braces. Isn't that fun? How much? Seven thousand dollars? Okay. You can't go to college, but I'm going to get you straight teeth right here. Glasses are out of control. Guess what? Glasses and braces, I have to be able to get those for my kids, so no snorkel for my truck. No driving through Taney Commo for me. I have to go along the road like the rest of you. I don't even know how much they are. They're just a little piece of plastic, but they look awesome. Have you ever been to Dogwood Canyon? They all have snorkel. They don't go through any water that needs a snorkel.

Let me ask the men: What are you sacrificing? What are you giving up to show your love to your wife? What are you laying down?

One of the missionaries said he gathered a bunch of women, pastors' wives in Kenya and asked them... Swahili is a little bit different from country to country and from tribe to tribe and so he just said, "What word would your village or tribe have to describe women?" Most of them came back with something related to word tool. Just something he needs to get stuff done. This idea is not in the scripture.

**26 ...to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies.** Let me tell you, in Greece and Rome and pagan cultures, this never would have been. "What? Love her as I love

and take care of myself?" ***He who loves his wife loves himself.*** **29** ***After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—*** **30** ***for we are members of his body.*** The idea here is cherishing. The bride of Christ, the Church, is not a ball and chain to Jesus. He cares for us, he loves us, he paid the ultimate price for us, he shed his blood for us. We are members of his body. And then Genesis 2: 24. **31** ***"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."*** Children leave mom and dad to start homes of their own. Children are supposed to leave as adults, not a journey to become one. You leave your home; you start a new home.

**32** ***This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.*** From start to finish, we see this beautiful picture of the bride of Christ and Jesus and that's why, for the life of me, I can't understand the believer that comes up to me and says, "I'm so tired of hearing about marriage in the church. That just doesn't make any sense to me when the Bible begins and ends with a wedding. And then we get this beautiful picture throughout. May we never tire of hearing this message. **33** ***However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.***

Your marriage is painting a picture of Jesus and his bride. So, for your children, your grandchildren, for friends and family, for members of this congregation, the question I have for you is, "What kind of picture are you painting?" Are we going to be a church where the men are laying down their lives, sacrificing for the women of this church? I think it was John Piper who said, "I can tell a lot about the marriage by looking into the eyes of the wife. I can tell a lot about the character of a husband by looking into the eyes of his wife."

One pastor... I met so many great pastors there, but one Kenyan pastor came up to me and said, "This is a hard subject that we never talk about." So, we did a Q&A. I have to be honest with you; there were questions I'd never been asked before and I was praying the entire time. Here are just a few of the questions that I received from pastors there. This was during an open time. They had a mic and they were passing it around.

***"If my wife is unable to bare me children, can I divorce and marry someone who can give me children?"*** That was a quick answer. No. Next question.

***"How do I keep members of my congregation from taking second and third wives?"*** I went back to "haven't you read that in the beginning, there was one man and one woman." I had to keep coming back to one man, one woman for a lifetime.

***"If a man in my church has four wives and he has recently converted to Christ, should he divorce three of them?"*** I can tell you I've never been asked this at a marriage conference in the United States, not once. I actually looked down at one of the missionaries for help and he responds with shrugging his shoulders. He's been in country 20 years! Thank you, band of brothers over there.

It was funny because I gave this answer and then I immediately got back and started Googling polygamy, John Piper... and all the pastors I could think of. I actually texted Alex Himaya who was in Egypt and Jordan while we were in Tanzania. Alex will be here in two weeks.

We have to offer a lot of grace to missionaries. I like how John Piper put it. "From first to second generation." I shared with this pastor that that man got himself into this situation and he has to care for his wives and children. "A man who doesn't provide for his family is worse than an unbeliever." I told him, "He has children now he has to care for. He's responsible for that. Now, I would go back and tell him 'no more wives. And you're going to teach your children... Even though they are not seeing it modeled, you're going to teach your children to the second generation one man, one woman for a lifetime.' And, by the way, he can't be a leader in the church. Paul addresses this clearly with Timothy and Titus. He has to be the husband of one wife." We've made that about divorce in our country, but I think that fits there perfectly because that's the culture they were dealing with. He can only have one wife and he can't be a leader in the church.

These pastors received the message of honoring women well. I receive several emails from the pastors who went back and immediately preached the message in their congregations. One pastor responded with, "Our assistant pastor, who I had been training and mentoring for seven years now, on Sunday evening at our men's event, taught the principles you taught us about taking time for your wife." It was well received by the congregation there in Tanzania.

I taught the pastors Song of Solomon 2: 14 that says, ***My dove in the clefts of the rock, in the hiding places on the mountainside, show me your face, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your face is lovely.*** I asked, "How many of you guys in here have a pet name for your wife?" One guy raised his hand. I asked him what it was. He goes, "Sweetheart." I go, "Okay, the rest of you, I want you to go home and start calling your wife "my dove, my gentle, tender dove." And when you want to have a conversation with her, you do your dove call and coo. So, for the rest of the week, I would come up to these guys. One of these guys came up to me and cooed in a really deep, loud voice. This guy was like, "I ain't doing it."

Can I just give you a couple of practical things? One, since I left Africa, I put an alarm on my phone to go off every day at 5:25 for Ephesians 5: 25. It goes off every day; it hits my watch, hits the phone. Before I hit stop, I pray for the pastors and their congregation in Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, that they would push back the darkness on the demonic teaching that is oppressing and enslaving women and they would turn a demonic culture and a demonic teaching around to where they are now displaying for their congregation and their communities what it means to value women.

When scripture calls women to submit, it has nothing to do with value, nothing to do with abilities, nothing to do with personalities because in 1 Peter 3: 7, we read clearly that women are co-heirs. This submission thing has zero to do with value. We all are equal. Hear me. We are all equal in value. So, would you join me in praying for the pastors and their congregations in those three countries?

But then let this be your prayer as well. When this alarm goes off, that it will be a prayer for your marriage. That the men in here would ask the question: "How have I sacrificed today? How have I loved today? Have I cherished her? Have I cared for her?" That the wives would pray for their marriages as well. I'm asking this question: What do people think about when they think about your marriage? What do they think about Jesus when they think about your marriage?

I'll give you four things and then we'll close out. These are the four main topics that I covered with them. I don't have a lot of time to spend on each one.

**Exclusivity** was obviously the biggest one. Genesis 2: 24 – one man, one woman for a lifetime. Would you commit to your spouse today in going into a new season with the person you came in here with today until the Lord returns or calls one of you home? You have many different factors hitting your marriage. You're going to have many forces coming against you that want to take you into the fall and winter seasons. That you would continue to commit to one another and quit looking for a new person to enjoy a new season with. In the Song of Solomon, it's the Shulamite woman saying of Solomon, "I am his and he is mine." Desire says, "I want you," but exclusivity says, "I want only you." Desire says, "Amy, I want you," but exclusivity says, "I want only you."

**Honor** - Speak words of high value over one another in private and in public. This is what the Shulamite woman says of Solomon. "His banner over me is love. I am safe under his banner. I am protected. I know in private and in public, he speaks well of me."

**Time** – This was a big one. I did a whole session on time for them. Prioritize quality couple time with a daily delay – 15 to 20 minutes a day. Engedi is what Song of Solomon refers to with this lush desert oasis. May your home be a place where you enjoy time together and you take time tighter. The weekly withdrawal – this is your date night. This is Solomon coming to pickup the Shulamite woman in Chapter 2 and taking her away. "Come away with me, come and go with me." Annual abandon – you see this in Song of Solomon chapter 7 where the Shulamite woman says to her husband, busy shepherd king, "Come away with me. Let's go to the countryside, there I will give you my love." The Hebrew term for "give you my love" is bowmbowmchickiechickiebowmbowm. You know exactly what that is.

I told the African pastors, "I have seen your countryside and it is very beautiful. Take full advantage of it as you enjoy time away with your spouse.

**Voices** – I've seen this happen way too many times. You're in fall, you're in winter, and you go find other spouses or couples who are in fall and winter. If you're in fall and winter, you need some backup singers. We say it here all the time. Every marriage is a duet in need of great backup singers. If you're in fall or winter, go find someone who is in spring. Go find someone who is in summer and ask them to come on their boat this weekend. Lori has a boat. If you want to come up and introduce yourself to Lori, she'd be happy to take you out today.

Do you notice people when they get into dry seasons in their marriage and their marriage is cold and bitter and harsh? They find other jaded people. That's not what you need. You need healthy voices and we have them here at this church. Marriage 911 – If you are in winter right now, R.G. and Karen are sitting right over there. They'll be down front here in just a moment. Come and meet with them. They have trained dozens of Marriage 911 mentors and coaches in this church who would love to meet with you and be a backup singer to your duet.