

Well, hey everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. Whatever campus you are joining us from, I am so glad that you are here; because summer is underway, and so is our summer series – 60 Days of Family. This summer, we're going to learn how to become healthy within our families. For the next several weeks, we have all kinds of things planned for kids, students, and adults, and they're designed to help you connect. To connect with your family, and then, for us to connect together as the Valley Creek family. On the weekend, what we're doing is we're unpacking some kingdom principles that are also going to help us be healthy in our families. Regardless of your season of life, regardless of the unique dynamics in your family, the weekend messages will apply to all of us, because God's kingdom principles apply to all of us.

We're going to jump in. Last week, we started off with the principle of surrender. We said that when you surrender something, you give something up. Well, sometimes when you do that, there can be a void that is left behind. The principle I want to talk about today, it just might fill that void. It's a principle that we're all familiar with. Business owners, athletes, coaches, anybody who has ever had a dream, you know this kingdom principle. The principle I want to talk with you about today is vision. How do you have a vision for your family? Now, I bet we would all agree that Elon Musk had a vision for SpaceX. I think Tom Brady had a vision for every Super Bowl game he started to play.

I think Taylor Swift had a vision for this massive tour that she's on right now. The reason that they have vision for those things is because those things matter. When we look at it, we're like, "Yeah, those are some pretty important big things. You need to have a vision for those." Well, here's my question, if we understand and can even appreciate the importance of having a vision for spaceships, Super Bowls, and Swiftie songs, why do we struggle having a vision for our own family? I mean, doesn't our family matter most to us? Yet, we can struggle sometimes in being really intentional about defining a vision for our family. Now, there's some seasons in our lives that it might be a little more conducive to thinking of a vision, like that season of engagement, where the bride-to-be, groom-to-be, oh, they're thinking about the future, and oh, they're looking ahead.

My husband and I will celebrate 27 years of marriage this summer, but I can remember our season of engagement. I remember we were going through all those great premarital questions, right, to make sure that we were aligned, and one of the questions was family. "You want a family?" "Yeah. Do you want a family?" "Yeah." "Great, look at us being all in unity!" It was awesome. We get married. Three years later, we have a beautiful baby girl. She's amazing. Oh, it was awesome. About three years after that, I told my husband, "I think I'm ready for another one." He said, "Another what?" I said, "Another baby." He said, "I already gave you one." I said, "I know. I want another one." He said, "Why?" I said, "I want four." He said, "Four of what?" I said, "Not four of what, four kids." Okay. It got real clear that we weren't real clear on the vision for our family, and the reason is because we had different perspectives that came from our families of origin.

See, my husband is an only child, and so was his dad, his grandfather, his great-grandfather, and even a couple of generations before that. His idea of family was one boy. We had one girl. My perception was different. My daddy is one of eight. My mom was one of five. I got more second-cousins than you people got socks. We had two very different perspectives on the vision. Now, for those of you that are like, close your people, to you, yes, we had a little boy after that. He's as great as his big sister was, but why do I tell you that question? This is what, I'll tell you the story. It's because I don't want you to check out on me. I don't want you to check out and be like, "Oh yeah, we got a vision for our family," because there just might be a need for next-level clarity as you move forward.

In the name of next-level clarity, I want to make sure we're on the same page, and let's start by defining, what do I mean when I say vision? When I say vision, I'm talking about, vision's the ability to see a preferred future. Let's say that again, vision – it's the ability to see a preferred future. Do you see a preferred future for your family? If so, have you clarified it? Have you defined it? Can every member of your family say it using the exact same vocabulary words? If you got a little, can they draw it with a crayon? That's how clear your vision needs to be. Because see, a vision answers the question, who as a family are we becoming? If you have a kingdom vision, well, that means that you're seeing God's preferred future for your family. A kingdom vision – well, it comes with these guardrails that come in place.

The guardrails help you to navigate in becoming all that God has in your vision of your future as a family. The guardrails help you know what to say yes to, and what to say no to as a family. Like, how will we spend our family time? How will we spend our family money? Do we need to have our kiddo in that particular extracurricular, because is that going to help, or is that going to hurt our pursuit of our family vision? When you say, what does my retirement year look like? Well, what are you doing now to make sure that you were prepared for that vision? Because if we don't have those guardrails in place, the world is full of distractions and decisions, and we won't live our lives. Our lives will live us. Sound familiar? You see, the author of Proverbs, he doubles down on this. He gets pretty serious, and he says this, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Where there's no preferred future, the quality life of your family is going to suffer.

Now, one of our elders, really, really smart guy. He said when he looks at this verse, he likes to flip it, and he likes to look at the opposite. What is the opposite of perish? Well, it's flourish. Opposite: "Where there is vision, the family will flourish." What would it look like for your family to flourish? What would it look like for your marriage to flourish? For your kids to grow up in a home where the whole family is aligned, they've got a vision set before them, and there's guardrails to keep them on track so they can flourish and become everything God designed them to be. Now, when we look at Scripture, there is a guy who I think got this principle really well. We looked at him a little bit last week. We're going to look at him again this week. It's our buddy Joshua. We see Joshua Chapter 24. This is basically his family vision

statement. "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Strong; strong vision statement. You probably have heard that verse before, but here's my question.

What else do you know about him? Who was he talking to? Why did he even say what he said? Well, let's get a little bit of context around this, okay. Joshua, we should probably – there's a whole book in the Bible named after him, so we should probably know something about this guy. Joshua was known because he was the protégé of Moses. At a very young age, Joshua was assigned the role of being Moses' aid. That meant wherever Mo went, Joshua was going to go with him. When Moses went up the mountain, Joshua went up the mountain. He avoided that unfortunate golden calf situation. Whenever they needed somebody to go into Canaan, into the Promised Land, and scout it out and run recon, Joshua was one of the ones that got to go. He was one of only two that came back with a good attitude. When they needed somebody to march around the city of Jericho when the walls came tumbling down, that was Joshua. What we can say, I think, is that Joshua saw a lot of hardship, but he also saw God's faithfulness in all of it.

As a result of that, he has a really unique perspective, and that's what he's sharing here in Joshua chapter 24. He's talking to his people, the Israelites. He's taking them on a little tour down memory lane, and he's saying, "Hey guys, you all have forgotten some stuff. You have forgotten how faithful God was to us and to our ancestors before us." I mean, God was the one who brought the Israelites out of bondage and slavery in Egypt. He was the one who was with them every step of their wandering in the wilderness. He said, "God was the one that got us across the Jordan. He was the one that gave us the victory in Jericho, and He's given us every victory over all of the -ites." Over the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Hittites and the mosquito bites, and anywhere there was an -ite, God gave them a victory over all of it. That's what Joshua was doing. He's saying, "Guys, you've got to remember how good God's been to us." That's context.

Now, let's look at the verse just before his big mission statement. He says, "Now therefore," now that we've all remembered that God is the one that's given us all of these victories, "Now therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. If it's evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day who you will serve, whether it's the God of your Fathers that served in the region beyond the river or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me, my house, we're going to serve the Lord." Joshua was saying, "Look, people, we are living in a time where society cares nothing about the Lord. They're focusing on themselves and the idols that they carry. I know that if I don't have a vision for my family, this society in the world is going to have a vision for my family." Sound familiar? He's telling the people, "You guys got to choose."

"Choose who you're going to serve. Me and my house, no question. We're going to serve the Lord." Okay. Have you ever done that same exercise? Have you ever taken your family on a

little tour down memory lane and you've pointed out God's faithfulness in your family's life? Like, how faithful God was to bring you and your spouse together and maybe to keep you together. How faithful He was in the good times and the hard times. Students, do you see your parents or your step-parents or your grandparents as God's faithfulness in your life? Sometimes, we've got to look back to find a vision to move forward. Sometimes, looking back can be hard. Sometimes, when you look back in the course of your family history, you can see your relatives that weren't walking with the Lord. You're like, "Oh, that. That's where that sin pattern really got embedded in our family and it just got handed down generation after generation."

Maybe as you look back, you don't really see the hand of God. Maybe you see more burdens than you see blessings. Maybe you look back and you think, "Man, my family wasn't what I wished it was back then." Maybe your family is not what you wished it was today. But, it's not too late. It's not too late to ask God, "Give me a vision for my family," and it's not hard either. See, I think we can sometimes get all wrapped up because we think, "It's so hard." Well, Joshua's was pretty right and tight and he did the job. But, if it still stresses you out thinking, "I don't know how to come up with a vision for my family." I've got good news and bad news. The good news is there is a vision for your family, already exists. The bad news is there's a vision for your family. It already exists. Both of them are in the same verse. Look with me at John 10. Jesus is speaking.

He said, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy your family. I came so that they" – your family – "may have life and have it abundantly." Right there; two visions. The first one is the vision of a thief. When does a thief come? When the house is unguarded, when the family's vulnerable. He's going to come only to steal. What's he going to steal? Hey, dad, he's going to steal your attention, affection, and your energy for your family. He's going to keep you wrapped around the axle at work all the time. He's going to kill. What does he want to kill? Hey, mom, he wants to kill your joy and your hope for your kid's future and keep you in anxiety and fear because you see the world pulling on him. What does he want to destroy? Hey, students, I think the thief wants to destroy your mind. You guys have the most brilliant mind. You have the mind of Christ if you're in Jesus.

The thief is wanting to put screens and artificial intelligence in front of your minds, so that he can destroy it. There's a real vision that the thief has for your family, y'all, and he plays for keeps. That's the bad news, but good news. The good news is that Jesus says, "Oh, no, no, no. I have come that this family would have life." See, when we are in Jesus, we get life. We go from death to life, and that's what we have. But, as a family, when we get a hold of a kingdom vision and we line all that life up, that's a whole different story. Now, we're talking abundant life. The original Greeks defines that as "over the top." There you go – vision of a thief and a vision of abundant life. Which one have you picked? Because if you haven't picked one, the wrong one has already picked you. If you're not sure, then answer this question inside of yourself. Does your family initiate or react?

Because a family that has a vision, they initiate. They say, "Oh, no. This is where we're going, and this is how we're going to do it, and this is what it's going to look like." They initiate; they don't react. A friend of mine, her husband's a firefighter. We went to go visit him at the firehouse one time, and we were just standing there chatting. All of a sudden, these really loud noises started going, and he just was gone. Then, I see all these other guys take off running, and my stomach started to get really sick, and my hands started to get wet. I was like, "Uh-oh," because I knew what was about to happen. My friend's husband, sure enough, they were getting called out, and he climbed up in the fire engine, because he was the driver. I guess that's how they drive. He was the driver. He looked over at her, and he smiled at her, his wife. He winked at her. I'm over here having the – I'm crying. I'm having the come-aparts. I look at my friend. She is cool as a cucumber.

I'm reacting in panic. She's responding in peace. Why? Because that's all part of the vision of his life and their family. When you have a vision, you can respond in peace. When you don't, you are constantly reacting in panic, and it's an exhausting way to live. I'm going to ask you one more time. Think of that, and think of your family. Which one have you picked? Because if you haven't picked one, then the wrong one has already picked you. Let's ask it this way. If the walls of your house could talk, what would they say? Would the walls of your house say, "Yeah, a family lives in this house?" Or would they say, "No, abundant life is in this home." Because when there's abundant life in a home, the climate, you can feel it – it's love, it's acceptance, it's safe. The family says words of life when they sit around the dinner table.

The family sits around the dinner table, let's start there. The husband and the wife, they go back and forth, and they're loving to each other. Grandparents and extended family are seen and valued when there's abundant life, but it doesn't mean that it's always going to be easy. I'm going to mean always easy, because Jesus gives us another promise in John. He tells us that, "In this world, your family's going to have trouble. But take heart! I've overcome the world." See, a healthy family, it's not a perfect family. It's not a problem-free family. It's a prepared family, because they've got a vision. They know that when, not if, when trouble comes, they know that they're going to respond and not react. When that health diagnosis comes that's not good, when somebody loses a job, when somebody fails a test or a class, anything that comes down that is bad, this family knows how to respond.

They're going to lean in to each other. They're going to lean in to God. They say, when trouble comes down, we stand up. Why? Because, "as for me and my house, we're going to serve the Lord." Now, we see this all through Scripture. The first-century church, they had them some trouble. They were following after Jesus. As they're following their vision and their families are with them, and when they have trouble, how do they respond? Look what Acts 5 tells us, "...rejoicing." These are people that are being persecuted, and what are they doing? They're "rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering for the disgrace." That's how they saw it. Let me be real clear. If there's going to be a cost to your family for following a

vision of Jesus-focused living. There will be a cost, but you know what? Isn't anything that's a worthwhile pursuit going to cost you something? Talk to somebody that's – talk to a couple that's been married for 10 years. I'll go one better.

Talk to a couple that's been married for 10 days, and say, "Did it cost you something?" Talk to some siblings of a blended family that couldn't stand each other when it started, and yet they have found a way to respect each other. Do you think it cost them something? Talk to an adoptive parent, and they'll look at you and probably with tears in their eyes, they'll say, "It cost me more than I thought I had in me to pay. But for that child that's mine, I'll do it all over again." There will be a cost to your family to following Jesus. But make no mistake, there will be a cost to your family if you don't. A family that does not follow Jesus, they have no guardrails. They've lost sight of God, and so they've become self-sighted. All they can see is themselves. They no longer see the family unit as one. They see themselves as the only one in the family, and that makes them a little grumpy.

Dad goes to work, comes home, and he is so irritated because the family does not appreciate how hard he works and all of the things that he sacrifices. He just goes back to work because at least they value him. Well, that makes mom irritated. Mom starts to spin down this vortex of comparison, and she compares her marriage and her life and her house and her kids and her career and her figure, and none of that measures up. Mom and dad are doing this, and you know who seems to pick up on that real quick? It's the toddlers. The toddlers in the house, they start acting out because they're feeling the tension between mom and dad. When that happens, the teenagers say, "Ooh, divine opportunity. I'm going to push the boundaries." They start making decisions that aren't that great. This whole house is just now reacting, and it's in a turmoil. About that time, a text drops from grandma and grandpa, and they say, "Surprise, we're coming into town for a two-week visit." This house just went to Defcon-5.

Out of sheer desperation, the family says, "Okay, I don't know. Let's just go to church. Maybe they've got an idea." They come to church for one time, and when the world doesn't turn around just like that, they run to the world and to the counselors, worldly counselors, and start throwing money and saying, "Just fix it. Just fix my marriage; fix my kids; fix my life. Just fix it." That, that is the first payment in a lifelong debt that's called the cost of not following Jesus as a family. It's a high-cost pay, because these things change. The kids get bigger, and their problems get bigger. Marriage doesn't get easier. It gets harder, and you're making more payments on this debt, and the interest on it is high. One day, you realize, a marriage that was just on the rocks is now in divorce court. Those toddlers that were just troubled toddlers, man, they're now in high school and college, and you've lost them.

You've lost them, because the thief wants to destroy them. A lifetime of reacting has taken its toll on your family. Now, if any of that sounds a little familiar, or maybe a lot familiar, you know what? It doesn't have to be that way, and it doesn't have to stay that way. I don't even think you want it to, because I believe you love your family. I do. You love your family. Maybe you

need a family vision that's got some love in it. Matthew 22, what if it was, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind... love your neighbor as yourself." What if you just said, "Look, our family vision is just to love God and love each other. We're going to give everything we've got to doing that." Wouldn't that be a worthy pursuit? I think it would. Notice, there's something similar in this as we saw with Joshua. Do you remember what Joshua started with, "As for me and my house." Joshua knew it started with him, your God, your heart, your soul, your mind, yourself.

The vision for your family needs to start with the vision for you. Do you see a preferred future for your own life within your family? Because, listen, epic people make epic families. They do. Joshua was epic. He was epic because he was courageous and he was bold and he was devoted to the Lord. But really, Joshua was epic because he followed an epic God. Do you know what that means? That means you're epic. Come on, you in your family. You're like, "You don't know what mistakes I've made." Great, you've just found out you're human. You, in your family, you're epic. You were made in the image of God. If you've placed your faith in Jesus, you have the mind of Christ, you have the Spirit of the living God living inside of you. You are following an epic God. Follow; follow an epic God. You will become an epic person and the family behind you will, too.

Can I just say, students, young adults, if you didn't come from an epic family, you make sure an epic family comes from you. I'm going to give you a verse to hold on to. Ephesians 2, hold on to this verse. Students, young adults, "We are God's workmanship." God's epic, if you're His workmanship, you're epic. For all the rest of us that are young at heart, we're epic too. "We're God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works that he's prepared in advance to do." Here it is; there's your vision. It's there. You know how we find it? We find it when we keep searching more and more of who we are, who God is, and what we were created to do. That's how you find your vision. That's how we walk it all out. We have to remember, have to remember, that it's success. You want a successful vision? Success is obedience, it's not results. If you've got some vision for your family that you're trying to get them to live up to, you're on the wrong foot friend.

Success is obedience. We get to be called to being obedient in finding God's vision for our life and walking it out. You say, "Okay, how do I do that?" I'm going to wrap this up. I'm going to give you three super fast ways. If you take notes, grab your pencil; number one. If we want to have a vision for our families, the first thing we have to do, you have to surrender your vision for God's vision. Remember at the beginning, when I said we surrender, we give it up, and something replaces it? This is what I was talking about. Surrender your timeline, surrender your expectations, surrender even those demands that you have that you don't dare speak them out loud. Surrender them and get God's, because guess what? God's ways are higher than our ways. That means His vision's going to be higher than our vision. Because when we wake up our own vision, you know what we do? We use words like "only" and "just." "If only my spouse

would." "If only I had a spouse." "If I can just get this kid graduated without making... fill-in-the-blank mistake."

Those are not vision statements, y'all. Those are sad. Those are just sad, little depressing declaratives. When we find God's vision statement, it uses vocabulary words that have strength like, "We will serve the Lord and have an abundant life." "We need to be obedient." "We do the best we can." "We find out what God's vision is and we lock onto it. If we get off track, or if our family member gets off track, God's going to take care of us." Look at Proverbs, "In his heart, a man plans his course, but the Lord determines his steps." In our heart, we do the best we can, and say, "Lord, I hear your vision and I'm going to plan it out. But if I misstep, the Holy Spirit's going to be our GPS. He'll just start recalculating." Okay. Surrender your vision for God's vision. Second thing, it's time. It's time; throw away the idols. You probably know what they are. What you need to throw away, get rid of, or stop doing so that your family can flourish? Idols were a big thing in Joshua's day.

I think they're a big thing in our day. Joshua talked about them again at the end of the chapter. Look what he said, "Throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the Lord, the God of Israel." Look what the people said, "And the people said to Joshua, 'We will serve the Lord our God,'" and there's your obedience. "'We will obey him.' On that day," – boy Joshua was struck while the iron was hot – "On that day, Joshua made a covenant for the people and right there at Shechem," or Flower Mound or Gainesville or wherever, "he drew them up decrees and laws." What are the decrees and laws? Those are the guardrails. "And Joshua recorded," he wrote it down. He wrote it down. Maybe he even put it in Hobby Lobby on the shop on the wall. He wrote it down and he took "it in the book of the law and then he took a large stone and he set it up there." You know why? Because he said, "We're going to need to remember it because we forget." But what did it all start with? "Throw away the foreign gods among you." What are the foreign gods among you? It's the root of the excuses that we make of why we can't walk out the life that God has for us.

You've just got to throw them away. I've got to throw them away. We've just got to be done with it. Last one is this. You've got to define the values for your vision. Now, if you've checked out, check back in with me because this right here is the secret sauce. Vision is where you're going, values is how you get there. This is where it breaks. Because people will say, "Oh yeah, I'm a Christian and we got to Valley Creek and we have our vision and just love God and love others." Then, you hear the way they talk to each other, and you're like, "Time out, vision break. You can't talk to each other like that." If the vision is the heart of the home, the values are the rules of the house. Make sure your kids know the rules of the house and you can do it in a loving way, but they've got to know the rules of the house. Those are the guardrails. Teach them the guardrails and teach them the rumble strips. If you hit a guardrail hard enough, you're going in the ditch. But if you get the rumble strips, you know those things go, drr, when you hit it? That'll get you back on track. Teach your kid the rumble strips. If you don't have this, your vision doesn't have a chance. Okay, that was a lot.



I was excited, so I believe it. Nose to toes, I believe this. Let me just say this right now. If you're a parent and you're like, "Oh, I need help," you're in good company, man. We all need help as parents. We are going to resource you. If you are a parent, we have a one-night parent workshop that's coming up. It won't cost you anything except the cost of a sitter to get your kids taken care of. We're going to tell you in a minute, we'll give you QR code, figure out all the details. But don't forsake the opportunity to get help. We're resourcing you with help. Here's my last thought. If spaceships and Super Bowls and Swiftie songs, if all of those are worthy of a vision, isn't your family too? Because you have an epic heavenly Father and you have a vision of abundant life that is yours. I'm telling you, if Joshua was standing right here, he'd say, "You all, you're living in some crazy times, the world is going to define the vision for your family if you don't."

Choose; choose who you're going to serve, "As for me, my house, we're going to serve the Lord." Will you close your eyes with me. Father, I thank You that You are epic. I thank You that You do give us a vision with values that help us to pursue and become everything You desire us to be. Would you just have the courage right now just to ask the Holy Spirit, what are You saying to me? Where's the invitation? Where's the invitation to surrender something of your vision for His, believing His is better? What kind of idols you've got to throw away? Because you will serve your idols, but they won't serve you. You've got to throw them away. Then where do you need to bring some values to support that vision?

The vision doesn't have a chance unless you have strong values to support it. Where do you have room to grow there? You're epic, and your family is worth it. Jesus, I thank You for the honor and the privilege of being part of this Valley Creek family. May we take everything in and learn everything this summer, and may we live as healthy families, overflowing in abundant life. We pray in Jesus' name, amen.