

All right, hey everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. Hope is here, everyone is welcome, and Jesus changes everything. Hope is here for you because Jesus is here for you. Everyone is welcome. No matter where you've been, it matters where you're going in Jesus' name. Everyone is welcome here and Jesus changes everything. Not a little bit, not some of it, all of it transformed and changed in the name of Jesus. Welcome to Valley Creek, as we last week got a chance to kick off a brand new thing – The Someone Else Challenge: Getting Outside of Yourself.

We said all of us have a choice to make from now to the end of the year. We can make it all about myself or we can make it about someone else. We, as a church, are taking The Someone Else Challenge, and every single week we're going to look at a principle from Scripture. We're going to talk about how to get outside of ourselves and then we're going to take a practical challenge together to do exactly that. We're going to step one ring outside of our normal. You see, it's going to be a challenge that's to you and your family and your friends, but it's not for your family and your friends and your roommates. It's for the someone else's in our life. The someone else's that are kind of, one ring out of our normal. That is, those that are in our path, those that are in our daily routine. It's that that barista, that server, that school administrator. It's for anybody that we can engage that doesn't directly benefit us. It's the someone else's. We know the Scripture has a lot to say about the someone else's in our lives.

It says, "Don't merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others." Not just you, but also them. Look at this one, "Those that refresh others will themselves be refreshed." Part of what we know is that this entire time, this challenge isn't just about out here. It's also about refreshing in here. There's a lot of people we talk to that are weary, that are heavy, that are kind of burdened right now. What we know, by faith, is that if we refresh others we will be refreshed. We want to lead you or challenge you because we love you. That's what we're doing. We're leading you by challenging you because we love you. Last week, when we kicked off, we said we're going to take one week to slow down, so we can slow down. Why? Because grace can't be released at high speeds. Sometimes we've got to just slow down a little bit. I guess, my first question would be, how did that go for you?

What was that like just taking a second to slow down, so that we could really decide we're going to engage this challenge and get into the lives of someone else? You see, what we're trying to do during the series, is we're trying to expand our definition of and our love for our neighbor. Last week, we got into the story of The Good Samaritan. The story of The Good Samaritan is one that we may have heard before. Some of us are familiar with it, but we often don't remember how it starts. In the story of The Good Samaritan, a teacher comes to Jesus, and he says, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus thinks about it for a second and He decides to answer His question with a question, "Well, how do you read it? What do you think the Scriptures say?" Then, the man repeats the greatest commandment – "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus says, "You've answered correctly," but then that man can't let it ride and says he wants to justify himself, and he says, "Well, who's my neighbor?"

Basically meaning, what's the least amount I have to do to love those that are hard to love? What's the least common denominator that can be like loving my neighbor? Jesus goes on to tell him a story called The Good Samaritan. The story takes place on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. An 18-mile stretch that was a treacherous journey because the Jews lived in Jerusalem, the Samaritans lived in Jericho and they hated each other. There was animosity, the was vitriol. Think of like, current day Israel and what's going on with Hamas and with the Palestinians. All of that was very much in play in this story that Jesus is about to tell. He says, "One day a man was walking from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he is robbed." Now, timeout for a second. You know what the teacher of the law would have thought? "I know who did it, the Samaritans because those guys be jerks." That's what he's thinking as soon as he hears Him say that. Jesus keeps going, He says, "He got robbed, he got stripped of all his clothes, he got left half-dead on the side of the road."

"Right about then, a priest walks by and sees the man, but he decides to go on the other side of the road, so too a Levite sees him and he also goes on the other side of the road, and he keeps on walking." But, then, Jesus flips the whole thing on its head when He says, "A despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey took him to an inn, where he took care of him." In other words, he showed him grace. He was gracious to him. He gave him undeserved favor, but there's one verse that I left off last week and it is a good one. "The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'"

Now, biblical scholars aren't exactly sure of the next section, but they're fairly confident that what happened is the man took immediate advantage of the generosity. He ordered \$400 of room service and Taylor Swift tickets at the cashier's desk. No, that's not true. That's not what happened. He actually went to the Coldplay concert. Okay, so what do we see here? We see that The Good Samaritan wasn't only gracious, he was also generous. That is, he used his money as a resource to bless this man. We see right off the bat that generosity is one of the keys to getting outside of oneself. I think when we hear this story, we can often place ourselves in different portions of the story. Like, maybe when you hear that, you're like, "Oh man when I see people, I have compassion for them. I want to see them get healed. I want to do stuff to help them." But, when it comes to this part, two silver coins, you're like, "I'm out. I'm not doing that." For others of you, all you want to do is use the two silver coins.

But when it comes to actually engaging and getting into the lives of people and getting into their stuff, that's when it feels like you're going to be out. Where you don't want to step into that. But, you have to understand, generosity is part of how we combat the disease of self. The

disease of self that's rampant in us and in society, "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, and lovers of money." We love ourselves and we love our money. But, in reality it's neither one of those; it's that we're going to love our neighbor. That's what The Good Samaritan does. He loves his neighbor. He sees him and he actually does something about it. He uses his money to be generous to him. Can I just ask you, are you generous? Another way to ask that is, what's in your wallet? Is there anything in there for other people? Because generosity is a mark of discipleship. To love is to be generous.

To be generous is to love and it's part of how we fulfill the great commandment, "For God so loved the world that he gave." There it is, "He so loved the world that he gave." For God, love and generosity were hand in hand. You see, love seeks the highest good of the other person. It's good will to them. Generosity is really good will on display, which means that generosity is love on display, which means that our money reveals our love to the world. For The Good Samaritan, at the point that he had two silver coins in his pocket they were just money in his pocket until he decided to pull those out and hand them to the innkeeper. Right in that moment, love, love was on display. Right in that moment, the kingdom flowed through two silver coins. It was generosity on display. Check this one out.

It says, "Help those in need by working hard." Man, when we work hard we can help those in need. "You should remember the words of the Lord Jesus, 'It's more blessed to give than to receive.'" What this is saying is you're just going to be happier if you give them when you receive. It's not that you won't be blessed if you receive, you're just going to be more blessed, more happy. You're going to be happier if you give to others. I think a lot of us struggle to believe that. But, if we believe that, if we believe that we'll actually be more blessed if we give than we receive, we'll always use our two coins in the pursuit of being generous to other people. If you don't believe that, then two or two million will never be enough. You'll always feel like you don't have enough to be able to give. I think one of the reasons we struggle to believe that really comes down to a possibility of two words that we struggle with – security and ownership. One of the reasons generosity is hard for us is because of security and ownership.

Security – what actually makes my life feel secure. Ownership – who the actual owner of my finances is. Check this out, security, "Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, 'Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.'" First of all, who would have ever guessed that "Never will I leave you, never will I forsake you," is in the context of finances. In the context of money, generosity. The love of money, keep yourself free from the love of money, what is that? That's when I think about it. That's when all my passions go towards it. That's when I have it I'm happy, when I don't have it I'm frustrated. But, in reality, it's not the love of money that is security. It's not money that's security. It's the presence of God that's security. It's the presence of God that makes me feel secure. When the presence of God is my security, then the presence of money won't have to be. "Never will I leave you."

God's saying here that, "It's actually My presence that makes you feel secure." Could it be that if we struggle to be generous that somewhere along the lines or along the way, we think that God has left us? He's not good to us? He won't be there for us? We think that money will be the thing that makes me feel secure. But, if I think like that, then more will never be enough. More will never fulfill me. "Those that love money will never have enough. How meaningless to think that wealth brings true happiness." That's an amazing verse. If I try to get more money, it'll never be enough because it's not actually my security. Ironically, the more that I have, the less secure I'll actually feel. Why? Well, because I'll always be thinking about my money and I'll be worried about it and I'll be trying to make sure I don't lose it and I'll keep it for myself. There's a security that only comes through Jesus.

There's a happiness more blessed when we give than when we receive. That's the security piece, but what about the ownership piece? Well, ownership is also a problem. We have a confusion on who actually owns our money, "But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand." This is King David speaking about building the temple. "Everything comes from you." Man, that flies in the face of rugged, individualistic Americanism. Frank Sinatra sang it like this. Favorite song. "I did it my way." You know what's not quite as popular? "I gave all my money away." Why? Because my way, I'm the one that did it. I pulled my own self up from my bootstraps. Like, my ability, what I could do, how I could earn it. But, in reality, I didn't actually give myself the ability to have the job that I have. God gave me that ability.

In reality, my job is not actually my provision. Jesus is my provision. I don't deserve to keep it for myself because I'm a steward, not an owner of my money. If I don't give, it's because maybe I think that I earned it, I deserved it, my ability gave it to me. But, that's not ownership, that's bondage. That's bondage. Because who lives freer than basically everybody on planet Earth? Little kids in a safe home with mom and dad. Because they know where their security comes from and they know who the owners are. The security comes with mom and dad. Mom and dad own it, which basically means I own it. What's yours is mine, what's mine is mine. They have this understanding of security and ownership. They live free. Can I just speak this over some of you? Jesus is your security. The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run to it and they are saved.

Jesus is the owner of your life. Your life is not your own. You were bought at a price. When I begin to transfer my security and my ownership over to Him, everything begins to make sense. Can I just call a timeout for a second? Isn't it so interesting that it's really hard to talk about money? It's like a whisper, like don't talk about money, don't talk about money. Especially in church, we're like, "Yeah, you shouldn't talk about money, don't do that." But, Jesus talked about money almost more than everything else He ever talked about. There were so many verses as I was preparing to talk to you guys that I was like I was trying to figure out which ones

to use. Because, for Jesus, money wasn't where He got His security and money wasn't where He felt like He had any ownership because that was all in the Father. His security was found in His Father and releasing His kingdom. Who doesn't want you to talk about money? Satan. Because it's how you advance the kingdom of God.

Because generosity is how we can get outside of ourselves and begin to love those around us. For Satan, he wants you to feel challenged and frustrated and inferior and confused by the conversations about money, but it's a resource to expand God's kingdom, not something to be afraid of. Let's go back to the story for a second. "The next day, he handed the innkeeper two silver coins." Sometimes you have just got to read it for what it says. He handed him two silver coins because he actually had two silver coins to hand him. It doesn't say the next day he handed the innkeeper, a maxed out credit card because of purchases at TJ Maxx and Friday night Happy Hours at Applebee's. He had two silver coins to be able to give, so he was able to do that. Okay, what if one of the primary reasons that he saw the man in the first place is because he was prepared to meet the needs that he saw?

What if we often miss what's going on around us, that poverty, that person that's hurting, that situation, because we're not actually prepared to meet the needs that we see? The god of this age has blinded the eyes. Satan has blinded the eyes, and so we're unaware sometimes of what's going on. Now, catch it. What if the priest and the Levite glanced at the man, but they had no way to help him, because for them, he was like a problem that they couldn't solve and a situation they couldn't afford. Because they didn't actually plan in a way to have two silver coins available to do anything about the needs that were out there. Does that make sense? Because the generous people plan to do what is generous and they stand firm in their generosity. They actually planned it ahead of time, a strategic excess. What this tells us is that budgeting is kingdom.

To live in the kingdom, I actually have to budget and plan with the Lord what to do with my finances. I make a plan and then I work the plan and I work with God in the plan in His kingdom. Try and experiment sometime. Give your family or your friends \$100 sometime during, like this holiday season so that they can meet the needs that they see. Just say, "Hey, I'm going to give you \$100. I want you to go and find somebody who's in need and then hand that to them." Watch how quickly their eyes open to every person in every situation because they're ready, man. "I've got this money. I'm ready to give it. I've planned to be generous with it, and so I'm going to walk out in that generosity." It's amazing how much our heart will be open, our eyes will be open to everybody that's around us because we're ready to meet the needs that are out there. Catch it, when we plan to do what is generous, it isn't just transferring money from another place to then give it to someone else. I'm not like taking it from my rent money or taking it from tithes.

It's excess and it's strategic to be generous. I'm planning it ahead of time. Hear me, Satan's got a plan for your finances, but God has a plan for your generosity. Satan's got a plan for your

finances. He wants you to use it all on you and maybe not even like, we said it last week, maybe not me, myself and I, but we, ourselves and us; just using it for our small sphere. Catch it. I just want to speak this over all of us. You're not a slave to stuff. You're not a slave to money. You're a slave to the righteousness of God and Christ Jesus. You are the righteousness of God and Christ Jesus. Then, if you begin to love what you can do with your money, not just what you can buy with your money, the world opens up, man. I believe God wants to help us love what we can do with our money. Do unto others as He has done to you. What we can do, not just what we can buy, not just the stuff we can accumulate.

In order to plan to be generous, in order to budget for it, think about it, plan it ahead of time. It's really important to understand. You can't stop being obedient in one area in order to be generous in another area. Here's what I mean, listen to this. Jesus says, "You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things." What Jesus says here is that tithing is actually not generosity. Tithing is obedience. We walk out by returning the tithe, our first and best 10% back to God, and we are obedient in that because we know that everything is the Lord's and we're just returning it back. That's why you don't give a tithe, you return it to God; because it's His already. When you tithe and when you walk in that obedience, we as a church can step in everything that God has called us to be.

I just want to encourage you, there are thousands of people that you're never going to see or you won't know about that are half-dead people lying on the side of the road that we're able to impact as a church family because you walk in obedience. For those of you that do, for those of you that step into that, I just want to take a moment and say thank you. It's a really big deal because your obedience unlocks amazing moves of the kingdom all across this church family. Tithing, then, is vertical, when we obey and we give back to God, but then generosity is horizontal. When we move outside of ourselves into the lives of other people, "You should tithe, yes, but don't neglect the more important things," like love, justice, mercy, moving horizontally outside of yourself into the lives of other people. Some of you are absolutely amazing at the vertical and you walk that out and you plan it and you plan to do what is obedient and generosity through tithe, but then you struggle to go this way, horizontally into the lives of other people.

Some of you are really great at that. You'll pay for that meal, you'll buy those extra gifts, but you haven't started walking this out yet, the vertical portion of it. If you hear me say that and you're like, "I'd like to, but I don't even know where to start there because like the credit cards and student loans and all the things." Okay, what if we just take a deep breath, and just say, okay, how about if you just ask God for a vision for your finances? God, will you give me a vision for my finances, for my generosity? Then, budget it, start to walk out obedience and tithing, and then expand to the other people, the generosity to the someone else's around you. God wants to give that to you. He's got a way forward to be generous. "Give generously to them and do so without a grudging heart." Pause.

What this means here is it's possible to be generous, but not have a generous heart, but it's impossible to have a generous heart and not be generous. It's possible I could be generous. I can do it for the tax write-off. I can give away the money, but I don't actually have a generous heart, I have a grudging heart. It's impossible to have a generous heart and not actually be generous. "Then, because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to." Wow. What if we just took Jesus at His word, and what this is saying here is, if there's an area in your life you're struggling in, God wants to bless that area through your generosity. Is there something you're struggling right now, where you're like, "Argh, it's just such a struggle." Okay. What this is saying, if I read this correctly, "God will bless you in all your work and everything you put your hand to." You want to win with your teenager? You've got to be generous. You want help memorizing Scripture? You've got to be generous.

You want to win with your boss, with your coworkers, favor at work? Generosity. That is the way forward. He wants to bless everything you put your hand to. The world of the generous gets larger and larger. The world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller. The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed. Does your life feel like it's getting bigger? Is it increasing? Is it expanding? Or does it feel like it's shrinking a little bit? Because if we're generous, our life expands. If it feels like the walls are closing in around me, smaller, smaller, smaller, it's probably because I've been a little bit stingy. I'm missing an opportunity. But, the one that blesses others is abundantly blessed. Church, I think we have a specific opportunity to do that, to do that for the people inside this church family. I think we've got a next level opportunity for the someone else's that are right here inside of our family. "Therefore, as we have an opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers."

Wow. You know what's a bummer? Seeing believers in this family charging other believers in this family for something they could have given them for free. It's difficult to see sometimes places where we could have seen each other as family or maybe businesses that could have absorbed a cost for something that otherwise they charge them and they could have given it to them like they were family because they actually are. How sometimes you're like, "Oh, I'd pay for it if that was like my family." I know. This is a spiritual family. This is a spiritual family that'll never end. The irony is for some of us, you will spend eternity closer with the people inside this church family than some of your biological relatives. I'm just going to encourage you, think about how you could do good, especially to this family, to this body of believers.

I think sometimes we see people in the church as more of a sales opportunity than a generosity opportunity. I've got to give you just a real, I've just got to share my heart, that's dangerous. Because whether it's Judas or Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5, the Lord doesn't take kindly to those that try to extract money from the body of Christ. The opposite of that, I've heard so many amazing stories and I've experienced generosity in so many amazing ways. One time, somebody basically gave us a car. We had sold our car to help pay for the adoption of our youngest daughter and there was somebody inside this church who was like, "I got you. I'll

make it happen for you." We're like, "What? Are you serious right now? Like, you're going to give us a car?" "Yep, yep, we're in for that." I heard another story of a guy who was a plumber who went and used his plumbing skills to help a single mom that was having a difficult time with her toilet.

You ever notice that if you ever say the word toilet, it's not a good story? It's just not. She was struggling with her toilet. The thing was leaking all the time and he knows what to do. He went and bought a toilet and just replaced it, totally took it out of her mind, totally blessed her just from nothing. Didn't charge her, didn't charge her the toilet, just did it because he could. I've heard other stories of 20-somethings that just gave away an espresso machine because God loves coffee and because the people that are their friends love coffee and they just did it to bless them. There are and there should be thousands of other stories like that inside of our church family. Thousands of stories in which we use our two silver coins to pay and help and bless each other. Next time you can pay for it, pay for it. Next time you can give it away for free, give it away for free. Next time your business can absorb it, absorb it. My question for you is when was the last time you used your money to bless somebody inside this church family? What an opportunity. You've got to understand, my body doesn't withhold from my body.

If I have an infection in one part of my body, the white blood cells don't withhold from other parts of the body to go and take care of that infection. It just takes care of it. The whole body takes care of it. When The Good Samaritan saw the man on the side of the road half-dead, lying there naked, it's like he was half-dead and he was there naked. That was like it was his situation. He knew that as part of the body, he was going to take care of the problem within the body. Let's go back to it here. "'Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man that fell into the hands of the robber?' The expert in the law replied, 'The one that had mercy on him.'" Can't even say his name. Just the one that has mercy on him. Okay, well here's how he had mercy. He went to him, he was gracious to him, and he was generous to him. Jesus says, "Go and do likewise." Church, it's time for us to go and do likewise. Are you excited to hear about The Someone Else Challenge for this week?

All right, let's go. "Go and do likewise," here we go. The Someone Else Challenge this week is to be generous to someone by participating in the Hope on the Move: Groceries. We have an opportunity to be a movement of hope for the city and beyond. We're going to give away 1,000 families a week's worth of groceries. Not a meal, a week. The challenge is this. Whether you can afford one can or a carload every single day, what would it look like to be super generous and give to those someone else's out in North Texas? You can use that card that you got, you can see it on valleycreek.org, all the items, but to make a plan to go there and actually carry out the challenge to the Next Step Center, Gainesville, to your location at your campus, wherever that is to say we're going to do this thing, as a family, as a couple, as a circle, choose to have a kingdom moment together.

Choose to enjoy a kingdom moment to be like, we're going to plan this thing, we're going to do it, we're going to step in by faith into generosity. Here's what I believe is going to happen because of that. "As a result of your ministry, they will give glory to God, for your generosity to them." There's thousands of people in North Texas that are going to get a week's worth of groceries. What's going to happen? Maybe God's real, and maybe He cares, and maybe He sees our situation, and maybe He loves us, and maybe I'm going to glorify Him and actually start to follow Him because He saw me in my time of need. How? Through His church, through you. There's going to be thousands of people that want to give glory to God for your generosity to them. Can you imagine how many people have church wounds that when they found out that a church did this for them, they're going to be like, really? A church did that? Yep, that's right, Valley Creek Church, the people of God who just want to be generous to you, who want to love you and be a good Samaritan to their neighbor. Let's go.

I might be a little bit excited about that. All right, so last week we said the irony of this whole story is this. In the story of The Good Samaritan, we often think of ourselves as The Good Samaritan. Ironically, we're not The Good Samaritan. We're the guy lying half-dead on the side of the road. Jesus is The Good Samaritan. The story is about Him. "The next day he handed the innkeeper two silver coins." In the story of Jesus, He didn't hand the coins. He was handed over for 30 pieces of silver. "Telling him, take care of this man. If his bill runs higher," just to be clear, our bill ran so much higher than we could ever dream of paying. He didn't pay with actual money.

He paid with his blood. He paid the ultimate price and He gave the most precious thing that could have ever been given – Himself. The story of The Good Samaritan is the story of Jesus being good to us. "For God so loved the world that He...[gave]." Yeah, that's right. He gave Himself generously to you and to me. Jesus took the Father's Someone Else Challenge and He gave. May we step into the exact same thing. May we be a generous people in Jesus' name. Would you close your eyes and pray with me?

Jesus, that's our prayer, is that we would see Your generosity towards us and it would release generosity in us. That we would see what You've done for us and how You've paid and how You've done everything that had to be done to pay for our bill that was so much higher than we could have ever paid for. So much further beyond anything that we could have paid, You paid it, Jesus. You were generous to us. In Jesus' name, I declare a generosity over our church family. That reports of our generosity would go far and wide. Not just to the thousand families that we're going to feed over this week, but far beyond that. To the someone else's that are out there that life has just beat down. That because of all that they've faced, feel like they're half-dead lying on the side of the road.

That we'd be generous to them to show them how generous God is to us. You just are. You're so good to us, You're so generous, You're so kind. You're so extravagantly over-the-top for us, Jesus. May we be a people that know how much we have been given. How much we have

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been forgiven in Jesus' name. Thank You, Jesus, that You are generous and You are creating a body of Christ that's both generous to outsiders and to each other and to everyone that they call their neighbor. In Jesus' name, amen.