

All right. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad you are here with us today. And we are in a series called A Different Way, talking about doing the things that Jesus did so we can do the things that Jesus did. And last week, we finished up Season 1 of this series. And we kind of laid a foundation and cast a big vision and tried to lift up your head a little bit and speak to the deep things in your heart. And we asked some really big questions like, who are you becoming? Who do you want to become? Whom or what are you a disciple of? Can you change? And if you can, how do you really change? And we walked through some really big things together. And today, we are going to start Season 2 of A Different Way.

Just like your favorite series, there are different seasons and each season stands alone, but if you really want to get the most out of the season experience or the viewing pleasure, if you will, you have to know what happened in the season before. And when you get into a next season, that season starts with the assumption that you know what happened in the last season. So we are moving into Season 2 with the assumption that you know what happened in the last Season 1. And so if you missed anything that we talked about, I would encourage you to go back online, watch it, grab a hold of it. I'm going to start with that foundation, with that premise that you've got Season 1. Season 2 will be all self-inclusive. So if you don't want to know Season 1, that's fine. Season 2 will still be good for you. It just won't be as good as if you understood what was going on in Season 1. And what we are doing and what we're talking about is, we've been saying, if we want to do the things that Jesus did, we first have to do the things that Jesus did.

If I want to do what Jesus did on-the-spot, I have to first do what Jesus did behind-the-scenes. If I want Jesus' life, I have to first take on His lifestyle. Like if I want to do the things that Jesus did, like have peace, and joy, and love, and be free from the love of money, and not have anxiety, and love my neighbor, and love my enemy, I have to first do the things that Jesus did, like pray, and fast, and meditate, and engage the Scriptures. And so as we move into Season 2, what we're now going to do is start talking about the specific practices, the things that Jesus did that enabled Him to do the things that Jesus did. And the verse that we've been using in this series is just, "Train yourself to be godly." Not try to be godly, not will yourself to be godly, not wait for God to make you godly, not train yourself to be worldly, train yourself to be godly.

My effort and God's grace coming together to change me from the inside out. And the best way we train ourselves is through spiritual practices or spiritual disciplines. And we've just been saying that a discipline is doing what I can do now, so I could do what I want to do later. A spiritual discipline or a spiritual practice is doing what I can do now to open myself up to God's grace, so I can do what I can't do or what I want to do later. You say, what does that mean? Well, it means if I can't be peaceful or be joyful or not be angry, I can't do that right now. What can I do? I can pray and I can fast and I can meditate and I can confess and repent. I can do some things that open me up to God's grace, put myself on the potter's wheel, allow Him to shape and mold and form me into His image and His likeness.

And then eventually God's grace in my life will allow me to do what I want to do later. Those are the practices. Those are the disciplines. And we've just given you some guardrails. And we just said spiritual practices as we go through this kind of Season 2. And I think there'll be a Season 3 and most likely a Season 4. Okay. So just letting you know, this is important. So you really want to make sure you get Season 1. We've just said spiritual practices are not a measure of maturity. Like if you do all these things, it's not a measure of maturity. No one really cares. Maturity is based on love and obedience and the Fruit of the Spirit. The point of practicing the piano is not to practice the piano. It's to become a really good piano player. The point of the spiritual practices are not the spiritual practices. They're to become shaped into the image and the likeness of Jesus. And we said they're an invitation, not an obligation, which means you don't have to do any of these.

There's no obligation, no expectation, no religious pressure to do anything. Now, these are all invitations from Jesus to people who are weary and burdened, who want rest for their souls, who would like to live their life a different way. You don't want to do them, you don't have to. These are not one-size-fits-all, which means not every practice works for everyone in every season. You have to be open as we go through these to what the Holy Spirit wants to invite you into, which means you actually have to. And they are done with God, not for God. These are not things we do for God to get some kind of favor from Him. In fact, we're not doing this for God. God's doing it for us. And we enter every one of these aware that He is with us and He is the one doing the work in our lives. And they're done in the secret place. In other words, we're not doing these to be put on display so your neighbors and your friends and the people in your life see how spiritual and mature and religious you are. No, we do them in the secret place, so the Lord sees them and then He rewards us in the open later.

So spiritual practices, what we've said is, they are a lifestyle. This is not habit-stacking, adding to an already-busy life, trying to force them in. This is about arranging and rearranging our life around Jesus and His lifestyle so that we can become like Him. And Season 2, we're now starting to talk about those practices. And we're starting with the first one, which is Scripture. So Jesus, today, as we start Season 2 of A Different Way, would you come and teach us how to be disciples? Would you come and teach us how to be disciples? Would you come and teach us how to arrange and rearrange our lives around You? Jesus, we don't want to do religious activities for the sake of doing religious activities. We want to become like You. So we put ourselves on the potter's wheel and we say, shape us, Lord, into Your image and Your likeness.

You see, one day after 30 years of hiddenness, Jesus comes to John the Baptist to be baptized. And as He's baptized, He goes under the water. It says the heaven's part open, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus. And the Father speaks from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And immediately after Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit leads Him out into the wilderness. And for 40 days and 40 nights, He is by Himself fasting, and at the end of that 40 days of not eating anything, when you would think He would be at His weakest moment, Satan comes to tempt Jesus. And three times, he comes to tempt Jesus. And the first

time he comes to Him and he says, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

Interesting. "If you are the Son of God," he leaves out the most important word "beloved." Satan doesn't care if you know that you're a son or a daughter of God. He cares if you know that you're beloved because love makes you fearless. "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." And Jesus responds by saying, "It is written, man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Three times Satan tempts Jesus and three times Jesus responds in the exact same way, "It is written." When Satan comes to tempt Jesus, Jesus doesn't freak out. He doesn't panic. He doesn't rebuke the devil. He doesn't cry out to God, "Why are you so mean to me?" He simply responds by declaring, "It is written." And in that moment, we learned that Jesus arranged His entire life around the Word of God. That for the past 30 years, Jesus had arranged His lifestyle around the Word of God.

He read it. He meditated on it. He memorized it. He prayed it. He prophesied it. He studied it. He learned it. His entire life was built around the Word of God because in that moment, He didn't have a Bible to turn to and say, "Hang on, Satan. Okay. This one is the one." No, "It is written." You can't say, "It is written," if you don't know what it says. He built His life around the Word of God. Now, I want you to compare that to Eve. Eve is in the perfection of the Garden. Adam and Eve walk with God in the cool of the day. And one day, Satan comes to tempt Eve much like he did with Jesus. And when he comes to tempt Eve, he gets her to question the goodness of God. See at the root of every temptation in your life is the questioning of whether or not God is good and whether or not God is good to you. And he comes to Eve much like he did to Jesus.

The serpent Satan said to the woman, "Did God really say..." questioning His Word, His voice, "You must not eat from any tree in the Garden?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the Garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the Garden and you must not touch it or you will die.'" Now on the outskirts, this looks really good. "God did say..." The only problem is, if you know the story, this is not what God said. Eve says, "God did say," but it's not what God said. She took a little bit of God's Word and a little bit of worldliness and she put them together and she was completely wrong. And isn't that what we do? Take a little bit of God's Word and a little bit of worldliness, put it together. Like "God helps those who help themselves." And we're convinced that's of God. "God helps" – in the Bible. "Those who help themselves" – in the world.

And we put them together and we fall and we crash. And what we learn is that Eve did not arrange her life around the Word of God. She couldn't say, "It is written," because she didn't know what it actually said. Jesus responded by saying, "God said," Eve responded with, "I think, and I feel." And what we learn is that if we want to do the things that Jesus did, we got to do the things that Jesus did. And He arranged His entire life around the Word of God. And if we want to do what He did, then we have to arrange our life around the Word of God. You see,

God's Word is simply God speaking. God's Word is simply God speaking. Jesus is the living Word of God. The Scriptures are the written Word of God, but God's Word is God speaking.

In fact, this is why it says, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God. And the Word was God." Jesus is the living Word of God. It's God speaking to us through the life, the person, and the work of Jesus. And the Scriptures are the written Word of God. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will never pass away." Isn't it interesting that God's Word was in the beginning and God's Word will be in the end? It always has been, and it always will be. And what's so important for you to understand is that the Bible is not a book. It's a voice. The Bible is not a book. It's a voice. It's a voice of one crying out in the wilderness. A voice telling us God's thoughts and God's will. The Bible is not contained by leather and pages and font and text. It's Spirit and it is life.

It is God's voice. It is God's voice creating, God's voice blessing, God's voice loving, God's voice forgiving. It is not religious commands and expectations. It is not a book. It is a voice. And what we forget is how powerful and profound God's Word actually is. Like, do you realize that God created, sustains, and will redeem all things through His Word? He created, He sustains, and He will redeem all things through His Word. Go backwards with me. In Revelation 19, in the very end, "I saw heaven standing open, and there before me was a white horse whose rider is called Faithful and True" – Jesus – "And out of His mouth comes a sharp sword, the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, with which to strike down the nations." At the very end of all things, Jesus comes and redeems all things, makes all things new with His Word.

That's how powerful it is. And not only that, but the Son is sustaining all things by His powerful Word. He is sustaining all things, literally right now, holding your life together by His Word. And in the beginning, "God said... and (it) was so... and (it) was good." In the very beginning, God spoke, it became so, and it was good. He spoke to chaos, and it became order. He spoke to darkness, and it became light. He spoke to nothing, and it became something. And when God speaks in your life, He creates. And God is sustaining your life in the chaos and the storm through His Word. And God is redeeming and making all things new with righteousness and justice, with grace and truth in your life, in the here and now.

And so what I'm trying to tell you is that God rules His kingdom with His Word. If He created, sustains, and redeems all things with His Word, then He rules His kingdom with His Word. And if I want to be a person of His kingdom, then I have to be responsive to His Word. Kings rule and reign with words and actions. Every king has a kingdom, and through words and actions, whatever is submissive and surrendered to those words and actions are a part of His kingdom. And God has chosen to rule His kingdom through His Word. And whatever is submissive and responsive to His Word becomes a part of that kingdom. And so if I want to live a kingdom life, I have to be one who longs for and values and is responsive, not to a book, but to a voice that comes from a person. I mean, have you ever stopped and thought about this? Have you ever

stopped and thought how or why do fish keep multiplying in the ocean, even though we keep polluting it?

Have you ever stopped and wondered, how is it that plants and vegetation keep just growing up, new plants from the ground, even though we strip the land bare? How is it that animals keep multiplying and reproducing, even though we've destroyed their habitat? How is it that humanity keeps multiplying and growing on this earth, even though we don't value human life? How is it that light keeps going to the edges of the universe and creating that which did not exist in the past? God said, and so it's so. "Let there be light," and that light is still moving and creating. "Let the oceans team with fish," so fish just keep reproducing because they're submitted to the Word of God. "Let the earth team with vegetation coming up from the ground."

"Let the earth be full of animals." "Let man be fruitful and multiply and reproduce." And even in our broken, fallen, sinful state, we are responsive to the Word of God. You say, that's biology and evolution. That's just what fish do. No, it's the Word of God. It's a king who has made a declaration over His kingdom. And even in its broken and fallen state, it is submitted and surrendered to it because it's the all-consuming, all-powerful Word of God. And so if I want to be a person who actually lives in God's kingdom, I have to become someone who responds to His Word. See, there are so much of our lives that is out of alignment with the kingdom of God. Not because we're bad people with evil intent, but because we're ignorant and apathetic and approach His Word casually. There are so many places in your life and my life, they're not in alignment with the kingdom of God. Not because God hasn't spoke, but because I don't know what He has said.

Think how much God has already told us about His kingdom, its values, its principles, its culture, the blessings, the opportunities, what's available. He has already spoken so much about His kingdom. The problem is I don't know what He says, so I can't align my life to it. God said it was so, and it was good. The problem is we don't know what He said. We don't believe it was good, and so it can't be so in my life. I don't know what God said. And what I do know, I question if it's good. And so it is not so in my life. Make no mistake, it will be so. God has just given you the freedom whether or not you want it to be so in your life. This is why Jesus, when He teaches us how to pray, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." You say, "God's kingdom, confusing language, I don't understand it." Well, God's kingdom comes wherever His will is done.

Wherever His will, His heart, what He wants, what He desires, what He chooses, wherever His will is done, His kingdom has just come. And the reason we pray "on earth as it is in heaven," because in heaven, everything is surrendered to the Lord. And so, it's the fullness of His kingdom. But on earth, there are kings and queens with kingdoms and queendoms. And God has given us the authority in this time, in this age to rule and reign and to decide whether or not we want to submit to His words or just speak out our own. And so if I want to see His

kingdom come, I have to surrender my life to His will. And His will is communicated by His Word. In fact, this is why Jesus goes on to say, "Give us today our daily bread." What was it that we just saw Jesus say? "It is written, man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." So could it be that Jesus is teaching us to pray for God's Word in our lives so we will know His will, so His kingdom can come?

That if I want to be a person who lives in God's kingdom, I must be a person who loves God's Word. God's Word will show me His will and His will, when I surrender to it, will bring His kingdom. If I desire to live in God's kingdom, I must love God's Word. To value His Word is to value His voice. To value His voice is to value Him. This is the great invitation – to repent for the kingdom is at hand. God's Word gives us the opportunity to repent and bring our will into God's will so His kingdom can come and I can reach out and take a hold of it. We spend so much of our lives being so worried, worried about the specific will of God. Like who should I marry? What job should I take? Where should I move? Should I buy this car? And that's great. Talk to God about all those things. Just don't ignore the general will that He has already released and revealed to us through His Word.

Consume yourself with that bread that you might know His will, that His kingdom would come. And I bet you wouldn't even be worried about most of the specific will we stress out about all the time. You with me on this? See, I love in Colossians chapter three, Paul and his passage where he's teaching us about how to take off the old self and put on the new self. He says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom. And as you sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your heart to God, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." If I want to dwell deeply in God's kingdom, God's Word has to dwell deeply in me.

God's kingdom is as deep in you as His Word is in you. Because if He rules His kingdom by His Word, and Jesus says the kingdom isn't here or there, it's within you. Then God's kingdom is as deep as God's Word is in my life. And so if I want to dwell deeply in His kingdom, I have to first dwell deeply in His Word, because He rules His kingdom by His Word, and where His Word is received, His kingdom will come. And when His Word is deeply in me, the kingdom is within me. And now I have songs to sing and gratitude to express. And all of a sudden, I now have wisdom to speak. Hear me. The authority to speak comes from the willingness to listen. And if you ever feel like when you talk, no one listens, your spouse doesn't listen, your boss doesn't listen, your parents don't listen, your kids certainly don't listen. It all just falls to the ground. Why? Because you're speaking your words, not His words. The word of the world dwells deeply in you. So it comes deeply out of you. But when the Word of Christ dwells deeply in me, now my words are aligned with His words. Now I have authority. Now I can do my actual commission, which is to rule and reign with God.

And if He rules His kingdom by His Word, how can I rule with Him if I don't know His Word? How can I be a hope carrier if I don't have the hope of Jesus inside of me through His Word?

This is how He creates, sustains, and redeems His kingdom. It must then become important to me if I'm going to ever live on mission to be a person of wisdom. In fact, if you can even catch this, do you realize Jesus says, "The Son says nothing by Himself. He only says what He hears the Father saying." He doesn't speak on His own. He only speaks what He hears. The Holy Spirit, it says, doesn't speak on His own, but He only says what He hears. Think of how much of our life we speak what we feel like saying, not what "it has been written." In fact, at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, it's in the great teaching on how to live in God's kingdom. And this is familiar. You probably know this. This is how to live in God's kingdom. This is the end of the kind of conclusion of the greatest sermon ever preached.

He says, "Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house. Yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears the words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." This is what Jesus says. "Whoever hears My words and submits and surrenders to them is a wise man who has built his life on the eternal, everlasting, unshakable kingdom. But whoever hears these words of Mine and does not submit or surrender to them is a fool who has built his life on the chaos of the world around him."

If God rules and reigns His kingdom through His Word, then we must become people who love His Word, not a book, a voice, a voice that shows us His thoughts and reveals to us His will in relationship, creating, blessing, loving, forgiving. Are you with me on this? You see, there are three profound things that God's Word will do in your life. God's Word will show you what's true in a world full of lies. It will show you what's possible in a world of impossibilities. And it will show you God's heart in a world without heart. God's Word will show you what's true in a world full of lies. Have you ever stopped and asked yourself the question, how do I know what's actually true? You spend any time thinking about like, how do you know what's true? What is good? What is real? What is right? Like, how do you know?

Is it what the news tells you? What you hear on social media? What your parents told you growing up? What you've experienced? What you feel? Your truth? Like, how do you know it's true? And maybe a better question to ask yourself is, how do you know if you're living your life under the influence of a lie? Have you ever stopped and thought about, what part of my life is under the influence of a lie? Jesus says, Satan's name is the father of lies. He is a great liar and deceiver. He speaks in the language of lies. And in this world, he just lies and lies and lies. And when you believe a lie, you empower the liar over your life. Jesus says, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." They don't know what's true. Jesus says, "You will know the truth and the truth will set you free." So truth frees us from bondage. But how do I know what's true? Well, there's this amazing verse that says, "All Your words are true."

All of them. God's Word shows us what's true in a world full of lies. And either all His words are true or none of them are true. Because if He says, "All My words are true," here and one of them is not true, then they're all not true. They're either all right or they're all wrong. They're either all good or they're all bad. There is no in-between. God's words shows us what's true in a world full of lies. This is why you hear Jesus over and over again say, "You have heard it said, but I say to you." "Truly, I say to you." Sometimes He says, "Truly, truly, I say to you," like, "If you didn't get the first, I'm giving you the second." This is true. He says, "I am truth." It's called the Spirit of Truth. It's called the Word of Truth. God's Word shows you what's true in a world full of lies.

Have you ever thought about what it costs you to live your life under the influence of a lie? Think about humanity for all the hundreds of years we believe the world was flat, silly example, but a great one. What did that cost humanity living under the influence of a lie? What does it cost you to believe a lie about who you are, who God is, or you were created to do? What does it cost you to believe a lie about your past, or your present, or your future? What does it cost you to believe a lie about what is good, and what is right, and what is real? Lies like, "I am what I do." Lies like, "I'll never be enough." Lies like, "No one cares anyway." So subtle. And they have that Eve thing to them, a little bit of godliness and a little bit of worldliness, because we wouldn't flat out believe an overt lie, but that subtlety, that darkness, what does it cost you? God's Word wants to break the lies off of your life by showing you what's true. What lies need to be broke off your life? That's when His kingdom comes.

Second thing is it shows us what's possible in a world full of impossibilities. If we're honest, we live very small lives. I hate to break this to you, but most of us live a very small, finite life. We have reduced ourselves, we have, we have built walls and fences. We put ourselves in boxes and we live with the prison of impossibility. And we say the "always" and "nevers." This will always be like this, this will never be like that. And we believe that everything is impossible. Most of us have shrunk our lives so far down that we complain that our life is not more. And yet we're not even close to living to the boundary lines that have fallen in pleasant places for us from God, because of impossibilities.

And so, God says, "My thoughts are not your thoughts and neither are your ways My ways. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts are higher than your thoughts." God says, "Hey, My thoughts are higher than your thoughts. And My ways are higher than your ways. And the way I communicate My thoughts is through My Word. And My Word will tell you My thoughts and My thoughts will show you My ways. Because it's impossible to walk in My ways without thinking My thoughts. And you can't think My thoughts if you don't know My words or hear My voice. And My thoughts will show you what is possible in a world of impossibilities."

Like God's Word will show you that joy is not only possible, it's normal. God's Word will show you that peace is not only possible, it's normal. God's Word will show you that a healthy



marriage is not only possible, it's normal. God's Word will show you that healing is not only possible, it's... (normal). God's Word will show you that a different way is not only possible, it's... (normal). Huh. Impossibilities become possible when God speaks.

Think about all the things in the Bible where something was impossible until God spoke and it became possible, like Noah's Ark. Think about the Exodus, it was impossible until God spoke to Moses. Now, all of a sudden, it's possible. Peter walking on water when Jesus speaks to the impossibility and says, "Come," it's possible. The resurrection of Jesus from the grave, when He speaks and tells the disciples, "I know you think this is impossible, but this is possible in My name."

Hear me. It is impossible to dream, to have a vision, to create, to advance into the future, if you don't fill your mind with the Word of possibility. Listen, if you were here last year in the Hope Carrier series, I did three weeks on dreaming with God. There were the three most resisted messages I've had in years. And you say, "Resisted?" Like, like, listen, it's like a teacher here, like in school, like I know when you're listening, hate to break it to you. I know when you're not. I know when you're excited, I know when you're not. Okay. All the things, right. I know when you resist. Okay. Dreaming with God was the most resisted three messages. Like I can't even remember doing another one that was that resisted. And it really bothered me. And we talked with our team, couldn't figure it out. Same feedback from everybody, like people just resisted it. And I was never able to figure it out until this week. The reason we resisted dreaming with God is because we don't fill our mind with the Word of possibility.

And so all I see are the impossibilities. So I can't dream with God nor have a vision nor create because all I can see is the physical impossibilities in front of me, because I've not filled my mind with the Word of possibility. Could there be an invitation? To fill your mind with words that are Spirit and life, because Spirit is not confined by the physical and the supernatural is not confined by the natural and the kingdom is not confined by this world. The Word of possibility shows me what is possible and breaks through the limitations and barriers on my life to things I believe are impossible. And then it shows us God's heart in a world without heart. Jesus says, "Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him." Listen to me, your mouth betrays your heart.

The mouth speaks out of the overflow of the heart. Your words betray your heart every single time. Have you ever said to somebody, you said something and you regretted saying it? And then later you said, "Hey, I'm sorry, that wasn't me." Maybe you did that even this morning. "Hey, that wasn't me." Actually, it was, because that was what was inside of you. And that's why it came out of you. And Jesus is telling us here that God's Word betrays His heart. It will actually show us what's in there. I'm using the word "betray" to kind of catch your thinking. And what I mean by that is, because God is good, all He can do is bring good things out of the good stored up in Him. And so, the more I read His Word, the more I know His heart. And I

start to actually believe that He is the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and bounding in love, maintaining love to thousands, forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. It's like, He can't hide that.

He can't hide how good He is in His Word because that's who He is. So when I read His Word, I start to see the good that's come out of the good things that are inside of Him because He is good. He can't say evil because there's no evil things that are inside of Him. You with me on this? You see, when Jesus says, "It is written, man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God," what He's reminding us, is that our lives are sustained by the Word of God. But just like your body needs bread, your mind, your soul, and your heart need God's Word.

We're created to feast on it. And in the Old Testament, there's a great example of the Israelites every day, they had to go out and gather manna from heaven, bread from heaven. And it was a physical picture of spiritual truth that every day, I need God's Word. And I can't today eat on yesterday's manna. And I can't today store up enough for tomorrow's manna. No, every day I need to feast on God's Word. And if you don't feast on God's Word, hear me, you don't have to feel guilty, but you probably feel hungry. Your mind, your soul, your heart, are starving. Like if all you ever do is eat on the Sundays when you come in here and hear from us, that's great. We want to feed you, but you're starving.

That would be like eating one meal a week physically. Like you could do it, but your life trajectory is probably going to go like this. Listen, every week when you come in here, I've been cooking all week. Okay. All week, man, and I cook, and I cook, and I cook. I'm trying to be the best chef I can. And I mean like, it needs a little more salt, I put, you know, got to take that out of it. That ain't going to work. It's like, I'm trying to, it's too hot to cook cooked enough, not cooked enough. It needs a little more baking. I mean, I'm cooking all week to feed you the best meal possible. I, my calling from God is to feed His sheep, right? So I want to feed you the best meal possible, but I also want to teach you how to feed yourself.

And if you've ever wondered why on earth do we use so many verses? I think there's like 43 verses in today's message. We're not going to get to them all, but there's like 43. Why do I want to do that? Because I want you to see what's true in a world full of lies. And I want you to see what's possible and what's impossible. I want you to see God's heart. And so I want to feed you, but I want to teach you how to feed yourself. We want to be people who hunger for God's Word. But the problem is, I can't make you eat if you're not hungry.

And just like physically, if you starve yourself to a certain point, you're no longer hungry. We have starved ourselves spiritually to the point where we're no longer hungry. Because we've fasted from what we should feast on. And we feasted on what we should fast from. We fast from what we should feast on God's Word. And we have feasted on what we should fast from, the world. And so a lot of us we're like, we're starving. Listen to me, Jeremiah says, "When Your

words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight for I bear Your name." One of the things that I want more than anything for our church is that we would love God's Word. I mean, love it, consume it, desire it, pursue it, feast on it. It's not a book, it's a voice.

And we would love God's Word because we want to live in His kingdom. And if He rules His kingdom by His Word, then I'm not doing a religious exercise. I'm learning how to live in an unshakable kingdom. I'm learning how to live heaven on earth, heaven in my hell. But I got to be hungry for it. And I got to eat it when it comes. And I love, he says, "For I bear Your name." Do you know what evidence of bearing His name would be? Evidence of being a Christian, a disciple, a follower of the way? Someone who loves His Word.

"When Your words came, I ate them, for I bear your name." Evidence of walking a different way is a love for God's Word that becomes the joy of my heart, and delight, brings light to the dark places around me. I've got a hunger for this. And if you're like, "But I don't hunger for it," that's okay, tell God that! Say, "God, I've starved myself to the point that I'm not even hungry. Would you make me hungry? God, I actually really like feasting on the things of the world." Tell Him that. He already knows, so you may as well open up the door a little bit to be like, "I'm not even sure I want you in, but I'm going to confess. I'm just going to go ahead and say it. I like to feast on the world." God can work with that because you're now at least willing to acknowledge that He's the potter and you're the clay. I long for us to be a church that loves God's Word. I don't care what I have to say. I don't have funny jokes. I'm not really all that inspiring and relevant to the world's dynamics. I get all that, I don't care, I care about this. And I want you to know this and love this. And I want you to look forward to the slides that are in here. I want you to like, feel like you missed out when you see me skip one.

I mean, seriously, not because of me, because you're like, "There's more of God in there. There's more of God in that. Touch that thing again, touch that. There's more of God in there, I want it to come out. It's not a genie in a bottle, but touch that thing. I want, I want to know that." And I think sometimes we sit here and we're like, could you skip a few? And that shows us what we're actually hungry for. And that's okay, acknowledge that. I can't say, "It is written," if I don't know what it says. It's the difference between the lifestyle of Jesus and the failure of Eve. You don't have to live in the way of Eve. You can live in the way of Jesus. And we put all these barriers and boundaries around God's Word. And we think like someone else needs to speak to me on God's behalf. Listen, "The people say to Moses, 'Speak to us yourself and we will listen, but do not have God speak to us or we will die.'" They're like, "Moses, you go hear God, and then come put some slides in a deck and tell us what God said."

Here's the problem. If I won't listen to God, I certainly won't listen to His messenger. Straight up. If you don't hear God, you hear nothing I say because I'm just a messenger, man. "You speak to us, because if God speaks to us, we'll die." Not realizing that without God's voice, you're already dead because God's voice brings things to life, doesn't cause things to die. God's voice creates, sustains, and redeems. If I want anything in my life created, sustained, or

redeemed, I need His voice, because it brings things to life. And Moses said to the people, "Don't be afraid. God's come to test you. So that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." In other words, if you don't hear God's voice, you will never have awe and wonder and reverence and honor. You will never live a different way. You will live the world's way. But when I hear God's voice, all of a sudden my life becomes, "God said it's good. And so may it be so for me and my family."

Changes the whole dynamic. You need other people to prophesy, and to teach you, encourage you, and to equip you, but you got to hear God for you. One last verse for today. The Bible talking about the Bible. Talking about itself as a voice. Voice talking about itself as a voice. "Now then My sons, listen to Me. Blessed are those who keep My ways. Listen to My instruction and be wise. Do not ignore it. Blessed it is the man who listens to Me, watching daily at My doors, waiting at My doorway. For whoever finds Me, finds life and receives favor from the Lord." The voice talking about the voice. Listen, listen, do not ignore.

Listen, watch, wait, find. And what will happen? I will be blessed, I will be wise. I will be blessed, I will have life, and I will have favor. The problem is, we want someone else to listen, listen, not ignore, listen, watch, wait, and find for me. Because I would like to be blessed, wise, blessed, full of life, and favor. But that's not how it works. Jesus listened, didn't ignore, watched and waited daily and found what God wanted to say. And so, if I want to do the things that Jesus did, I have to do the things that Jesus did. And you can almost hear the pleading in this.

Almost. But it's also God saying, "He who has eyes to see, He who has ears to hear, He who has a heart to receive, will." God won't make you see what you don't want to see. And He won't make you listen to what you don't want to hear. And He won't force you to have revelation on something you don't care to understand. The question is, am I watching and waiting not for a book, not for a book, a book that's contained with leather and pages and font and text, but for a voice that's in the book, that's living and active, that Spirit and life that wants to speak to your soul and create and sustain and redeem, invite you deeper and farther into His kingdom of life. If we are going to be a kingdom church, if you are going to be a kingdom person, we must become people who love God's Word, not a book, God speaking. God speaking in all the ways that He speaks, and then arranging my life around that, and then being obedient to that.

And you'd be amazed at who we could become. And you say, well how do I do it? That's a great question. That's part two for next week. Your practice plan, though, for this week, and every week I'm giving you a practice plan. Do it or don't do it. I don't really care. I'm going to sleep good at night. I'm going to do it. You don't have to do it. But every week I'm going to give you one because we're assuming you got Season 1 and you like Season 1. So you're still here for Season 2. Hey, I'm smiling at you. If you didn't like that, you're all right. It's all right. It's all good. Engage the Valley Creek Reading Plan five times this week. Okay. I just basically, here's what I did. I walked you into the gym and I showed you a bunch of the machines.

And I told you what they do. And you're like, "But I don't really..." I know. And I'm like, "Hey, don't hurt yourself this week, but just go try it. And then we'll talk about how to actually use the machine next week." I want to get you going on your training plan. Okay? And if you're like, and if you're like, "Hey, I do it, I do, I do more than that," great. That's great. You didn't, no one's telling you to tone it down, just, but we're all going to start at a place that's reasonable. And if you're like, "But I don't engage God's Word." I know. And listen to me, I love you. And I am doing everything I can to help you think about living a different way and then practice it slowly, methodically, not in a way that kills you. I'm not putting on a machine that you can't handle. I'm not asking you to run a marathon. I'm asking you to put your shoes on and walk to the mailbox. Five times, it'll take you less than 10 minutes each time. So it's less than an hour. You can, if you're a fast reader, you can even do it faster than that.

Right. I'm not trying to give you "how" today, I'm just trying to get you activated with a little bit of open door, a little bit of clay on the potter's wheel, a little bit of like, yeah, God, like, like, I don't know, God, but I'd love to experience a little more heaven in my hell. And if Your kingdom comes where Your will is done, and You reveal Your will through Your Word, I, I got to figure out how to surrender my life to Your Word. That's not a book of paper and leather, but it's Your voice. It's not a mysterious somewhere-off-in-the-universe voice. It's Your voice and You're right here and You're talking to me because You love me. So I don't believe all that, but I want to. So would You help me find five times this week to just start by going to ValleyCreek+ and opening it up and just believing that You're going to speak.

Jesus, we want to be people that say, "It is written," because we know what it says, because we want to live deeply in your kingdom. Lord, for years, we've longed to be a church that loves God's Word. And so many people come and go over the times and seasons. But I pray for this time and this season and this body of Christ that's gathered and assembled in Valley Creek. Would we be people who love your heart. Help us hunger and thirst. Help us not be satisfied with news and TV and social media and the voices of the world because there are lots of voices speaking, but only one voice that can create, sustain, and redeem. There's only one voice whom I want to submit and surrender to, and it's Your voice. So speak, Lord. We know You already are, teach us how to listen. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.