

All right. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. Come on, whatever campus you're at today, Denton, Flower Mound, Gainesville, Lewisville or online somewhere in the world, let's just welcome each other together for a moment. We are so glad you are here with us and we've had a great couple weeks in a row. We had two weeks of Spring Break, Selah, rest in Jesus' name, then together as a church, we prayed for our Easter experiences and services, which was one of my favorite services we've had in a long time, then we had a great Easter, where we met together with the resurrected Jesus, and then last week hundreds of people got baptized are moving forward on their journey with Jesus, and what I just want you to see in all that is that God is moving. He's at work. He's doing things in our lives. He's doing things in our church and there is this growing sense of hunger. There's this growing sense of discontent for the status quo. There is this hunger and this thirst for God.

And we've been in this series, this season, if you will, just called A Different Way: Do What Jesus Did, and we're taking most of this year to just talk about what does it mean to be a disciple of Jesus, a learner, a student, a follower, one who becomes like the one they follow. Allowing Jesus to be our teacher; to give us a vision of who we want to become. And we're talking about, how do we arrange and rearrange, order and reorder, our entire lives around Jesus and His way. We've been saying that if we want to do the things that Jesus did, we first have to... [do the things that Jesus did.] Yeah, you've been listening. That if I want to do what Jesus did on-the-spot, I have to first do what he did behind-the-scenes. That if I want Jesus' life, I have to first take on His lifestyle. You say, well, what does that mean, to do the things that Jesus did so I can do the things that Jesus did? Well, do the things that Jesus did. What did Jesus do? Jesus raised the dead, and healed the sick, and cast out demons, and He had peace in this life; He was full of wisdom, He was able to love His enemy; live in freedom. If I want to do those things, I have to first do the things that Jesus did, like His practices – fasting, prayer, Scripture, community, generosity and so on.

You see, we've used this little image to say, this is a picture of the life that Jesus lived and these are the things that we want. Peace in chaos, joy in every circumstance, purpose in the mundane, being able to forgive no matter what, and sometimes we look at the life of Jesus and we think it's so beyond us, so impossible, we can never live that life. Yet, Jesus Himself says, "I tell you the truth," and anytime The Truth says, "I'm telling you the truth," you should probably... this is important. "Anyone..." Does that include you? "Who has faith in me will do what I have been doing." He says the life that I'm living is not this extraordinary ordinary, supernatural, divine Son of God kind of life. No, this is the normal Christian life. This is what it means to be human. This is what it looks like to be alive. This is what it looks like to be a person in right relationship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus' life is actually available to you, and I when we decide to allow Him to be our teacher and us be His disciples and He will show us the way. But it doesn't just happen. We actually have to train ourselves to be godly. Not just try to be godly, not just wait to be godly, not just hope to be godly, not let the world train you to be worldly. No, we got to train ourselves to be godly. Just like it might be hard for you to be like Jesus right now or to be godly, in the same way, you couldn't just go out and run a

marathon. But you could start training, and you could walk to your mailbox, and then the next day, walk around the block, and maybe the next day, go around it two times, and so on, and so forth, and train yourself to be able to run a marathon. Just like we can't be godly the way we want to today, we can start training.

We've been talking about spiritual practices or spiritual disciplines, which is simply doing what I can do now so I can do what I can't do later. Doing what I can do now, what I have authority and the ability to do to practice in the here and now, so I can do the things I want to do later in my life and become who Jesus says that I can become. So in a sense, all we're talking about is spiritual formation, the process of being formed into the image of Jesus to become a person of love. You see, one day after 30 years of hiddenness, Jesus is baptized. When He comes up out of the water, it says the heavens opened, the Spirit descended upon Him, the Father spoke from heaven, "This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased." Immediately, the Holy Spirit led Jesus out into the desert to be in the wilderness for 40 days of fasting. At the end of that 40 days of wilderness experience, Satan comes to Jesus, at what we would think would be His weakest moment. Three times, he tempts Jesus. "If you are the Son of God..." and then tells Him to do something. Every time Satan tempts Jesus, Jesus responds by saying, "It is written..." and then He quotes a piece of passage, a Scripture from the book of Deuteronomy. In that moment, when Jesus defeats Satan, what we discover is that He spent the last 30 years of His life arranging His life around memorizing and meditating on the Word of God.

In that moment, when Satan tempts Him, and He declares and quotes three passages from the Book of Deuteronomy, we know He had it memorized and that He had meditated on it. Why? Because he doesn't have a Bible. He doesn't whip out a scroll. He does not have the Bible app to quickly type in "passages to help you find victory over Satan." No, He spent the last 30 years arranging and rearranging His life around memorizing and meditating on the Word of God. So He didn't win that victory in the moment, He actually won that victory long before behind-the-scenes. And what we see about Jesus is that He filled His mind so full of the Word of God that He thought God's thoughts, He spoke God's words, and He lived God's life. You see it over and over in the Gospels. He's constantly saying things like, "Have you not heard?" "Do you not know?" "Have you not seen?" "It is written..." He quotes these passages of Scripture over and over and over again because He has arranged and rearranged His life around memorizing and meditating on the Word of God.

If we want to do the things that Jesus did, we have to first do the things that Jesus did, which is meditate on Scripture. So let's talk about this for a second. Meditation. It's a big word, a word a lot of us are familiar with, but we're not sure totally what it means. What does meditation actually mean? Well, to meditate on something means to think deeply about deep things. To meditate means to take a piece of Scripture and put it in your mind and turn it over, and over, and over, and over, and over again until you start to literally break it down. The way a cow would chew its cud over and over again, you keep turning it in your mind, breaking it down, smaller and smaller, until you actually start to absorb the very reality of that verse. That reality

starts to frame your entire mindset. As you absorb it, it starts to change your attitudes, and your judgments, and your opinions, and your preferences, and your perspectives. It changes your behaviors, and your motions, and your feelings. It literally starts to frame your entire perception of reality. See, to meditate on God's Word isn't just changing your thoughts, it's changing your thinking and your entire mindset. To meditate is not just thinking. Here's what I want you to understand. It's thinking with the Holy Spirit. That's what meditation is. It's not just going off in a corner and thinking deeply by yourself. No, it's thinking with the Holy Spirit, under the illumination and the influence of the Holy Spirit. When you're saying, "Holy Spirit, what does this mean?" "Holy Spirit, why did You say this?" "What does this look like?" "What are You trying to show me in this place?" You're allowing His influence and His illumination to literally break apart that verse until you absorb it. It becomes a very part of you. It's when you open yourself up to God's Word as it is, not to study or analyze it, but just to receive it.

In fact, let me try to make this clear for some of you. Meditation is simply having a vision for your thought life. That's all it is. It's choosing, intentionally choosing, what I am going to think about before the day even begins. Before the situations and circumstances arise, I've already decided, this is where my mind is going to go and this is what I'm going to be thinking about all day. And here's what's amazing. Every person in this room, you are already gifted at meditating. You're a great meditator. The only question is, is who or what are you meditating on? Ready? Do you ever worry? Do you ever worry? Okay. Do you know what worry is? Worry is simply meditating on the future without God. It's thinking about the future over, and over, and over again, but without God. So I worry, and I stress, and I have fear. How about this? Have you ever thought regretful thoughts? Have you ever been full of regret? Do you know what regret is? Regret is meditating on the past without God. It's thinking about the past over, and over, again. "Why did I do this?" "I shouldn't have done that." "I wish I would have done this." "I wish I would have done that." Okay. How about anxiety? Have you ever had anxiety? You know what anxiety is? It's meditating on the present without God. So I start to become overwhelmed, and stressed, and unsettled in all these things I have to do. How about this? Have you ever been really, really angry? Nobody wants to admit that one. Have you ever been really, really angry? And you just stew over, and over, and over again in your mind. You know what that is? It's meditating on how your will was violated. Have you ever been really offended at someone and you can't just seem to let it go? You know what that is? That's meditating on the offense and turning it over, and over, and over again in your mind. Have you ever been in love with someone and you can't stop thinking about them over, and over, and over again in your mind? Have you ever been really excited about something in the future and you can't wait to get there and you're thinking about it over, and over, and over again? That's meditation. You are actually already really gifted at meditating. The only question is, is who or what are you meditating on?

You see, I think we forget how powerful our minds are. God has made you in His image and His likeness, and He's given you this profound mind, and your thoughts lead your life. Right thinking will lead to right living. Wrong thinking will lead to wrong living. And whatever you fill

your mind with, your life will become full of the reality of. If I fill my mind full of the thoughts of God, my life will become full of the reality of God. If I fill my mind full of the thoughts of the world, my life will become full of the reality of the world. The problem for a lot of us is we believe we're victims of our thoughts. We believe that our thoughts choose us, but in reality, we choose our thoughts. You are not a victim of your mind. You are a product of it. God has given you the freedom of what you want to choose to think about. You are not enslaved to any kind of thinking. God gives you the freedom and the ability to choose what you want to think about. You can't choose the circumstances of your life, but you can certainly choose what you're thinking about. This is why Proverbs tells us, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." Your thoughts lead your life. So sometimes we got to stop to think about our thinking and give thought to our thoughts. When was the last time you stopped to think about what you're thinking about or gave extended thought to your thoughts? "Fix your thoughts," which means you are not a victim of, but a product of. "What is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about it." Can I ask you a question? Are your thoughts true, good, and right? Are they pure and lovely? What are you meditating on? Because every day you're meditating on something and you get to intentionally choose what that can be. If we want to do the things that Jesus did, then we've got to arrange our minds around the Word of God and think about it all throughout the day. You with me on this?

See, what was Jesus' main message? Jesus' main message when He showed up on this earth was, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Remember, the word repent means change your thinking, change your mindset. "Re," go back. "Pent," think penthouse floor, high view. Go back and get a higher perspective. Go back and get God's view on life. If you will repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand and you can access it. A lot of us repent enough to get into the kingdom of God, but we don't repent enough to actually live in the kingdom of God, to move forward and to advance. Why? Because we don't think about God's Word deeply enough or long enough to actually repent. If repent is changing my thinking, it's not just sitting in a church service being convicted by a verse and having a good feeling about it for 13 minutes and then walking out and going right back to my life. That's not repentance. Repentance is actually changing my thinking, and a lot of us in one moment can't actually change our thought life, so how do we actually repent? By meditating. Meditation is a key to repentance and repentance is the way we access the kingdom is at hand. The reason a lot of us never grab the kingdom is because we don't meditate on God's Word enough to actually be able to access it or to grab it; for it to become reality in our life. God gives us a piece of revelation, we see this little treasure and we think, "Wow, that's really good," and then we go right back to our life. But if I will take that thing and think about it, and mine it out, and turn it over, and over, and over again, I'm not just changing my thoughts, I'm actually changing my thinking and I'm actually changing my mindset until I start to think the very thoughts of God, speak the very words of God and walk in the very ways of God. Does this make sense to you? If you want to live deeply in the kingdom, you have to become a person who meditates on God's Word, because that's how you actually change your thinking. Not just once, but for good.

So, if you're here and you struggle with lust, don't keep trying to tell yourself, "Don't do it, don't do it, don't look at it." How's that working out for you? Instead, meditate on verses about God's love for you. If you're here and you struggle with greed, don't just keep telling yourself, "I shouldn't be so greedy." Meditate on verses that talk about God's generosity towards you. If you're here and you're always anxious, don't just keep talking about your anxiety, meditate on verses that talk about the peace He has already gave you. Why? Because that's going to help you repent, change your thinking, so you can access the kingdom that's at hand and bring it into your life. How about this? Paul in Romans Chapter 12, he spent 11 chapters talking to us about what we have in Jesus, the finished work of Jesus, the goodness of grace. So he says "Therefore," based on 11 chapters of theology of the finished work of Jesus, "I urge you brothers in view of God's mercy," based on everything Jesus has done for you, "to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship." Worship is not just raising our hands. It's literally offering our bodies as living sacrifices. Every time you engage in spiritual practices or spiritual disciplines, you're offering your body to God as a living sacrifice. Every time I meditate, and every time I fast, and every time I pray, and every time I serve, and every time I do community, all those things, I'm literally offering my body to God as a living sacrifice. Why? Because I'm saying, God, I want to train to be godly. So here's my body. I don't want sin trapped in the members of my body. I want your righteousness to flow through the members of my body. So when I meditate, I'm literally offering my mind to God as a living sacrifice as an act of worship.

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Okay. Let's see if we can get this together. "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." The world has a pattern. The world has a way of life. The world has a very clear definition on what is good, and what is true, and what is right, and they want to conform you into it, shape you, mold you, press you, like a cookie cutter, form you into this thing where you become exactly like them in every way. All of us have more areas of our life that are conformed to the pattern of this world than we realize. So this is why he says, "Do not conform any longer." There are parts of your life that have been conformed to the pattern, to the standard, to the source, to what the world calls good, true, and right. He says, but don't be conformed, don't let them press you in.

Do you know one of the primary ways we get conformed to the pattern of this world? Okay. Everybody take a breath with me, and step on some things, is social media. Here's what's interesting. We go on social media, and we look for people to follow that we think are experts in the things we're interested in. So, we will follow people that we think are experts in finance, experts in beauty, experts in fitness, experts in relationships, experts in being Gen Z, experts in using our time, experts in travel, experts in the life that I think I want. The moment I follow them, let's use the words now, follow. I click the button. What does it mean to follow? It means they lead, and I have now submitted myself to be a student or a learner of that thing or that person. And now, let's use the words that we use. We call them influencers. What does

influence mean? Influence means to have power or authority over something. It means to have a compelling force on someone to make them do that which you want them to do. So the moment I follow someone who I think is an expert in something I'm interested in, I've literally just given them permission to lead my thoughts. I swipe through and I see an idea, an image, language, wording, a vision, a prophecy, whatever you want to call it, that I wasn't thinking about. Three seconds ago, I wasn't thinking about this, but because I've chosen to follow them and let them influence me, whoop, now there it is. Now I've let them, literally, I've invited them to lead my thoughts. And if my thoughts lead my life, I've basically allowed them to lead my life. So I'm allowing them to tell me what is good, what is true, and what is right. All of a sudden, I start to speak their words and walk in their ways and think their thoughts. "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." So I allow their ideas and their images. All of a sudden, all of a sudden, they start to take over my life and I become conformed to the pattern of this world. I allow that way to become the way for me.

Does that make sense? Before you press the follow button and before you swipe through, just stop and ask yourself the question, do I want this person to lead my thoughts? Do I want this person to lead my thoughts? Why do I believe someone who lives like the world can be an expert of finance in my life? Because I'm in the kingdom. Why do I think someone who lives according to the pattern of this world can be an expert of health? Because I'm in the kingdom. But why do I think this person who says they're an expert in relationships and what life can be like in the world, why do I think they're an expert? Because I'm in the kingdom. So not only are they not an expert, they're actually, the Bible will call a fool. Where's the expert? The Scriptures. We didn't like that one. So don't let that happen to you. Ironically, we actually choose it.

It is so hard to lead a church to become like Jesus when we spend 167 out of the 168 hours a week consuming what the world says is the way. Most of us, all we get is the amount of verses I can get into this thing in 35 minutes. Can you see that? You choosing to be here today is a great thought, because here's what you're saying. You're saying I'm here to follow. Lead my thinking. Did you ever think that? You come to church and you sit there, this is why you should take notes. Lead my thinking because I don't want to think like that. I want to think like this. So "do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Change the way you think. It'll change the way you live. We need a renewing of our mind. We need a renovation of the mind. We need a restoration of the mind. We need our mind to literally be remodeled and He says we will be transformed. The word "transformed" here is the same word that's used when Jesus is transfigured. Do you remember that story? He goes up on the side of the mountain and it says He's transfigured. He's changed in front of the disciples and to the point where He radiates brighter than the sun and they literally can't even look at Him because it's so bright. In that moment, He's transfigured and what's happening is He is literally radiating the very glory, beauty, holiness, wisdom, the very life of heaven. In that moment, He fully represents the reality of another world. So when Paul uses that word, what he's saying is, when you will meditate on Scripture and renew your mind, your mind will literally

begin to radiate the very glory, and beauty, and holiness, and wisdom of heaven. People who think like the kingdom radiate the realities of heaven. Why? Because they start to think from heaven to earth and from the spiritual to the physical, from the invisible to the visible.

One of the great dreams of my own personal life is I want to become someone who literally thinks like the kingdom. There is no thought in this head that is of the pattern of this world, but every thought is primarily framed and shaped by what God says is true, the superior reality, an accurate perception of reality, instead of being deceived and being fooled. "Then," and only then, "will you be able to test and approve what God's will is." Only when your mind has been transformed by the renewing of it through meditation will you be able to see God's will in your life. The reason most of us can't see God's will that's right in front of us is because we've been conformed to the world and you can't see what you're not looking for. You can't understand the language you don't speak. You can't find that which you're not interested in. A lot of us can't find God's will for our life because we think so much like the world that even when He shows it to us, we can't see it. Are you with me on this? This is so important. I mean, when Joshua is about to go in and take the Promised Land, a picture of moving deeper into the kingdom of God, the Promised Land, the kingdom of God, Joshua is about to lead a couple million people, okay? Here's what God says, "Do not let this book of the law depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it then. Then," everybody say, "then you will be prosperous and successful." He says the key to prosperity and success is meditating on God's Word. If I would have sent you a text this morning to say, "Hey, come to church today because I'm gonna tell you the secret of prosperity and success." We'd have a lot more people here than we currently have and everyone would sit with their journal and they'd be like this. Because we want to be prosperous and successful because God made us to desire that. God made us to desire prosperity, to have breakthrough and abundance and shalom and life. He's made us to desire to be successful, to accomplish God's purposes in our lives. He tells us the secret or the key of the whole thing is to just meditate on His Word.

"Do not let this book of the law," God's Word literally is the defining reality of what is good and true and right. "Don't let it depart from your mouth, but meditate on it day and night," in the morning and in the evening. When you're awake and when you're asleep. When you're coming and when you're going. When life is good and when life is bad. When the circumstances are favorable, when they're unfavorable. When you're driving, when you're playing, when you're working, when you're hanging. Everywhere you go, meditate on it. Then you will be able to be careful to do everything written in it. You can't align your life to something you don't know, and then prosperity and success will come. Here's what I want you to see. He says, "Don't let it depart from your mouth." Okay. The word meditate literally means to murmur. It doesn't just mean to think. It means to literally speak it out. We're not just supposed to read the Word. We're supposed to speak the Word. Biblical meditation would be literally speaking the very words of God over your life all day long. Be like everywhere you go, you're just walking around. You're just thinking, "God is for me, so who can be against me?"

"One thing I ask, this is what I seek, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord forever." "The Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear?" "Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways, acknowledge Him and He will make your path straight." "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." "I am confident that God will work all things together for the good for those who love Him, who have been called according to His purposes." "I know there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." "I am convinced that nothing, neither height, nor death, neither angels, nor demons, nor nothing in all of creation will separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus." "My God will meet all my needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old is gone, the new has come." Are you hearing me? You gotta speak it. You gotta speak it.

When was the last time you spoke the Word of God when we didn't give it to you and say, "We're all gonna declare this together in church"? You're like, "That would just be weird, man." I think the way the world lives is pretty weird. You know what happens when you're meditating, murmuring, speaking the word of God? You know what's happening? It's the Word of God. God's Word creates. So when you speak it out, you're creating your future. God's Word prophesizes. When you speak it out, you're calling things that are not as though they were. God's Word heals. When you speak it out, you're bringing healing to your home and to your family. God's Word is living and active. When you speak it out, you're releasing life into the atmosphere. God's Word trains us in righteousness. When you're speaking it out, you're literally training yourself and your very spirit is becoming stronger in the moment. But instead, oh, we meditate, we just walk around and we do things like this. Like "I'm just, I'm no good. I'll never be able to do this." "I can't believe, why did she do that again? She always does that. Why does she never do what I ask her to do?" "I can't believe he's still acting this way. We've talked about this. Why isn't he doing it?" "This job, I hate this job. Why do I have to come here every single day? Why do they get to do it and why don't I get to do it? When is this gonna change? How do I just get out of this because this whole thing is awful?" So what's happening? That's the future you're creating. That's what you're aligning yourself with. You're being conformed to the pattern of the world because that's how the world thinks. Make no mistake about it, all those experts you follow online, that's the thought patterns in here. Oh, they may look really pretty, and they may have a lot of money, and a car you like, and they may have the vacations you hope for. But make no mistake about it, according to God, they're broken and lost and darkened in here. So I'm glad they look good on the outside, but do they have life on the inside?

The greatest thing you can do for your entire life, prosperous and successful, just meditate on God's Word. Greatest thing you can do for your marriage is meditate on God's Word. Greatest thing you can do for your future, meditate on God's Word. Greatest thing you can do for that sickness, meditate on God's Word. Greatest thing I can do for my work, meditate on God's Word. Greatest thing I can do for my anxiety, meditate on God's Word. It either is the definition of prosperity and success or it's not. You get to choose. If you don't think this is the

definition of how you become prosperous and successful, then here's my question. How do you believe you become prosperous and successful in life? That's a great thing to give thought to. Ask yourself, where did that thinking come from? Because it's a different thinking than what God says. With me on this? See, I've done this for like 20 years now. For 20 years, everybody has, the number one reason people say they don't engage God's Word. Do you know what it is? Don't answer, just think. Do you know why people for 20 years have told me they don't engage God's Word? It's because they say they don't understand it. "I don't get it." "It doesn't make sense." "It's just not for me." "I can't get it." Do you know there's no place I can find in the Bible where God commands you to understand His Word? But there are hundreds of places where God commands you to memorize it, to meditate on it, to read it, to engage it, to pray it, to prophesy it, to obey it, to align with it, to follow it, to delight in it, to consume it, to enjoy it. He doesn't tell us to understand it. He tells us to meditate on it. So we say I don't engage it because I don't understand it, and God says you don't understand it because you don't engage it. I mean, look at this. "For the Lord gives wisdom, and from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding." You can't understand it on your own anyways. The Lord gives revelation and understanding and supernatural insight. You can't do this on your own. He has to reveal, reveal, literally show you that which was hidden and that which was covered and make it known to you. He longs to give it to you, but He only gives it to those who are hungry for it. In fact, right before it says this, look what it says. "My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then" – then, then, then, everybody say... then – "you will understand the fear of the Lord and find knowledge."

He says if you'll accept it and store it up, if you'll literally memorize it, and turn and apply your heart to understanding, meditate on it, if you'll call out, and cry, and look, and search, then you will understand. Listen, we want to understand. God says faith leads to understanding. Understanding will follow your faith. By faith, put it in. By faith, read it. By faith, prophesy it. By faith, just think about it, for goodness sakes. Just think about it. You'd be amazed what kind of understanding you'll get. The reason so many Christians are so shallow and superficial is because we read it once, say I don't get it, and move on, and God says, "And that's why you don't get it. Because you're not willing to store up, apply, turn, call aloud, cry out because I want to give you knowledge." In fact, He says to the disciples, "The secret," the mysteries, "of the kingdom of God," there are spiritual truths that are spiritually hidden, but God wants to "give them to you." He gave them to the disciples because they were hungry. "But to those on the outside, everything is parable so that they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, ever hearing but never understanding." Do you feel like you don't perceive and don't understand? Could it just be then it's because you're not actually hungry for what He wants to show you? Because He gives the secrets to those who will steward them well. If God gives you hidden revelation that you don't want, you become responsible to now obey it. So if you don't want it, it's actually His grace to not give it to you. He only gives the secrets to those who are willing to

steward them because once they've been revealed, you are now responsible to repent and align your life with.

In fact, I love this. Jesus says to the Pharisees, "But go and learn what this means," and then He gives them something. "I desire mercy, not sacrifice," whatever. He's saying to the Pharisees, the religious leaders who studied and analyzed the Word of God, "Go and learn what this means," and He quotes a verse. I want you to think about this. What is He saying? Here's what He's not saying. He's not saying, "Go read another commentary, go sit in another sermon, go talk to a friend." No, He's saying, "Think about this. Meditate on this under the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and take some time to go deep with what I say is true." When was the last time you left a message with a verse that maybe didn't connect with you, or you didn't understand, and you went away and learned what it meant? Not from a commentary, or your Circle, or no, just by meditating on it and saying, "Holy Spirit, I don't understand, but you want to show me. So will You show me?" I get it. We say things like, "But God says, 'My thoughts are not your thoughts as the heavens are higher than the earth. So my ways are higher and my thoughts are higher.'" We're like, "I can't think God's thoughts. They're too out there." Okay, Jesus, the living Word came from heaven, took on flesh, moved into your neighborhood with grace and truth to bring the Word of God to you in the here and now. If He could do that, then the Holy Spirit, who has been released in your life, can liberally give you the mind of Christ, which is why it says, "We have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us." Spiritual truths are spiritually discerned by the spiritually hungry. It's not that it's so far out there. It's just not available to those who don't want it. Are you with me on this?

Okay. See, for the last couple years, not even, 18 months, I've been really convicted and impacted by this truth that I'm trying to teach you. So we've started memorizing larger chunks of passages with some of our people. It started with just a couple of us and we started memorizing on some stuff and I watched how it went and then we started asking our staff to do it. In this last year, we've asked every leader in our church to memorize passages of Scripture, not like a verse, but like chunks, like a chapter. We started working it into our Kid's Leadership and our Student Leadership Experience. Then at Men's Nights in the fall, we actually worked on memorizing an entire chapter together. Every time I've asked anybody to memorize a chunk of Scripture, you should see them like, it's like you literally ask them to like, fly to the moon. Like, "Ah, I can't do that. That's so hard. I don't know how to... I don't have the mind for that. I can't do it. Oh, I, oh, ah, eh, oh." Oh my gosh. Okay, hang on a second. Breathe, first of all. Now let's talk about this. Do you know how good you are at memorizing? You know how many songs right now, if I could press play in your heart, bang, would just come out? You know how much useless information and knowledge you have stored up in there? Some of you guys are like, "I can't memorize Scripture." Bro, do you know how many sports facts you have? You could tell me like, Troy Aikman's incompleteness ratio from 20 years ago, on the spot. It's not that we can't memorize, it's that we don't want to memorize. I mean, do you realize that the Jewish culture, like in Jesus' day, the entire education system was based on Scripture? It wasn't based

on math, and arithmetic, and reading, and writing to get a scholarship, to get into that school so I can be prosperous and successful because if you don't get in that school, you can't be prosperous and successful. Oh, wait, sorry. That was a person I was following on social media. Unfollow. Okay. It's either true or it's not. You get to pick. The entire thing was based on Scripture. Every 12-year-old boy, by the time he was 12, would have had the entire Torah memorized. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, the entire thing. Why? Because God said, "I want you to think my thoughts and speak my words and walk in my ways." If you will put that in here, that's who you will become. Every person who went on from education from that point would have gone on to memorize the entire Old Testament. So, Jesus, the man, not the Son of God, the Son of Man, would have most likely by the age of 30 had the entire Old Testament memorized. We sit here and argue about memorizing two or three verses.

And then, parents, okay, so I'm just going to go for it today. Parents, we say things like this. "My kid can't memorize Scripture. That's way too hard. They got too much. Oh, it's too much." Okay. Hang on a second. Pause. Okay. Your kid is in AP Physics, Calculus AB, AP Chemistry. They can learn world history. They can study Shakespeare. They can memorize their entire musical theater script. They can learn every play in the offensive playbook. Oh, but they can't memorize a couple of verses. So we bring what our students are capable of way down here. You are capable of so much more. God designed it this way. So you can't say you can't do it, because God made it this way. You can say you don't want to do it. The reason we don't ask our students to do it is because we don't actually believe, that's where prosperity and success comes from, number one. But number two is because if I asked them to memorize it, now I have to memorize it. I'm not so sure I want to do that. If you're in a Circle or on a serve team, I would encourage you to ask the leader of that Circle or that serve team, how their journey of memorizing John 15:1-17 is going. Because that's what we asked all our leaders to do this semester. Ask them, what are you learning? How is it going? How has it been challenging for you? How has it been changing? Ask them, ask them, and in some way, because I hope for the accountability of it. I'll just tell you right up front, we've lost staff and leaders over this because they don't want to memorize Scripture. Here's what I want to say. No problem. Thank you for playing. Bless you. Appreciate you. Because the moment you tell me you won't memorize and meditate on Scripture, you're telling me you can't be prosperous and successful. Because if God says that's the key to taking to Promised Land, you're telling me you can't prosper nor succeed. So why can I then, can't, in good conscience empower you over people that you can't prosper and succeed with? I mean, just imagine for a second, if whatever you believed made you prosperous and successful, if you took just a fraction of that energy and how you look, and education, and networking, all the things, you just took fitness, or took a fraction of that, and put it into meditating on Scripture.

A dream in my heart is that we would be the kind of church that could walk around and anytime we see each other anywhere in this world, we would be able to say, "Hey, what Scriptures are you working on? What Scriptures are working on you?" "Oh man, I'm trying to meditate on

this," or, "I've been memorizing this, and God is showing me..." You know how amazing that would be? When was the last time you committed a single verse to heart, let alone a chapter? Listen to me, if God is the one who made the mind, He knows how it works and just like He says your body needs water and food, He says your mind needs His Word. It needs His Word in here to renew and restore, to change the thoughts, the thinking, the actual mindset, to break it down to a point where it absorbs the very realities of heaven to frame your opinions and perspectives and judgments and emotions and thoughts and feelings so you perceive reality. When I don't do it His way, I literally have a darkened mind and my mind freezes up and it breaks and it doesn't work. I mean, look at this furthermore, "Since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He gave them over to a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done." Meditate on this one this week. They didn't think it was worth memorizing and meditating on the knowledge of God so He gave them. They said, "I don't want to think with you, God. I want to think by myself." He's given you the free will to go do that, but understand that your mind will become depraved, darkened, foolish. Do you know what this word actually means? It means, "can't stand the test." Can't stand the test of what? Your life. Your mind becomes so empty, so void, so darkened, so seized and locked up when it's not full of the Word of God that it literally can't stand the test of your life. This is why we're often so broken, and then we start doing things that shouldn't be done, and we find ourselves doing things we never thought we would do or be like, because we didn't think it was worth retaining the knowledge of God. Believing when God says, "You will be prosperous and successful wherever you go in every area of my life." The greatest thing I can do is put the Word of God in my heart, in my mind, meditate on it, mutter it, speak it. Listen, can I just say something for some of you? If you're here and you struggle with mental health in any way, anxiety, depression, ADD, ADHD, bipolar, any type of mental trauma, brokenness, darkness, like a darkened imagination, whatever you choose for your path of healing, make sure it includes memorizing large portions of God's Word.

You got to choose your healing path, medication, counseling, reframing my life, so on and so forth. Just make sure whatever your plan is includes memorizing large portions of Scripture, because that's how God says your mind works. You can't say, "I can't focus. I can't do it." The reason you can't focus is because you haven't done it. Working on it will actually teach you focus, but then I'll be able to apply in other areas of my life. Why? Because God says I'll be prosperous and successful if I will meditate on His Word. That make sense? The people of God can't choose the world's way for healing. The people of God have access to all truth and the world has some access to truth, but we must make sure we include what God says is priority and first most as truth before we just run off and do all the things that the experts tell us to do. Because if they're not experts in the kingdom, I have to be very careful with how I let them influence my thinking. Some of you are like, "But I can't... I mean, I can't, my life is..." I know, this whole series is about arranging and rearranging. I'm not asking you to add something into your already over the margin life. I'm saying you probably need to take something out so that you can now rearrange your thoughts. Oh my gosh, your thoughts. It's so sad to me that this verse is supposed to describe the world, and yet it describes so much of the American church

that we don't believe it's worth retaining the knowledge of God. Oh, I know God. Yeah, sure. Oh yeah, no. I go out and I live like everybody else. Think, I think like everybody else. That's why I live like everybody else. If I will think like Jesus, I can live like Jesus, but I don't think like Jesus and I'm making no effort to learn to think like Jesus.

I'm getting close to pleading, and I don't want to do that. So we're going to stop there for today and that's what you missed, but we'll get there next week. Here's your practice plan. Practice plan for this week. Remember, in this series, all year, there's a practice plan at the end of every one of these, choose to do it, don't, it's totally up to you, but we are training to be godly as a people. Memorize Psalm 23 this week. Okay. Hang on. It's only six verses. It's already a familiar passage. You're going to have some reference in context of it. We're even going to make you a digital download that you can put on your phone. Try it. Try it. Here's my question for you. If you don't try it, that's fine. Just make sure you're very clear in acknowledging the reality of where you're choosing to put your thinking. It's okay. Don't say I don't want to do it, great. Just then define like, what am I actually then going to think about this week? Money, sex, beauty, fame, frustration, my dysfunctional spouse, my wayward children, my frustrating parents, being cool, being popular at school, just acknowledge at least what you are going to choose to think about, because you choose your thoughts. Your thoughts don't choose you. This is choosing to just have a vision for what you're going to think about just for the next seven days. That's all it is. You're like, well, it's just choosing to have a vision for what I'm going to think about in the next seven days and watch what God will start doing as He starts washing and healing and loosing and releasing the very mind that He's given you to see the very realities of heaven, the will of God around you. Try it. Rearrange your thoughts this week and we'll talk about it more next week. You're like, "But I still don't know how to meditate." I will talk more about it next week. Fair?

So Jesus, we want to be people that have a renewed mind. I want my mind to be transfigured till it radiates the very glory of God. We want the mind of Christ. We want to be people that think according to Your Word. So God, just help us have a little bit of faith this week. Not worried about understanding, or analyzing, or studying, or doing all those excuses, the defense mechanisms of, "Which translation should I use? That one is this, and this..." No, just tear it all down, Lord, and just help us open ourselves up to Your Word. I pray for every person that thinks they can't memorize, that their thoughts would be renewed in Jesus' name, that You gave them a mind, and You wouldn't ask them to do something they can't do. I pray for every mind that has been darkened and consumed by the darkness of this world. Just click on a little bit of light, Lord, just a little bit of light, even as they mutter it, and murmur it, and just speak it out. "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want," as they go through their life this week, Your word is a lamp to our feet and a light into our path. They're literally lighting up the very path they're walking on by just saying, "The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want." Give us a courage and a faith, God, to actually believe that Your Word does what You say Your Word does. Give us a hunger and a thirst for it. And I just declare that every person in here that wants

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to do this, can, and every person that doesn't want, You can change their want. So by kindness, would You draw us to repentance? In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.