

Foolproof Love

Proverbs 5:15-23

“Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love. Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man’s wife? Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman? For your ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all your paths. The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them; the cords of their sins hold them fast. For lack of discipline they will die, led astray by their own great folly.”

Hey, good morning! Hey, it was crazy getting in here today, so I get it. Head nods all around. There are hundreds of people out there; there are still people on Highway 84 right now so it’s crazy. I just want to acknowledge that and say that we are trying to get our best and our brightest minds on what to do there. I know everyone has an opinion and we are weeding through the opinions—seeing which one is of the Lord. Just know we are wrestling with that.

I am at that age where I am starting to feel old. I played basketball the other day for 15 minutes with my kids and the next day I couldn’t get out of bed. I forgot; I was like, “What is wrong with my leg right now and why won’t it work?” Then I realized what had happened. I’m starting to say things that I used to think old people say, like, “What’s up with this music my kids are listening to?” to songs. I’m like, “Who is this?” and “You cannot listen to them anymore” and “Stay away from the radio.” They’re like, “Dad, what’s the radio?” You know, Nicki Minaj, Lil Uzi, Post Malone, Doja Cat—no, that is not music. So, I start to feel old. This was a little while ago—old news—but I said, “I’m gonna introduce you to the greats, okay? I want you to hear real music.” So, I introduced my kids to Garth Brooks. “This is Garth Brooks. This is real music.” They’re listening to it and they’re vibing. They’re like, “Man, we like this.” This song comes on with this epic thunder in the background and then the music comes in and hits this climb. *The Thunder Rolls* in with the lightning. Dad’s in the front. They’re like, “This is great” and then they’re like, “Dad, what’s this song about?” And I was like, “Yeah, what is this song about?” They’re saying, “I know you didn’t want us to listen to that other stuff because it was not good, but what’s this one about?” I said, “Oh, I don’t think you’re old enough to know yet. I’ll tell you one day.” Well, this week was the day when I told them. I’ll read the lyrics to you:

“Three-thirty in the mornin’, not a soul in sight

The city’s lookin’ like a ghost town on a moonless summer night

Raindrops on the windshield, there’s a storm movin’ in

He’s headin’ back from somewhere that he never should have been...

Every light is burnin’ in a house across town

She's pacin' by the telephone in her faded flannel gown

Askin' for a miracle, hopin' she's not right

Prayin' it's the weather that's kept him out all night

She's waitin' by the window when he pulls into the drive

She rushes out to hold him, thankful he's alive

But on the wind and rain a strange new perfume blows

And the lightnin' flashes in her eyes, and he knows that she knows."

That's the first time I've been able to get through it without an emotional response because there is a lot of heart in those lyrics. Today, we are talking about adultery. I'm going to define that as sex outside of the context of marriage. I tried very hard not to teach this message. We gather as a Communication Team every Monday as part of a track offered here at Harris Creek in an effort to raise up communicators and send them to other churches. Every week, we write these messages together in the context of community. On Monday of this week, this was the clear and obvious choice. We taught Proverbs 4 last week, and 5, 6, and 7 all cover this topic of adultery. That's the clear and obvious next step. I don't want to go there. It's just relevant to a sliver of the audience. It's going to make them really uncomfortable. A lot of people will just miss out on it and think, "Hey, it's not relevant to me. I don't need to listen." There are sixth-graders here. I'm not sure I can appropriately tackle that topic in an age-appropriate way. All of these things. We wrote another message— "wisdom comes from the council of many." We put on there an idea, a subject, three points, and some illustrations for me to think about and work with—but the Lord would not let me go. I continued to trip all week over this topic. I sensed the Holy Spirit wants this for us and so it's where we're going to go. If you have a child with you and you're uncomfortable with that, I'm going to pray in just a minute. You'll have an opportunity to take them out there by what we call the library, with that wall of books on the wall. One of our staff members will help you find an appropriate place for them. To help you make that decision, I'll just let you know that my family is going to be here today. My in-laws will be here today; that should be a great time. My wife will be here today. That's my best effort to help you make that decision. Let me pray right now, which is your cue if you choose to do that, and we'll dive in.

God, we just ask you to open our hearts to whatever you want to do right now. If somebody's just stricken with anxiety and fear and really building a wall between them and the work your Holy Spirit wants to do, which is no problem for you, but I pray that you would protect us from the work the Enemy wants to do in our hearts and our minds. Help us to not write this off as irrelevant to us; it is relevant to every single person in the room. Would you help us to know and understand that and respond appropriately to that? In the name of Jesus, amen.

In reality, this topic is relevant to everyone. Especially if you have children, you want to teach them a right understanding of sex and intimacy and what God has for them because, if you don't, the world will. If you're married, you need to know there's going to be no limit to the attacks that your marriage will face in this area. If you're single, there is certainly going to be a word of wisdom for you from the Scriptures today.

You're going to hear me say all the time that so much of ministry is pattern recognition. There are some indicators and some trends that will set someone up to be more likely to have an affair: things like how they dealt with pornography and how they've dealt with sexual addiction prior to marriage. Did they do the work? There's one that I want to put before you that I've noticed and other experts have noticed as a trend that makes you more accepting of and more vulnerable to an affair, and it's this: "It will never happen to me. I wouldn't do that." In fact, I heard a pastor say that in those words: "It will never happen to me." That is one of those things that makes you more vulnerable. The truth is that it's already happened to you. In Matthew 5, Jesus says that anyone who has looked at someone lustfully has already committed adultery in their hearts. Every one of us needs to have some sort of heart surgery today. There is work that God wants us to do. If you look at the Old Testament, the biggest metaphor that God uses for his followers is "adulterers." We have hearts that long for other things. That is the truth. We want to turn our back on our marriage to Jesus—our marriage to God. We want to run to other lovers.

I realize that, for some of you, this will be the most uncomfortable sermon you've ever heard. To others of you, there will be a temptation to go back to memories that are so hurtful and so painful. I'm so sorry. I hate that. I don't want to blame God and say, "Oh, he made me teach it." I would just say that, as a pastor here at Harris Creek, I believe we need this message. This is something that is attacking our church. If you're here and you've been married for a long time, there's a temptation to say, "Oh, that's a young person's game." The biggest divorce rate—the demographic getting divorced the most right now in 2022 and 2023—is the demographic of 55 years of age and older. They are getting divorced the most right now. In regards to us thinking that it's just relevant to a sliver of folks, the health center did a survey in 2021 that indicated that 46% of marriages confessed to an extramarital affair. Forty-six percent—almost half of marriages—confessed to an extramarital affair. I'm gaining clarity on why God would have this for us.

I'll be in Proverbs 5 if you want to turn there. As we move through Proverbs 5, we'll break it up into three sections: your option for intimacy or sex, the trap of adultery, and—before you leave here this morning—how to escape the death that comes from adultery. Solomon wrote this, as a reminder as we're moving through these lectures. This is one of those where a father is speaking this to his son. There's certainly a masculine emphasis. You're going to see that he's talking to a son. That just happens to be how the text is handled in 5, 6, and 7, but I'm going to do my best to make this relevant to both men and women while remaining true to the text.

Solomon is writing this with generational sin in his rearview window and in front of him. Solomon's dad had an affair. Uriah is at war. David is walking along the rooftops to see Bathsheba, Uriah's wife, going through her menstrual cleansing. She's bathing. He sees her and, rather than being grateful for what her husband is doing in service, he takes her, and he sleeps with her. She becomes pregnant. He schemes to bring him back from war so others will think it's his. Being a righteous man, he does not sleep with her, so David panics and has him killed. He sends him to the front lines of battle to be killed. That's Solomon's mom. That is Solomon's mama. David is faced with the consequences of adultery because we do not get away with sin ever. There are always consequences in our life. That is the landscape with which Solomon writes these words.

I'll start in verse 15. Again, I could have chosen chapter 6 or chapter 7, but I thought these words, these Scriptures, most encapsulated the message of those three chapters. It says this in verse 15: **“Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well.”** The visual illustration is an opening. This physiological, anatomical metaphor is that of female anatomy; that's the illustration obvious in the text. Verse 16: **“Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water in the public squares?”** Another name for a prostitute is a street walker—someone that is moving through the streets, looking for the next person to affirm them and physically satisfy them. Verse 17: **“Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.”** The fountain is now a masculine metaphor for the male anatomy. He says, “May you enjoy the wife of your youth.” Here's what he's saying: “Remember when you two lovebirds said, ‘I do?’ Remember when you were there? You guys were crazy about each other. You stood up in front of everyone; you said, ‘for richer or poorer’ and ‘in sickness and health’ and ‘until death do us part, I commit my life to you.’ You guys were crazy. You could have chosen anyone in all of creation. You had options and you said, ‘You know what? I choose you. I want to be with you forever and ever and ever and ever until death do us part.’” He says, “Go back there and stay there and only there.” My first point is:

1. Do not go outside your marriage.

Do not go outside your marriage for intimacy. God invented sex. As the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, it was his brilliant invention. He made the parts. He made them function the way they do. He put the nerve endings where he did. He made it feel the way he does. He says, “The only place that you can enjoy this is in the context of marriage between a man and a woman. That is it. It's exclusive to that right there.” In fact, the Holy Spirit would write through Paul—later, in 1 Corinthians 7—that **“since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relationships with his own wife and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife and likewise the wife to her husband.”** He goes on to inspire these words in verse 9; he says, **“For it is better to marry”**—speaking to single people now—**“For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”** He could have put a lot in that blank. He could have said, “For it is better to masturbate than to burn with passion.” “It is better to pleasure yourself and find release than to burn with passion.” “It is better to have some other kind of sex than to burn with passion.” But he doesn't. He says there are two options: you have a desire and a drive and the only place that you can satisfy that desire and that drive is in the context of the covenant of marriage. You do not want to bring anyone else into your marriage. This includes porn. This includes things you might read. This includes images you might take in through movies and videos, as we talked about last week in terms of guarding your heart. If you missed it, go back and listen; it's certainly relevant to this week, in chapter 4, right before chapter 5. You don't want to go outside of your marriage for intimacy of any kind and this includes pornography.

He says, in verse 16, **“Should your springs overflow in the streets, your streams of water overflow in the public squares?”** When our kids were younger, there was a park, and it was the park of all parks. It was the park everybody went to. It was the Mother's-Day-Out park; it was the play date park; it was the one with the really big slides and the climbing wall and all the big swings. Everybody would go to this park. It was always busy; there were always lots of people there. In the middle of the park, there's a square post with a water fountain attached to it. This

was a very public water fountain. This water fountain became a landing ground for lots of people and used gum. It became a place where you would water your pet. Because it was right there in the public, it was the water fountain that every homeless person within five square miles would find and drink from. It was that water fountain. I remember sitting there on the bench with my kids playing and I'm thinking, "Who would drink from that water fountain?" It's the water fountain that everybody drinks from, so nobody should drink from it. This is the metaphor that this author uses to say, "Listen, if you're married, God has given you a water bottle with your name on it. It's the best; it's the Stanley Cup. It's a great water bottle and it's yours and you can drink from it. You can drink from it forever" What we consistently do is say, "No, I don't want to drink from my God-given water bottle. I wonder where that park is; JP talked about a water fountain. I'm gonna go find that. I'm thirsty." That's what the cool kids in Gen Z say: "He's thirsty." Have you ever heard that? "They thirsty." They think they invented that. That's actually a couple thousand years old from Solomon. That's what we're seeing here.

Let me tell you something. Some of you are bothered by that water fountain metaphor. Let me tell you something. I'm so humbled to get to be your pastor. I have not withheld from you the struggles; the very rough road that I've walked in terms of sexual addiction; the work that I've seen God do to heal my own heart; the temptations that still linger that I fight. I'm talking about sexual sin in front of you with the mic strapped to my face, but I feel like the chief of all sinners—the dirtiest water fountain in the room. Jesus made me a new water fountain. That's the reality. Jesus cleaned up this water fountain. I'm not trying to say anything theologically inaccurate and I'm not trying to overstate anything. I'm just telling you that he made me new. There are still temptations. The enemy still desires to take me out; my flesh is still there. It wants to seek—like a dog to his vomit—the things that I drank from, but I stand before you a new water fountain. I say that to you to offer you hope. This metaphor really moves throughout the Scripture. He says this in Jeremiah 2, and again, the metaphor is for God's followers. He says, "**My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water.**" We are a people always looking for somewhere to drink. There's going to be a time when you're really really thirsty and you don't have a water bottle. There is something presented to you that says, "Here, drink from me." I want you to commit in your hearts, right now, that you would rather die of thirst than take that in. Are you okay in the desert dying of thirst rather than drinking from a broken cistern?

Verse 19: "**A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.**" The word "intoxicated" is the Hebrew word "shabah" and it's really not interpreted "intoxicated" anywhere else that I've seen. In fact, if you look it up, the number one definition of that word is "led astray," but one that you might have in your Scripture—your version of the Bible—is "captivated." I'm telling you that because you're going to see this same word again in the next line. "**Why, my son, be intoxicated with another man's wife? Why embrace the bosom of a wayward woman?**" Again, that word "intoxicated"—shabah—it's "captivated." What he's saying, the reason he uses that word twice, is that he says, "Be captivated by this one that is yours, not that one that is not." It's the theme: "be captivated by this one, not that one."

There is going to be temptation for the rest of your lives—single or married—to think the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. "Man, their marriage—it just seems like they don't fight like we do. It seems like they get along better. They have common interests. They go on

vacation and take these family pictures with the sun setting and they're all dressed the same. When did she buy those outfits and how did they do that? Man, I want it that way. I want it that way. Why can't we be them?" Fact of life: the grass is not greener on the other side of the fence. The grass is greener where it's watered. If you're in a marriage, that's your marriage. The only way your marriage is going to be a good marriage is if you work really hard on your marriage and you get the help you need within your marriage. Marriage for everyone is hard. We had a marriage conference here this weekend and that was a big permeating theme. Man, marriage is hard work for everyone. Don't be deceived to think that it's easy for someone. It's not. The grass is not greener over there. Be captivated by the one you have. That's what I would say is the second point:

2. *Be captivated by the one you have.*

All my single friends say, "Well, I don't have one. Who am I to be captivated by?" You do have one, so hear me out. Don't let me lose you with what I'm about to say because it's the most preacher thing I could possibly say. You have Jesus, right? Listen, hear me out: any of your married friends are going to tell you that marriage teaches you about sacrifice and submission. That's true. It really does. The Scriptures tell us that: Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, 1 Peter 3. Sacrifice and submission. Singleness teaches you about the supremacy of Christ. Now, if you just rolled your eyes or the eyes of your heart, listen. If you're like, "Oh, yeah, tired of learning that lesson." Consider heaven. I'm not sure you're going to be crazy about heaven because heaven is one long lesson of us being married to Jesus and him being enough. Sufficiency, right? You're going to be dead a whole lot longer than you're alive for your 70 or 80 years on Earth. At some point in this journey, Jesus stopped being enough. I'm telling you: he is enough.

To my married friends, there's always going to be a temptation for you to be attracted to someone who does not have responsibility attached to them. They don't have kids pulling on them all day long. They don't have the burden of work that will make them come home and complain to you. You're going to have an opportunity to segment off your relationship into some hotel room or Airbnb or the office or a work trip. You say, "Oh, he can do all of the responsibility. He can stay right here, and we could just rob this of all the pleasure that we can get from it and none of the responsibility." That's always going to be really attractive. You cannot compete with the pleasures that an affair offers. Do you know what's happening in the midst of an affair? Your endorphins shift into overdrive. Your pupils dilate, letting in everything that is around you—all of the feels. Your autonomic nervous system shifts into overdrive. There's fear mixed in with pleasure, which heightens the pleasure. I had a young friend say, "You make it sound better." In some ways, it is. That's the truth. In some ways, it is better—for about 32 seconds, and then reality sets in. Then, you look up and you realize it's burned down everything that the Lord has worked to build in your life. By better, I mean "more pleasurable." Is the goal for us to experience as much pleasure as we possibly can? Man, heroin seems like it would be amazing. Crystal meth, right? Those things offer you a ton of pleasure in a moment, but they want to rob you of your life. They want to steal from you. An affair and pornography? It's a shortcut.

Because God did make women to be captivated by us—and I understand there is all kinds of confusion around roles today and that there are exceptions to the generalities and the stereotypes—but the truth is that God did make men and women different. Marriage is work and,

specifically, in the context of sexual intimacy, it is work. It's slow and it is a long, slow pursuit. Pornography doesn't ask any of that from you. No, they don't even know you. They are there and available to you with the click of a button. They say, "I am here for you. Take a drink from me," but on the back end, they seek to take everything from you. That's the reality because that same fear factor, those same endorphins, the same autonomic nervous system in overdrive, it's there with pornography too. You begin to look over your shoulder. You think, "Hey, who's there? I'm not supposed to be doing this. I'm not supposed to be doing this. It feels good." This makes it feel even better. What happens is that you mistake it for love.

I'm so tired of someone telling me, "But you don't understand. I love them." Okay, I don't understand. May I write the script? I've been here a couple hundred times. I can tell you that this is how you feel, and this is what they said, and this is what you did, and these are all the things stirring in your heart and mind to think, "It didn't work out with this one but it's really going to work out this one" –this thing that we've built on complete and total selfishness? What you do in those situations is that you begin to follow your feelings. "How do I *feel*?" That's what got you there in the first place. "It felt good so it must not be wrong." See, on the back end of that affair, you're like, "Whoa, that 32 seconds is over with." You're think, "Whoa, that was wrong, but it felt really right, and the feelings are really right." It tricks you into thinking, "Man, this must be really right." Satan loves that so much. Gosh, he wants to have a heyday with you in that. "It feels really right." There are a lot of things that feel really right that you're not supposed to do. "Well, if God didn't want me to do it, why would he make me feel this way?" Because of Genesis 3, there are all kinds of things that you feel to be right, but in the end, it leads to death. Proverbs says that twice. There's a way that seems right to someone, but in the end, it leads to death. Stay away from the death that is there. Pornography is a slippery slope of destruction because you experience a drug and then you want to go and get high on that drug. You want to go back, and you want to get that same high, but you need to use more of that drug and so now you need to go down this pathway that is dark. I'm not going to be explicit here in my explanation, just trust me—it is a dark spiraling staircase that leads to hell. It is dark and you keep trying to get that same high, so you've got to take more of that drug.

Last week in the service, toward the end of the service, there was a disruption. If you were here, someone had a seizure or passed out. It's called a vasovagal syncope. I practiced saying that so I'd say it correctly. That's a type of seizure caused by anxiety. Here's what was going on: they were visiting from out of town from Belton, looking for churches. They visited here with a background of pornography and felt a conviction in the message. I began to talk about some shows that I watched. He had watched the same show. With his wife sitting beside him, he began to feel anxious—the Holy Spirit. I share that with you with his permission—with their permission. He said, "Tell them." Why would they want you to share that with us? Because the heart that's well is the heart that tells. Because the heart that is well is the heart that tells. When you get to a place where you're like, "I don't care who knows. I want to take my story and I want to share it with others," that's real healing. That's real freedom. When you sit in this place and you've been saying in your head, "I'm not going to do it. He's not going to convince me. He's not going to convince me to tell anyone. He's not going to convince me to tell anyone." You're going to leave a prisoner. You are going to leave a prisoner—captivated. Do you know what they said? She said, "I felt so loved, not just by the medical volunteers, not just by the doctors who responded to care for my husband, but by the pastors who came around us and helped us deal with the real issue. In one day, I felt so loved. We found our church." That's what she said: "We found our church." If

you're in Belton looking for a community group, I've got two people trying to find one there. They would love to jump in with you and get healthy. They are on a fast track to health.

I know there are all kinds of situations here. I know there are wives who desire sex more than their husbands. I get all of the exceptions that you might sit in, and we see that a lot. I just want to encourage both of you to be captivated by the one you have. If you don't have someone, be captivated by Jesus. It's not a Band-Aid; it's a real, truth-filled prescription. Adultery and pornography are traps disguised as shortcuts. You'll get stuck there. It's never been—to anyone in the history of the world—it's never been worth it. Verse 21: **“For your ways are in full view of the Lord, and he examines all your paths.”** When we look over our shoulder, “Is anybody seeing?” It's actually an activity of doubt because God always sees you. He sees everything that you do. In fact, I'm reading this book right now and there's a chapter on pastors who have had affairs. I'm reading that to know how I avoid that outcome at all costs. I'm looking for the common thread, and the common thread in all of them is secrecy— a private life, an extra phone an email on another server that somebody can't see. This part of my life doesn't have the banner of confidentiality, you understand? I've forfeited a right to privacy. I have forfeited a right to privacy. I don't want any area of my life that you can't see, because if it's there, I will be tempted to put something there that's going to drag me down. **“The evil deeds of the wicked ensnare them; the cords of their sins hold them fast. For lack of discipline they will die, led astray by their own great folly.”** It's like we're sneaking around in a cage at the zoo where all of the angels and God himself see everything we do in that cage at the zoo. Number three: it says, “For lack of discipline, they will die.”

3. Discipline yourself to escape death.

Discipline yourself to escape death. You have to fill your heart with the truth because Satan is a liar and he's always going to present a lie to you. If you're here and you're not married, certainly there are temptations to have sex outside of marriage or use pornography outside of marriage. I want you to know that there's really only one reason that someone would have sex outside of marriage. It's because they don't value the covenant of marriage. Anyone that will have sex outside of marriage is communicating something really clearly and really plainly: “I am willing to go outside of marriage for sex.” That's what they're saying. Don't be surprised when that happens because they're trying to tell you that really plainly. “Listen, there's the marriage covenant. I don't value the marriage covenant. I'm not going to wait for the marriage covenant. I'm going to do what I want to do. I follow my emotions. That's what you need to know about me. I do what my emotions tell me to do—what my feelings tell me to do. I want to follow them. I'm willing to not hold sex in that place where God says it's reserved for it. I'm telling you that I'm willing to go outside of that for intimacy.” There's only one reason that someone will do that: it's because they don't fear God. The reason I had sex prior to me being married was because I didn't fear God.

It's crazy—when Monica and I got married 18 years ago, we moved into her little apartment, and she went out of town for a weekend to see a friend. I had a friend coming through town from college and he said, “Hey, do you want to grab dinner?” He and I went to dinner; we're catching up over chips and queso; we're having a great time; my new wife is out of town. This woman walked up to us, and she was perfect—physically beautiful; everything was in the right place; beautiful—and so I just assumed that she was coming up to my friend because he's got a lot going

for him. She turned to me and said, “Can I buy you a drink?” I look at him and I start to laugh because I’m thinking, “Is this a joke? Am I being punked right now? Is Ashton Kutcher going to jump out of the bushes or something?” She doesn’t laugh. I look and I can see she’s sincere. I say, “Oh, I’m married.” She says, “Well, is she here? Because I don’t care.” In that moment, it felt like I got struck by lightning. I was terrified and excited all at the same time. I’m a new Christian. I barely know anything, but I know my wife’s out of town. My brain, for a minute, begins to scheme around; “Okay, how do I get us away from him? What is that going to look like? I need to get her number.” I’m sitting there in the situation, and I hardly know any Bible, but I know Proverbs 5, 6, and 7. Somebody said, “Hey, you’re starting to read the Bible, so read a Proverb a day. On the first, read 1; on the second, read 2. There are 31 chapters.” I knew Proverbs 5, 6, and 7.

The saving grace, in that situation, was that I looked at that woman and I thought, “Oh, she hates me. She doesn’t love me. She wants my wife to hate me. She wants my in-laws to hate me. She wants my parents to hate me. She wants my unborn children to hate me for just a few minutes of ecstasy. She wants to take my life and burn it to the ground and that thought was God’s saving grace at that moment. This doesn’t go anywhere good. It may feel really good and be so exciting, but then who’s going to be left to pick up the carnage? To put together the destruction? You have to decide right now: are you ever willing to go outside of your marriage? You will have an opportunity and it’s going to be attractive.

If you have gone outside your marriage, it will never, in your entire life, be easier to bring that to the light than right now. The Enemy’s gonna say, “You can’t do that.” I’m telling you—you can do that, and we will come around you as a church. We will help you; we will support you; we will do all we can to help you save your marriage and pick up the pieces. It’s a lie that it’s easier by keeping that in the dark. It’s a lie.

In summary: don’t go outside your marriage; be captivated by who you have; and discipline yourself to escape death. I think one of the things God used to say, “Hey, you’ve got to teach that” was that, on Tuesday, I go to staff prayer. I was just looking around the room and seeing how many people on our staff have been impacted by this—either their parents or firsthand, in their own situation, or a dear friend. Just on our staff. I thought, “Oh my goodness.” There, one person shares their story. The next day, I said, “Hey, would you be willing to share that in front of the church?” Would you listen to my friend Meredith’s story?

[Video audio: Meredith] Chris and I met in college at Texas A&M and got married in 1995. He went to med school during those early years of our marriage, but in 1998, Chris was working a crazy amount of hours—over 100 hours a week. I began a sales job and was assigned a mentor to help teach and train me in my position. It was a young single guy about the same age that I was at the time. Very quickly, we forged a friendship that Chris was aware of and knew about, but before I knew it, I found myself in a place of committing adultery and doing something that I thought I would never do. Initially, I told Chris that it was only emotional adultery. I was in a situation where I felt like I needed to say something, but I didn’t want to tell him the whole truth because I was fearful of the consequences. I, as a believer, did feel shame and regret for what I had done. I knew it was wrong. I was wrestling through that because I was really very quickly entangled in my sin. At the end of 1999, I told Chris the whole truth and that my adultery was, in fact, physical as well. He responded to me that day with forgiveness. He would tell you that the

process of forgiveness really just began that day but, for sure, each of us coming to each other and looking to the Lord and saying, “God, what do you have for us in this? How are we supposed to respond as believers in Jesus?” Community played a huge role in how we were able to walk forward. This season of our life was 25 years ago. We never want to go back there. Part of that is having people in our lives that know the miracle of the story is that God did heal. We celebrate 28 years of marriage this year. We have four incredible daughters. He’s good. He’s given—he’s recreated our marriage. He redeemed, not just me and not just Chris, but who we are together. I think, what I would say to those people that are hearing my story today, some for the first time, is that, if you’ve experienced adultery in your marriage or if you know someone that has walked through that, that you would hear a story of redemption. Healing is possible. I think, for those of you who are currently maybe considering it or walking through adultery, and no one knows, hear me say that you need to tell someone because what you’re experiencing—that’s not God’s best for you. That’s certainly not God’s best for your spouse. *[Video ends.]*

[JP.] For some of us, the part that we’ll play in this journey is forgiveness. It’s difficult and it’s an opportunity to live out the gospel—to understand what God has done for us in allowing his Son to die to win us back into marriage. That same Spirit that defeated death is the one that’s readily available to us as followers of Jesus. We want to help you. That’s something we can do. I love that Meredith and Chris, her husband, taught at our marriage conference this past weekend. It’s just what God does. The restoration that is available—that kind of restoration is available—to anyone who says, “I am willing to walk a path of repentance.” Yours may look different, but there’s always hope. There is always hope available to you.

God, would you just help us in this calm before worship? Would you search our hearts and root out the ways that we have been adulterous towards you? Show us our sin and help us to forsake it. Would you deafen the lies? Would you deafen us to the lies of Satan and demons that tell us we can’t and help us to be emboldened by your Holy Spirit? He does not give us a spirit of timidity but one of power and love and the discipline to avoid the death that comes from sin. Would you root your word and hope deep in our hearts? In the name of Jesus.