

We've been talking about these letters to the churches in the book of Revelation and we've gone through three of them. We started in the church at Ephesus. And to the church at Ephesus Jesus is going to say this, that confession and repentance are going to be key if we're going to be who Christ has asked us to be. And so we talked about not being fake and not being pretenders, not playing church, but really being honest about who we are and where we are and the healing that comes from that. And then from there we talked about Smyrna and we talked about soul wealth and we talked about how to have a soul that's wealthy, that Christ is actually going to redefine wealth and say that wealth is not the ownership of things but rather it's the state of the soul, that you could have a wealthy soul. And last week we talked about finishing strong, that it doesn't matter if you start real pretty if in the end you go ugly. We are big believers in story here, because story has power. How many of you, in the last three weeks, have watched a movie? Yeah, we watch movies because we love story. And in the book of Revelation, Jesus is going to say that you and I, as believers in Him, are going to overcome the harshness of the world. We're going to overcome not just because of the cross but the stories that are produced because of the cross. He's going to say it like this, that we're all overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of the testimony. So what happens is Christ, in the lives of people, creates these stories that encourage. And so I want us to stop for a bit and I want us to look at a story, a narrative if you will that will help us put into perspective what happens when the things we've learned the last three weeks gets put into action. So here's the story:

Cheryl: I met Jeff in Memphis, Tennessee. I was going to Memphis State University, putting myself through college and I was working in a restaurant/bar where I was a waitress and earning really good money. And he came in one day and sat in my section and I basically waited on him the entire night. He flirted with me the whole night, and by the end of the evening he asked me out on a date and I said yes. We went out on a couple of dates and after about two dates, we were “dating” *per se*. We were in love, we couldn't get enough of each other, we were infatuated, it's all I could think about, I could hardly concentrate on school. And we talked about marriage early on in the relationship.

Jeff: Cheryl and I had been dating for quite a while, actually about 8 months and she graduated from college and took a job with NCR Corporation and she had to go away for three weeks to Dayton, Ohio for training. And while she was gone, I was transferred. I literally got transferred from Memphis, Tennessee to Los Angeles, California. So the day she flew back, I drove to the airport, picked her up, took her off to dinner, this romantic Italian restaurant and sat her down. And we caught up, talked about how things were going and then I said, “Well, I have some good news and some bad news.” And she goes, “Give me the bad news first.” So I explained to her that while she was gone I was transferred to Los Angeles. And then about that time, the waiter comes in with a tray and there's a little box on it. And I say, “Now for the good news,” and he presents the box to Cheryl and it was an engagement ring and I asked her to marry me and she said “of course.”

Cheryl: After we got married, we moved to sunny California where we basically had it all. We had the success of the world, we had great jobs, we bought an ocean view home, we had beautiful cars, we went to the beach every weekend. It looked like the perfect life and the perfect marriage and we were happy.

Jeff: Cheryl and I wanted kids. We had been married a couple of years and the reality of the situation was we were having trouble conceiving. So we visited a couple of doctors, we had some infertility issues and got that taken care of. And the girls are actually *in vitro* twins, and they were born in July of 1988. It was just an awesome day. I couldn't imagine being any happier, just the whole miracle of having two girls and in my eyes, my family was now complete. I had a beautiful wife and two beautiful daughters.

Cheryl: Really it started to unravel for me. About two years into the marriage I started feeling like something was missing in my life and I didn't know what that was. And I kept burying the feelings and didn't tell Jeff about it really because it seemed like something that was stupid. We seemed to have everything, he was a really wonderful husband, life was good and I was feeling empty. For me, we didn't have much intimacy. I didn't feel like he knew my heart, I didn't feel like I knew his heart. And I just became more unhappy and more unhappy and more unhappy and buried it deeper and deeper and deeper. As time went on, I got involved in pretty much just in my job. And what that was all about, my identity was pretty much there. I started to emotionally disengage from Jeff and in my heart I was really emotionally divorcing him. I never thought of divorce. It wasn't an option. I just never considered that. I was dying inside, that's what I felt like. And I didn't know where to go or what to do. I thought that if I talked to anyone about that, they would have thought I was stupid because it looked like I had the perfect life. As I was feeling emptier and emptier inside, it was really lonely. I had a job that was very visible, I worked around a lot of men. And what was happening was the men at where I was working and even the executives of the company were paying a lot of attention to me and I had never really thought about that before. I just kind of took it in stride and just really didn't give it a consideration until I was to a point where I was feeling so empty that I just started to feel like, "Wow, I like this." I liked this attention that I was getting that I didn't seem to be getting at home. I never considered having an affair or getting involved with anyone. As time went on, I was getting angrier and angrier with Jeff and he didn't even have any clue. And I was looking forward to going to work so I could get the attention there that I was somewhat needing, I guess. I went to our national sales meeting and began talking to a man I had known from our company from a different city. We just began talking about our marriages, and it was very innocent. He was telling me how unhappy he was and for the first time I was able to express to somebody that I was unhappy. And what began on that trip was nothing of a physical affair, but it was an emotional connection that I felt like I had never had before in my life. And it caused me to plummet down into having an affair with this person. And to be honest, at the beginning, I was ecstatic, I felt like I had found the love of my life, I thought my kids would be better off if I married someone new. I still haven't really said at this point that I wanted to divorce Jeff. I really wasn't at that point yet, but I knew that I couldn't let go of this other relationship. The other half of me was strewn with guilt. It almost felt like I was two people living two different lives. And I was so messed up inside and it was causing the lies and everything. I had so much energy that I was using. I was exhausted emotionally. And while Jeff was at home and we had our children and doing the family thing, I had this other thing going on on the outside. And when I think back now, I basically was miserable.

Jeff: We had been married about eight years and it was a Sunday afternoon and I was getting ready to go play golf with a friend of mine. And I walked upstairs just to say goodbye to Cheryl. She had been talking to her mom on the phone. I walked in and she was on the bed crying. I said, "Cheryl, what's wrong?" And she said, "Well, I have something to tell you. I'm not sure I really love you, and I'm not sure I ever loved you." I was like, "What are you talking about?" Because up to that I was clueless. I thought things were perfect and great, and I couldn't imagine our marriage being any better.

Cheryl: Jeff never actually found out about the affair until way after the divorce was final, but what Jeff did find out was that I was unhappy. And he found me on our bed one day crying and asked me what was wrong. I said, "I don't think I love you. I don't know that I ever loved you." I never told him about the other person. I was really scared about that, as I should have been. I was completely stepping out of line and didn't know how to control that. So he found out that I was unhappy and as I pursued divorce, that I was serious and leaving him and destroying our marriage really.

Jeff: Honestly, I didn't know until after the divorce about the affair. I knew who this guy was. We had been transferred from Los Angeles to Dallas, and I started seeing him around. He was showing up to Parent/Teacher conferences with the girls. So I put two and two together obviously. But up until that point, I didn't know that for sure. I was very angry, and I didn't like the idea of there being another man in my kids' life, the idea of somebody else living with Cheryl as a step-dad to Brittany and Lauren. That really bothered me. I was very angry. I was actually upstairs in the children's bedroom reading them a story at night when the doorbell rang. Cheryl was downstairs, but she didn't answer the door and it kept ringing. So I picked up one of the girls and went downstairs and answered the door. It was the sheriff delivering me papers, and that was the first I knew about it for sure. At first I just couldn't believe it, and then I couldn't believe how the papers were delivered. I was so angry, and I was desperate. I wanted to do anything I could to save my marriage. And we had gone to marriage counseling a couple times but her heart wasn't into it. And I begged Cheryl to go back to marriage counseling. "How can we divorce? We have this beautiful family, two gorgeous daughters. We're just in a tough time. We need to get some help." But she was adamant about getting a divorce, so we were divorced several months after that.

<End of video>

Matt: Okay, so this is very real, very gritty, very painful stuff. I mean, you're talking about some depths of emotion and some depths of despair that I don't know go deeper than this kind of betrayal and this kind of confusion and this kind of hurt. I think that if we were honest, all of us at some level and at some place have experienced some of these emotions. Whether it's betrayal or whether it's divorce or whether it's something else, I think we've all been in this dark valley. We talk a whole bunch here about the way of Jesus and who Jesus is. And the question of the morning is: Does Jesus make sense here? Does Jesus work here? Does Jesus make sense when it gets this bad? We're going to do something different. It's really the first time we've it here. We're going to kind of do the Village this morning Oprah Winfrey style, except we'll go full on the Jesus route. So I have invited Jeff and Cheryl to be with us this morning. So they're going to come up and sit with me, and we're going to chat a little bit and then we'll go from there. So this is Jeff and Cheryl. Will you welcome them on? This takes a lot of courage. I know that when we start here, there's all this tension in the room. Like, "Oh, they're sitting so close. How could they do that." And everybody's waiting for this thing to go Springer, but we'll hope that we don't need to break anything up.

There are a couple of things that I know from chatting with you the past couple of months and even seeing on the video that I try to get my mind around and try to reconcile. Here's one of the biggest ones. Jeff, you said that the moment you really found out that Cheryl was miserable in this marriage and feeling empty and so alone, it was this complete shock to you. And I think it's the way you phrased it that made me go, "Oh man, give me the right eyes to see." Because here is your wife over this period of two or three years really plummeting into despair, but as far as you could see, you would describe it as perfect. Is she that good of an actress or were you somewhere else? Can you help us with that a little bit?

Jeff: Well, it's hard to say sometimes, but truthfully I was selfish. What was going on in my life was I was all focused on my job and getting ahead in life, buying the ocean view home, having the BMW, all the stuff. And I wasn't focused on the Lord certainly, and I wasn't focused on my wife. So I didn't see it coming.

Matt: Now you have these beautiful little girls. I think they are two when this thing starts to unravel. Can you talk to us about the journey with the girls through the divorce and through the breakup? I'll let

you say it, but I knew you had a friendly divorce as best as you can define that, but talk to me a bit about the struggle with the girls there and what the girls were experiencing as this thing started unraveling.

Cheryl: By the time we got divorced the girls were four. And at that age you don't really think they get too much about it, but their little hearts do. They were hurting. The time that I really realized it was when I found Lauren sitting on the floor in the bathroom one day just crying. And I thought, "They're not going to be affected by this very much because they're so young. And by the time I get married to this other guy, Jeff will probably have another wife and everything will be just great. We're friendly with each other, so our divorce is going to be just fine." The truth of the matter is they did get it. And as we divorced and started the whole visitation and custody, they couldn't understand on Christmas morning why mommy wasn't there one year and daddy wasn't there the next year. We used to take each other to the airport for vacations and I would drop him and the girls off to wherever they were going and *vice versa*. They never could understand what was going on.

Jeff: Probably the toughest part for me was every night. At bedtime, kids just kind of spill their guts right before they go to sleep. Every night it was uncomfortable. When they were at my house, Lauren would be crying for Cheryl. And when they were at Cheryl's house, Brittany would be crying for daddy. But because we lived five minutes away and we tried to make this as comfortable for them as possible I would call Cheryl when Lauren was crying and say, "Can you come over for Lauren and comfort her or can you take her to your house?" And we did that just about every night.

Matt: Now talking about your backgrounds spiritually, I know Cheryl, you were raised Catholic and did the Catholic school but really never had a relationship with Christ or anything like that. And Jeff, you actually invited Christ into your heart when you were ten and then in college made the left hand turn that I know so many here have made. So during the first marriage, there's no real connection with Christ and I think you've said previously that it was kind of a Christmas/Easter deal. But as this thing unraveled and as the divorce started becoming eminent, God started doing some things in you and started working some things in you. Why don't you we talk about those things. Jeff, we'll start with you. Why don't you talk about what Jesus began doing in your heart, and then we can hear from Cheryl.

Jeff: By the time I got to the end of myself and I was so desperate, I just ran back to Jesus. I can remember just about every night lying in my bed weeping and saying, "Forgive me for neglecting You for the last fifteen years. I'm desperate now, I need Your help, Lord. And when we moved here, we had started going to a church and I got involved helping teach the senior high school boys in a youth group. I probably shouldn't have been doing that, but one of the first books they had me teach was *The Disciplines of a Godly Man* by Kent Hughes. And every week I was studying the lesson of how to be a godly man. And I went, "Wow, how ironic, because I'm certainly not this godly man that I'm teaching these high school boys to be." Through all that Jesus just loved on me and put people in my life that loved on me. The grace of God is just awesome.

Matt: I love your story. It's so wrought with irony. Here you show up at the church and they're like, "Why don't you teach this?" I love it. And if you've grown up in church, that's so true. We're just like, "We don't know you, your marriage is a wreck...teach us *The Disciplines of a Godly Man*." That's so how it's played out over the years, isn't it? So Cheryl, why don't you chat with us a little bit about what was going on in you before the divorce and then after the divorce, what Jesus began to do to you.

Cheryl: As we came to Dallas, for the first time in our marriage we started going to church. And even though I was emotionally divorced from the whole thing, I still decided to go to church with Jeff. So that was a God thing definitely. As I would sit in church, what I realized was I believed in God, I believed that Jesus was God's son and all that, I had absolutely no idea about a relationship or anything about the Bible for that matter. As I would sit in church, I realized that God was passionately pursuing me. I was finally starting to get that. I would sit there and it would seem like every sermon was prepared just for me. And I would cry through every service, and I didn't understand any of that. As a few months went by, I realized that there was this war going on in my heart – for God or for the worldly temptations. So I was starting to get the whole thing. Even though that was all going on, I was still thinking I was in love with someone else, pursuing this other relationship, divorcing Jeff and divorcing him. I said, "Well, I'm going to keep going to church." So I left that church and went down the street to a small church. And some friends of mine took me by the hand, just put their arms around me and started to love on me like I've never been loved before. I didn't get that. I was like, "Okay, this is weird. Am I supposed to trust them? What's the story?" And the same thing would happen, I would sit in on these sermons and I'd hear and I'd hear and I'd hear and God was just penetrating so deeply into my heart. One day, after probably fifty times of hearing the gospel, I heard the gospel. And I wanted what these other people had, because I couldn't figure out what it was. As time went on, I realized it was Jesus that I didn't have and that He was my Savior. So I accepted Him, asked Him into my heart literally three months after our divorce. What's ironic is today is the anniversary of our divorce, August 21, 1992. Anyway, God started me on this path that I didn't even understand, and He was teaching me His ways and I couldn't get enough of the Word. I was going to Bible studies going, "Wow, where did this all come from? I'm 33 and I've never heard any of this stuff before. The one thing He laid on my heart was, "Cheryl, I want to put your marriage back together." And I'm like, "You've got to be kidding me. I don't want that. I just left that. I've spent ten years where I don't want to be. I'm in love with this other person. I'm out of here. I don't want that." And I saw this huge devastation that was left behind me and I wasn't really phased that much by it.

A couple months after that, I started going to a Bible study that Tommy Nelson used to do locally. And in January, he always did the "Song of Solomon." And I went, "Okay, I don't know what the Song of Solomon is, but I'm going." So I started going, and on the first night he gets up there and goes, "Open up your Bibles to the Song of Solomon." And I'm paging through my Bible in the New Testament and can't find it. So I finally find it and he starts talking about how this is God's book on how to have a relationship. And I was like, "God had a plan for that? God has a plan for marriage?" So all this stuff is new to me. And as I sat there for six weeks, my mouth was dropped open the entire time. And I was sitting there going, "Oh my gosh, Jeff and I did this all wrong." And He said, "Cheryl, I told you I want you to pursue putting your marriage back together." And I was finally willing by that time. I said, "Okay, I'll try to go down that step." It led me to break off this other relationship, which I knew was not of God and I was so deceived in that. So God said, "Okay, you need to go and talk to Jeff. The first thing you need to do is repent and ask for forgiveness." Because I was just beginning to learn about that. So I wrote this letter, because I knew that if I got in front of him, I would just cry the whole time. So I thought if I write a letter, sit down and read it to him, that would be better. It took me a month to write the letter. I called him and said, "Can I come over and talk to you?" And he said, "Why?" I said, "I just have a few things I need to talk with you about." And he said, "If it's not about the kids, I don't want you to come over." And I said, "Please, just ten minutes." And being the nice guy that he is, he said okay. So I go over there and I'm like, "Can you sit right here next to me?" And he said, "Are you out of your mind? No, I'm not sitting next to you." So I told him, "Okay, just sit there and let me read you this letter." So I read it to him and went through the whole repentance, asking for forgiveness, etc. At the very end, I said, "You know, I really feel like God laying on my heart that we're supposed to give it another shot. And Jeff said, "You must be crazy. You're out of

your mind. It's not going to happen."

So God put me on a path to reconcile our marriage, but He had another path first and the path was "I want to teach you what it means to be patient and long-suffering. I'm going to teach you first what it means to obey Me, to surrender your life completely to Me. Life is all about Me, not you and Jeff, not you, not your kids, but Me and you." He taught me what it meant to persevere with Him, stand along with Him and endure with God. He gave me verses and verses and verses throughout, but two of them really stuck with me. One of them was Ephesians 3:20, because I couldn't see this happening, and it basically says, "I can do immeasurably more than you can ever ask or imagine." And the other one is Matthew 19:26, which is, "*With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.*" So I stood on those verses and walked along with God...for a little while.

Matt: So you keep going back to Jeff going, "Let's fix this thing...let's fix this thing...let's fix this thing..." and he keeps going, "No...no...no..." How long did that last?

Cheryl: Seven years.

Matt: That's the number "seven"...followed by the word "years." Just so you're with me. Because I guarantee you there are people in this room this morning that have come in here going, "Maybe this will finally be the sermon that does it for me." Like it's this one little easy step and then everything is fine. But healing is a process and it takes time. So for seven years you're going, "Come on...come on..." and he's going, "No way...no way..." But then God starts changing your heart, Jeff. Here's my question for you. We're watching this video this morning, and think I can speak for the majority of the men going, "I would kill someone" and "I could never forgive that. I could never get over the bitterness, I could never get over the betrayal." I think I'm pretty right on there for most men watching this going, "Man, if my girls cheated on me like that, I don't know that I could ever let it go." And there's been this thing that we've seen over the last three years here, and I'll just describe it using real characters where a woman will want her husband to be this godly man and this Christ-centered, loving her like Christ loved the church kind of man and he's not. He's not doing it, and the marriage kind of unravels. And as it unravels, because he's an adulterer or he's so distant and not there, when that marriage unravels, this guy gets that shock wake up call and presses hard into Jesus and then over a period of time becomes all that she wanted him to be in the first place. But she's still so angry and bitter and frustrated that there's no way it's going to reconcile, because she won't let go of the hate. Or switch out the positions and it's the same thing. I'm just talking about the reality of not being able to let go of hurt and anger and bitterness. So why don't you talk to us a little bit about that journey, and then we'll go from there.

Jeff: Well, I was definitely angry. And for the three years following the divorce, I was so angry at her that I couldn't even look at her. It was terrible. But as I would lay awake at night and just cry out to the Lord, it just became apparent to me that this anger that I was holding and harboring in my heart was eating me up. It wasn't doing anything to Cheryl even though my anger was directed at her. It was eating me up. So one night I was reading Proverbs and I came across Proverbs 3:5-6, verses that I had memorized as a small child, "*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.*" I just read that thing over and over, and I was going, "God, for the last fifteen years I've been leaning on my own understanding and look at my life. It's pretty screwed up. But now I think I want to trust in You with all my heart." It's just amazing how you wrestle with the Lord and how He brings you to your knees, the change that He can make in your heart.

Matt: And so Cheryl continues to try to woo you, and you finally really press into Christ and began to deal with your anger and unforgiveness and bitterness. And then you guys started dating again and that turns into something else. Why don't you chat a bit about how Jesus brings this thing full circle.

Jeff: One thing I wanted to tell you too is that I was going to a Friday morning men's Bible study and I had three guys who were my accountability group. And for the last couple of years, I had them praying that God would put this godly woman in my life to be my wife. Well after we prayed that for a couple of years, one of the guys finally said, "Did it ever occur to you that this godly woman that we're all praying for to be your wife is Cheryl?" And when he said that, I was so ticked off. But the truth of the matter was I did know that. God had put that on my heart. But my fatal flaw or the sin that I battle every day is the sin of pride. And I was going, "What would I ever tell my mom and dad? What would I ever tell my friends that went through this divorce with me? What would I tell my brothers and sisters that prayed for me and helped me through this divorce?" I was still struggling with this whole sin of pride thing. God was working on me, but I wasn't there yet.

Cheryl: That's why the dating took a little while. But we did start dating, and that was about five years into the divorce. And our dating was kind of funny. The way it looked at first was we did everything as a family. So that was the "date." I started asking Jeff to come over for dinner. He told me no for about a year, and finally he said yes and I thought I was going to faint. I think I prepared all day. Right before that, the one thing that I dabbled in was "You know what? God, this isn't fair because I'm standing and Jeff is dating and this isn't right. I have absolutely no guarantee this is going to happen. So I kind of want to keep my feelers out there just in case." And God just slapped me over the face one day and said, "Look, you're walking with Me or you're not walking with Me." And I said, "I don't know." And I prayed for two weeks, because I was not willing to surrender completely. After two weeks I said, "I'm Yours. I'm doing this. I know I can't date, I can't do all these things, but I'm going to walk with You." And that's when the whole thing started with Jeff saying yes to dinner. And what started happening was he was over two or three times during the week. And then he would pick up the girls, get in the car and have one of them call me and say, "We want you to come over for dinner." So I had to cancel all my plans because God said, "Do this." And we finally were just dating and we started going on real dates of our own. One weekend the girls had just come back from Pine Cove or Sky Ranch or somewhere like that and we had picked them up and told them that we had good news. They said, "What is it?" "We'll tell you when we get home." And for a fifth grader that's torture. We got home and proceeded to tell them that we were getting back together and getting remarried. They were the "Parent Trap" kids, the twins always trying to get us back together. So told Lauren and she was hysterical. She laughed for two hours and ran around the house going, "You're kidding, right?" And we said, "No, we're not kidding. It's going to be October 3rd." And Brittany, who's heart is on here shoulders, she buckled at the knees and just lost it and she said, "Really?" And so we got remarried.

Matt: Well man, I think all of us in our lives have these peaks and valleys. That's just part of being human and part of being in a fallen world. It's part of why we love trying to live the way of Jesus and long for that day where the fullness of Him is here and it's known. Because then the peaks and valleys stop and we've just got the peaks. The thing about your peaks and valleys is it seems like the valleys in your life are really, really deep and they're dark and there's a lot of hurt and pain. And then your peaks are above the clouds and high. Jeff, we've got a lot of young men here, we've got a lot of young marriages, we've got some men who are doing very well in business. What would you say if you could say anything to us from where you've been? Because I can guarantee you every man on the way home is going to be like, "How you doing, baby? Are you alright? You look great today. I love you." Every dude on the way home is going back Casanova. I can promise you that. But if you could say

something to us out of where you've been, if you could say something to us as men and as fathers and as single men who are going to be husbands, if you could say something to us from what this last fifteen years has been, what would you say to us?

Jeff: First I would tell you to date your wife. And guys, ask her, "How are we doing?" Because a lot of the time, we don't pick up on it. But probably the most important thing out of all of it is that God is a jealous God and He wants to be first in your life. That needs to be the first and most important relationship you have in your life. I learned that a tough way. He got my attention. If He wants to get your attention, He's going to get your attention. And then I think about our marriage now, and the times that we're happiest are the times when I'm asking Jesus to help me be a better husband instead of demanding that Cheryl be a better wife. Biblically speaking, we can't swap out our wives, but Jesus can change your heart. And for me, for those three years after the divorce, I hated her. I could not look at her in the eye. And now, I can't imagine being more in love with her. And that's a God thing. So give God a chance, bro.

Matt: I want to repeat what you said, because I think having my own baggage coming into marriage, what you said has been the one thing that's helped me get a pulse and a grasp on my own heart and my own relationship with my wife. What he said that's so profound is that marriage started working and started making sense when, instead of demanding that Cheryl be a better wife, he began to ask Jesus on how to be a better husband. And instead of trying to fix his wife, he journeys inside his relationship with Christ and starts being obedient to Christ and starts pressing into Christ, and that's this thing that becomes this really freeing, intimate thing. Because what happened in their first marriage biblically is they came together physically and emotionally for a season, they didn't have the spiritual bond. So emotions are flighty, are they not? Absolutely. You can go from euphoria to despair in an instant in relationships, not because you live with a sinner, but because you're one too. If you're saying "no," don't get married. And so he said something very, very, very profound there and that's that he stopped trying to do surgery on Cheryl and started submitting to God in his own life. And I think that's profound, and in my own life it's been such invaluable advice. And Cheryl, the same kind of question. Marriage is this really tough deal for a lot of us, and I know there are women in here who feel so alone and they're sitting next to their husband right now. And they feel so alone, and they're in this thing by themselves. And some of them might have already started that process of divorcing emotionally from their husband and are looking for some other thing to fill that. I'm so glad you're here and I'm so glad you can speak today to us, because you have this really unique view of things because you bought into temptation that things are better on the other side and then felt the sting of that. If you could say something to our ladies here, married, unmarried, great marriage, poor marriage, what would you say to us today? What would you say to the ladies here?

Cheryl: The truth of the matter is I didn't even realized I was emotionally divorcing Jeff until I divorced him and started dealing with myself. And it doesn't have to be an affair, it can be anything else that you can go towards to fill it. The biggest advice I have is run as hard and as fast and as passionately as you can with Jesus. That's the number one thing. Because He is the Filler, He's the Savior and He's the Bridegroom. I didn't get all that. When I was pulling away, Jeff had absolutely no clue I was pulling away. I was afraid to tell him because ironically I thought if I told him, he would leave me because he thought there was something wrong with me. If you're facing this stuff, don't be afraid to tell them. If you can't go to them at first, go get help somehow. Go to somebody, go to counseling. One of the best things I ever did in my life was go to counseling. I found a great Christian counselor. A lot of times when you go to counseling, you're bashing the person, right? Well this guy bashed me. And I learned about me and I learned about all my weaknesses and I learned about all my good. It took about nine months, and I was beat up after I got out of there. It was awesome. It was

one of the best things I've ever done. But God gave me the courage to go to Jeff finally but it was too late. So don't be afraid. Seek godly counsel. I wish Jeff and I would have had some godly people in our lives. Because I'm not sure we would have gotten where we got to and ended up where we ended up. We had absolutely nobody walking beside us. Don't be afraid to let someone walk along side you and encourage you and tell them what's going on in your heart. Because if I had told Jeff about the affair, I didn't tell him because I was afraid he'd take my kids away from me, but if I would have actually told him, then that whole big thing would have just collapsed. Because that big lie an the excitement and all that stuff that was going on would have just gone way down. So I'm not sure what that would have looked like, but I wish I could have done that then.

Matt: Well, we sure love you. I know my wife and I have so enjoyed getting to know you. I love that you're around here at the Village. I know I've said this, but we spent the first year going, "Please send us hurting people and wounded people and sick people." And then we looked up after a year and were like, "Oh no, please send us someone who knows any Scripture, even if it's just two verses. Send us someone who owns a Bible please." And God did. For such a long period of time there were just massive amounts of people coming who had never heard anything about Jesus or were in that place where He was the Christmas/Easter God. And so I'm so grateful to see you around and I'm so grateful for your story. It's just got so much hope in it.

Let's pray, "Father, I thank You for the Scruggs. I thank You for hope, because that's what they bring. And I thank You that there is no such thing as the impossible in You. And I pray that You'd whisper really sweet things to us this morning. I thank You that You do make sense even here. It's for Your beautiful, spectacular name I pray. Amen."

I want to read you a passage of Scripture very, very quickly. It's found on Colossians 1, starting in verse 19. "*For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him,...*" This is Scripture's way of saying that it pleased God to put all the fullness of what life could be in Jesus. And so as Jesus walks the earth, He is the image of the invisible God. That's what Colossians 1:15 says here. He is all the fullness of what life could be in this one man, Jesus. And I want to show you why the fullness was given to Him. Look at verse 20, "*...and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.*" So what's happening in this text is God is calling Jesus the reconciler. To reconcile means to make right, and if something needs to be made right, it's broken. You don't make things right that are already right. So in essence Jesus takes what's broken and He fixes it. Let me say something directly, because I know we've got people who are on their second marriage, we've got people who are on their third an fourth marriage. And I'm not talking about yesterday; I'm talking about tomorrow. I'm not saying you're wrong for being remarried right now; I'm saying that there doesn't have to be a fifth. Jesus can make things right. And for some of us in here, this doesn't have anything to do with marriage. Some of us are just so angry and bitter. Maybe we were betrayed by an ex-friend, an ex-spouse or our mother or father and we're just hanging on to that anger, we're just hanging on to that bitterness. You heard Jeff's testimony, you've heard testimonies of others. When all is said and done, you're not hurting anyone but you. You're not burning up anyone but you. And so all week we've prayed for hope, because some of you find yourself in a real dark place this morning. And I know there are wives in here who feel very, very alone even though they're in a crowd. And I know there have been some husbands who have really bought into a really dumb lie that what your family really needs is nice things at the expense of you. We've been talking about the letters to the churches, confession and repentance, soul wealth, finishing strong. I wanted you to see it lived out. I wanted you to see that it's not like a microwave. Cheryl didn't go over there and read a letter and have Jeff go, "Okay, I'm in." But there was seven years of fighting and prayer and arguing with God. And

if you're in that stage where you're arguing with God...He wins. So may the sweet King of hope extend it to you this morning. And may men who are asleep at the wheel wake up before they crash. And may wives who are hiding secrets be honest. And may we seek help from the great reconciler who takes what is broken and fixes it.