

Hi my name is Thelma and I have been attending the Vineyard for about 2 ½ years. I came from a family of 6. I was raised on a farm in Wisconsin and I have believed in God and Jesus all of my life but it was not until I came to Vineyard Community Church in October of 2005 that I comprehended the real meaning of Jesus dying on the cross for my sins. I was raised in a church. I turned Catholic when I got married so our children would have a common religion, however this did not fill the void in my life. I was married for 21 years to a marine who was often absent from our marriage, if not physically then emotionally. The majority of parenting our 3 children was my responsibility. I did not work outside of the house; I was a wife and mom. I was living a life of dysfunction, and in my opinion my husband was as alcoholic. I isolated and did not have any friends. I always felt lonely, even if I had others around; I always had a sense of being alone. Toward the later part of my marriage, my husband was stationed in another state and I stayed here. He was living a single lifestyle and ultimately asked me for a divorce. I felt like I wanted to die, I was devastated. I did not know how I would survive. Following the divorce, I isolated myself for 8 years; went to work, home and Al-Anon meetings, which is for family and friends of alcoholics. I remember other members of Al-Anon saying they were my family now, but I still felt alone. I had no feelings, I was numb and I felt nothing. One day I received a post card from Vineyard Community Church about the Fear Factor series. A few weeks later, I listened to the previous Fear Factor sermons online (till 2:00 am in the morning) before I actually attended for the 5th Fear Factor series sermon. I felt the Lord was reaching out to me even in my isolation. He was meeting me right where I was at. I needed something in my life and the Lord invited me to His church here. On that first Sunday, I went back to the Connections table to say that it my first time attending this church and that I basically had no life. Someone told me, "Why don't you come on Wednesday night and we'll give you a life." So I started attending a small group. I also continued to attend weekend service. The Wednesday small group that I attended had a time of fellowship and a meal, however I did not attend this part because that would mean I'd have to actually "talk" to someone. I was not comfortable talking to anyone. I sat in the back of the church with my arms crossed waiting for the worship to begin. Someone came and knelt beside me and talked to me. I felt I could not reach out but someone reached out to me and that made me feel welcomed. I felt good. I remember her saying, "One day you will be a leader in the church." I thought yeah right, me? She worked in the school system just like me so we had that in common. I started attending the small group that she and her husband lead. They always ask for prayer requests at the end and would pray for the people. It was still a while before I was actually brave enough to "speak" there and ask for prayer. She told me that night about a class called "Forgive and Live" and that it may be a good class for me to attend. It was during this class that the healing started taking place. I was learning how to forgive my husband and how God is my vindicator and He will fight my battles for me. I also attended the Alpha course which was a very eye opening experience for me; I was learning how to have a more personal relationship with Christ. I was allowing Him to come in and work on all my pains and hurts, I could not heal them myself. I went to all the groups offered at the church. As I grew in the Lord, I wanted to start giving back so I got involved in serving in the food pantry and currently I am working with Alpha. This course is where I really developed an understanding of how to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ,

and my heart's desire is that others that take this course will also have the same experience. If you do not have Jesus as the leader of your life, I want to encourage you to make that decision today. My life has now been changed for all of eternity. I now have the reassurance of spending eternity in heaven. I thank God for receiving that postcard in the mail on the Fear Factor series and how He used that to pull me out of isolation. I still have problems in my life but I know now that God will always bring me through it and I am not alone. God does not want us in isolation and I now have a church family here at the Vineyard. I now have Jesus by my side. He will take care of me and provide for me, He has blessed me with my dream car! My plates on that car read IB4JSUS and my plate holder states Fight Like a Real Man, Get On Your Knees & Pray. This is my statement to the world; I now live for Jesus and will fight through Christ on my knees. Thank you for letting me share my story.