

We are His people and we choose to seek Him with a desperation and a hunger and a thirst. For this last week, we've been praying and fasting as a church, crying out to God for an awakening, asking Him to turn our hearts to Him. 2 Chronicles 7, says, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves," acknowledge that we need His grace and His Spirit in our lives, "and pray," cry out, "and seek my face."

Look for Him with everything that we have, "and turn from their wicked ways," turning from the evil works of darkness of faith towards God, "then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land." In other words, God promises to respond to our cries. What I want you to see is those first couple of words, "My people." Not my person, "My people." There is something about when the people of God get together and cry out to God that moves the heart of God. This is what it means to be a church. It doesn't mean we just come into the same building together. It means we come in as His people called by His name, crying out together for God to move. For the last week, we've been praying and fasting and we've had these little prayers that we've prayed every day, if you've been tracking along with us.

We've prayed them as individuals. For the next few moments, wherever you are, whatever campus you're at, will you just pray as a people, the same prayers you've been praying as a person all week. Whatever campus you're at, will you raise your voice? Will you join with me and let's cry out to God for an awakening. Come on Valley Creek, you can do this. "God, awaken our hearts to You." God, awaken our hearts to You. Open our eyes and our ears. Draw us with kindness. Turn us from the things of this world, of the dead works and of faith towards God. God, soften my heart and awaken us to You in Jesus' name.' The second one is, "God, awaken our hearts to your love." Come on, cry out for that. God, awaken us to Your love. Help us know and rely on the love of God. Help us know how wide, how deep, how long, how high it is.

Help us to believe and be awakened to that we are Your beloved sons and daughters in whom You are well pleased because Your love is life, in Jesus' name. The next one, "God, awaken our hearts to your grace." Oh, come on, church. Awaken us God, to grace. Thank You for grace, a grace that forgives and heals and saves and transforms. A grace that sustains me. Your grace is all that I need. It is sufficient for my weakness. God, Your grace empowers me to go places and do things and live in ways that I can't. God, awaken us and may we grow in the grace of God in Jesus' name. "God, awaken our hearts to Your Word." God, may we be a church that loves Your Word. When Your words come, may we eat them.

May we feast on them and may we not just be hearers of the Word, but doers of the Word. May Your word be a light unto our path and a lamp unto our feet. God, give us a hunger and a thirst for the Word of God, in Jesus' name. Then we cry out for "God, awaken our hearts to holiness." Oh God, awaken us to a healthy fear of the Lord, to an understanding of the holy, holy, holy nature of God, and that You have called us to be righteous and holy. That holiness is about obedience and freedom and life and submission and surrender. God, may we be a

people that doesn't think like and talk like and act like and live like the world. May we not be duplicit. May we not run after sin and the flesh and the things of the devil, but may we be a holy people set apart, chosen by You.

Then, one more, "God, awaken our hearts to the body of Christ." God, awaken us to the very people sitting next to us in the seats right now, that we are the body of Christ and every one of us is a part of it, and none of us can follow Jesus on our own. God, awaken us to that You have assembled us and placed us right here, right now to give and receive, to love and be loved, to know and be known that we are Your body on this earth. The way that we live shows the world who You are. God, awaken us to each other. God, we cry, we ask, we seek, we knock, we pray for an awakening in Jesus' name. Open my eyes, open my ears and soften my heart to the things of God, in Jesus' name.

Will you just grab your seat wherever you are. Once again, I say to you, welcome to Valley Creek. We're so glad that you're here. In the last week, as a church, we've been praying and fasting. We really believe that God called our entire church to a week of prayer and fasting, to really crying out for an awakening, that He would turn our hearts to Him, because there's so much more of Jesus and His kingdom to experience. As you've gone on this fasting and prayer journey this week, for some of you, it was a great week. Some of you, you feel like you found God, you heard from God, you got a breakthrough, you experienced supernatural provision in your life. You were like, "Man, can we do this every week?"

Some of you, you chose not to participate this week. Some of you, you had some other things going on that you weren't able to participate. But I believe that there's some of you that are here today and you tried. You tried to pray and fast and it didn't go like you wanted it to. If you're honest, you're kind of disappointed. You feel like God didn't show up, like you didn't hear Him. He didn't move. You didn't get what you wanted or what you were expecting. But, can I just show you this? "Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." You see, what we did this week was a step of faith and an act of humility. We stepped out by faith to believe that God is, that He exists, and that He will reward those who earnestly seek Him. It was an act of humility by saying, "God, I acknowledge I can't awaken my own heart."

"I need Your grace and Your Spirit to do it." If you stepped out by faith and it didn't go the way that you wanted it to, can I just tell you, you're still going to be rewarded in Jesus' name, because anyone who seeks God by faith will be rewarded. Maybe you didn't get the reward you wanted this week. Oh, but seeking God is never wasted time. He's moving, He's speaking, He's doing something. Like a father teaching his toddler to walk, sometimes as we move towards God, He starts backing up a little-by-a-little to move us further and farther than we ever thought we could go. I believe that happened to so many of you this week. You may have not got what you want or heard how you thought you would hear, but man, you went a whole

lot farther than you've ever gone on your journey with Jesus. We celebrate that. You see fasting, I know we're still trying to get our minds around what fasting is.

If you think about it, it's really just the simple reality of all we're doing is not eating to seek God. We're saying, "I don't want my life to be based on the things of this world. I want my heart to be hungry and thirsty for the things of God." When you fast, what you're doing is you're bringing your flesh into submission and surrender to the Spirit. That's what you're doing. When you don't eat, you're denying yourself. You're crucifying your flesh. Your flesh craves it, your body wants it, but what you're doing in the moment is you're saying, "I'm saying no to that so I can say yes to God." You're practicing denying your flesh and walking in the Spirit. I mean, think about how many times in your life you do things you don't want to do without even thinking about it. Like, when the apostle Paul says, "I do the things I don't want to do and the things I do want to do, I don't do them. What help will there be for me?"

How many times do you do what you don't want to do and you don't do what you do want to do? You say that thing that you didn't want to say; you reacted. You kind of went to that place you didn't want to go. You did that thing you didn't want to do and you didn't even think about it, you didn't even choose it, it just happened. What is that? That's just your flesh. Just living out of your flesh. It's not even thinking, it's just reacting and it's what happens. When we're fasting, here's what you're doing. You're practicing crucifying your flesh and bringing it into submission to the Spirit. In other words, when you say "no" to that cheeseburger now, you're practicing so you can say "no" to that anger later. When I say "no" to that sandwich now, I'm practicing denying my flesh so I can say "no" to that lust later.

But, when I say "no" to that piece of cake that I want really, really bad right now, I'm denying myself and turning towards God and practicing so that I can say "no" to greed later. Because you can't just make yourself do those things in the moment. We have to practice. When Jesus says, "If anyone comes after Me, He must deny himself, pick up His cross and follow Me." Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature, be crucified with Christ. It's no longer you who lives, it's Christ who lives within you. How do you do all those things? We have to practice submitting and surrendering our flesh in the here and now, so we can walk in the Spirit in the then and there. If you got nothing else out of praying and fasting, you got that. You got a little bit more practice bringing your flesh into submission to the Spirit of God. See, you always have to remember that the physical is a picture or a representation of the spiritual. God uses the physical realm to teach us about the spiritual realm, the higher reality.

When we fast from food and we don't eat, what happens to your body? You probably get a headache. You probably had some hunger pains. Maybe you got a little shaky and you probably felt really weak. That is a physical picture of the spiritual reality of what happens when we don't feast on Jesus. See, when you don't feast on Jesus, your mind isn't right. Your mind is sick. Your mind is broken. Your mind isn't all there. A lot of the mental health problems in the world today are because people don't feast on Jesus. They have a headache. Their head aches

because they're not feasting on that which will sustain and make their head right. If we're not feasting on Jesus, what happens to our soul? It hungers and it thirsts and it's never satisfied. No matter what we get, no matter what we put in there, it's never enough. When we don't feast on Jesus, we have a shaky, not body, we have a shaky life.

Our whole life is shaky and there's no stability and foundation. When we don't feast on Jesus, we're weak. We're weak. We can't do the things we were created and called to do. As we've been crying out and fasting this week, it reminds us of our humanity. It reminds us of our mortality. It reminds us that I am not God and I can't do this myself and I am not even able to sustain my own life, but He can and He will. I don't know about you, but I realized this week as I fasted how much I think like the world and want the world and consume the world and rest on the world. But, I don't want any of my heart to be awakened to the world. I want all of my heart to be awakened to God. Not to be awakened to a new thing, but to be awakened to that which has always been there – the kingdom of God and the goodness of Jesus.

I mean, do you remember the story of the prodigal son? Probably one of those famous and familiar stories in the Scriptures is the story of a son who basically wishes his father dead. He wants his inheritance. Why? Because his heart is turned to the things of the world. His father lets the son have free will, gives him the inheritance and the son runs off and he goes for it, man. He doesn't hold back. He goes all the way – lust of the eyes, cravings of the flesh, pride of life. He denies himself nothing that his heart desires and he goes for it and he lives everything the world offers, but eventually the money runs out. The friends go away. The fun is over. He finds himself in a pigpen, feeding pigs, at the end of himself.

There's this little line that's absolutely beautiful that says, "When he came to his senses... he got up and went to his father." When he had an awakening, he turned from the world and went back to his father. When he went back to his father, his father wasn't angry and condemning and gave him the cold shoulder. No, the father was waiting and looking for him and saw him on the horizon and ran to his son full of compassion and love and gave the son a hug, a robe, a ring, sandals and threw a party because his son was now once again awakened to life. I love that line when he came to his senses, when he had an awakening. See, I think there's a whole lot of people coming to their senses right now. I think there's a whole lot of us, this week, we're coming to our senses. We're having an awakening. What's your senses – your eyes and your ears. Your eyes and your ears are being open to that which is good and true and right.

I think a whole lot of men right now are coming to their senses, waking up and realizing that I don't want to live this life of pride and arrogance and individuality. I don't want to be consumed by work and success and money and finance. I don't want to love money and throw away my whole life to go chase some almighty dollar because that is the road of death. You're having an awakening, your eyes, and your ears are being opened and you're turning to God. I think there's a whole lot of moms that are coming to their senses right now; that are realizing how good God has been to them; that God has blessed them and is for them and is with them.

The great privilege of their life is to raise up this next generation; that God has given them those children because He believes in them. Their eyes are being opened and their ears are being loosed and their hearts are turning. I think a whole lot of young adults are coming to their senses right now and realizing, "I don't want to live like this destructive generation. I don't want to live with the lust of the eyes and the cravings of the flesh and the pride of life. I don't want time to be my God. I don't want self to be my God. I don't want to make it all about me. I don't want to put myself in the middle and be full of self-indulgence and immorality and idolatry. I don't want to go that way."

You're awakening; your eyes and your ears are being opened, and you're turning to God. I think a whole lot of empty-nesters are coming to their senses, realizing that their life is not over, that there are still amazing and great things that God has in store for them. I think students are having an awakening and realizing they don't have to throw away decades of their life to follow their peers down the wide and broad road of destruction, but that there is a narrow road with a small gate that leads to life.

I think there are a whole lot of religious people sitting in all of our campuses right now, coming to their senses; realizing that this is not about all the things I think I know, but that there is a Father who is waiting for me to come home. For the first time, I'm seeing it and hearing it. That's an awakening, friends. That's an awakening. That's what God offers you and that's what He wants to do. I think this whole week is about that. See, God's kindness leads you to repentance. Whether you have been trying to turn your heart to God, whether you've wanted God or not, the very fact that we did all of this together is God's kindness. You might have not participated this whole week. That's okay. God's kindness is still even moving right now, trying to turn your heart to Him. Then, we get the opportunity to respond in faith. There's this beautiful passage that the Lord showed me before we even started any of this series.

I just want to read this to you. Okay. I know that looks a little long. Take a breath, but just let me read this to you. Listen. "But make sure that you don't get so absorbed and exhausted in taking care of all your day-to-day obligations that you lose track of the time and doze off, oblivious to God. The night is about over, dawn is about to break. Be up and awake to what God is doing! God is putting the finishing touches on the salvation work He began when we first believed. We can't afford to waste a minute, must not squander these precious daylight hours in frivolity and indulgence, in sleeping around in dissipation, in bickering and grabbing everything in sight. Get out of bed and get dressed! Don't loiter and linger, waiting until the very last minute. Dress yourselves in Christ and be up and about in Jesus' name."

Everything I've been trying to say to you for the last three weeks, there you go. Because let's be honest, we get so absorbed and exhausted taking care of all of our day-to-day obligations that we doze off and become oblivious to God. But, He wants to bring an awakening, opening of your eyes and a loosening of your ears in Jesus' name. He's been doing it. In fact, even as we've been crying out to Him, look at this next verse. Here's what he's been doing, "Prepare

the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." As we're crying for an awakening, saying, God, come, we want to know You. "Every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill brought low; the crooked places shall be made straight and the rough places smooth."

Catch this. When you cry out for God for an awakening, you're preparing the way for Jesus to come and move in your life. When He does, what is He doing? "Every valley shall be exalted." In other words, every valley or hollow spot in your heart is being filled by the goodness and grace of God. Every place where sin has hollowed you out, where the world has eaten you away like termites, where you've been wounded even from childhood and it's left this gaping hole inside of you. Yeah, that valley, that's the one that's being filled up in Jesus' name. "Every mountain and hill are being brought low." You know what's happening? Every hill and mountain – pride and independence and selfishness and arrogance and control, it's being brought low. It's being broken down. Why? Because you're seeing the goodness of God and you no longer want to or have to live that way.

"The crooked places are being made straight." Yeah, the crooked places, the things that are so bent out of shape in your life that you know you could never put them back together; those broken places in your mind and in your heart and in your body that are so crooked and knotted up. Yeah, those are the things that He is straightening out in Jesus' name. "The rough places are being made smooth." The rough and the hard parts of our hearts are becoming smooth and soft in Jesus' name. This is what happens in an awakening – God straightens out the crooked, He softens the hard, He fills in the low, and He brings down the high and He sets us free in Jesus' name. You see, there's one more thing I want to say to you in this concept of awakening. It's simply this.

I think sometimes the reason we're not awake to God is not because our heart is turned to the evil and wicked things of this world, but because our heart is turned to something in our life that we dearly love. I think sometimes our hearts get so focused on this thing in our life that is so important to us that unintentionally we turn our heart away from God. Like that marriage that's falling apart, or that child that's going wayward, or that health issue in our body, or that business that we're trying to make succeed, or that team that we want to see win, or that breakthrough that we're longing to come. Sometimes it's not a bad thing. It's just the thing that we turn all of our attention and our focus in our heart and we literally become dead to God because we're so awake to this.

I think that, for a lot of you, is the thing that God's asking to give to Him so that you might be awake in Jesus' name. See, there's that famous verse that simply says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." See, trust is simply turning your heart to God. It's what it says. Trust is choosing to turn away from this thing that I dearly love and turn to Him and say, "God, I'm going to give it to You. I'm going to lean not on my own understanding because it doesn't

make sense because if I let go of this thing, it's going to fly apart. If I turn and look to You and I'm not looking at this, who's going to make this thing happen?" In all your ways, acknowledge Him and the things of your life that are important, make sure you're awake to God and He will make your paths straight.

Only Jesus can straighten out that crooked marriage. Only Jesus can straighten out that wayward child. Only Jesus can straighten out that sick body. Only Jesus can straighten out that business. Only Jesus can straighten out that thing that you love and you want and you desire more than anything else. It's in giving it to Him that it actually becomes straight. You just close your eyes with me. Can I just ask you, what's that thing, not even a bad thing that maybe your heart is turned more towards than it is to God? That's the thing He's inviting you to surrender right now. Do you have the courage and the faith to say, "God, I so dearly love this thing, and as I'm sitting here, your Holy Spirit is convicting me. I acknowledge my eyes and my ears are zoned in on this thing because my heart is on this thing. I don't know that I can trust You enough to give it to You."

Tell Him that. Then, ask Him for grace to give over that husband, that wife, that child, that business, that team, that dream; the dream. Some of you, it's a dream, but that dream has – you're awakened to the dream and you're dead to God. That dream will never be straight until you become awake to God. Then, He can straighten out that dream. Before we run off into this fall and do it all on our own, what is that thing you just need to surrender to God? That's how you have an awakening. I trust in Him with my heart. I turn my heart to Him and acknowledge Him in this thing.

Jesus, by faith, we surrender things we love, things we're consumed by, things that are gifts from You, but we never want them to have more of our heart than You do. We surrender it in Jesus' name. At all of our campuses now, our teams are going to start passing out communion. The beautiful thing about communion is communion reminds us that we are already awake in Jesus' name. That's what communion does. It reminds you that you've been rescued from death, that you've been saved, that you've been set free, that you've been made whole. Communion reminds you that in Jesus' name, you are awake. Every time we take it, it's a reminder to be awakened even more.

It's simply a cracker and some grape juice. When it gets to you, this is for any and everyone who has put their faith in Jesus. If you haven't put your faith yet in Jesus, when this thing gets to you, we would just ask that you pass it along. Or maybe when it gets to you, you realize your eyes have been opened and your ears have been loosed and you, by faith, take it for the first time. You see, it's so interesting to end a fast by taking communion because when you don't eat for a while, your body detoxifies. Then, the first thing you eat, the flavors that you taste are incredibly rich. They're deep, they're profound, they're beautiful. You realize how much you miss out on by consuming all the foods of this world.

This new thing that you taste, it's like, "Oh my gosh!" I think there's something about communion that gives us an opportunity to actually taste and see that God is good. We spend so much of our life consuming the things of this world that we don't really taste and see that He is good. Communion reminds me that I am not sustained by the things of this life. I am sustained by the very life of God himself. In fact, we call it the Last Supper. It was the Last Supper that Jesus ate before He went to the Cross. What was His Last Supper is our first meal. The Last Supper, the broken body and the shed blood of Jesus, not just the cracker and the grape juice or the bread and the wine. No, no. The body and the blood of Jesus is our first meal.

You understand when you have your first awakening to God, the first meal that you ever feast on is the body and the blood of Jesus. This is why He says, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me shall not be hungry. Whoever believes in Me shall never be thirsty." He says, "My body is real food. My blood is real drink. Whoever feasts on these shall have eternal life. I will be the one to give him life." When we fast and we pray, what we're saying is, God, I don't want to feast on the things of this world. I want to feast on Your body and Your blood. I want to be satisfied by You and by You alone. May you taste and see that God really is good.

The flavors of His goodness are so much more than we realize. May you realize that you don't live on bread alone, the bread of this world, but on the very words of God, the bread of life that sustains and satisfies at a supernatural level, because you are not a body with a Spirit. You are a Spirit with a body. We need to make sure we feast on that which satisfies our Spirit, that our whole life might be whole. On the night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, after He had given thanks, He took the bread and He broke it. He said, "This physical bread is a picture of my body. My body is going to be broken for you. As often as you do this, do this in remembrance of me."

"This is the bread of life. May you never be hungry again." Let's take it by faith. In the same way, after the Supper, Jesus took the cup. He said, "This is the cup of the new covenant. My blood poured out for you. My blood is real drink. The thing that satisfies and heals and saves your life. As often as you do this, do this in remembrance of Me." Can we take this by faith, knowing that in Jesus we have been awakened and He is awakening us even more. Jesus, we cry out to You for an awakening.

Thank You for turning our hearts to You. Thank You that You are my bread, You are my drink, and my life is found in You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!