

Alright, everybody, and welcome to Valley Creek. We're so glad that you are here with us, and we are in a series, a season called "A Different Way." We're talking about doing the things that Jesus did, so that we can do the things that Jesus did. We're talking about arranging and rearranging our life around Jesus and His practices, talking about being disciples and becoming like Him. And last week we talked about the practice of meditation and there was such a spirit of revelation and repentance in the room. And our practice plan for the week was to memorize Psalm 23. And I want to celebrate you, because so many people practiced in Jesus' name this week. I heard so many stories of people taking the challenge and practicing their faith. I heard of a woman who's struggling through cancer and she decided that memorizing Psalm 23 was going to be a part of her healing process. I heard about a man in his 80's who thought memorizing Scripture was for children, but he decided no matter how old he is, he wants to renew his mind, and so he memorized Psalm 23 this week. I heard of a young adult who struggles with significant insomnia and anxiety who memorized Psalm 23 this week and slept the best they have in two or three years. I've heard from so many students and young adults who took the challenge and took it upon themselves to memorize Psalm 23, and when I would see them they would show me their phone screen to show me Psalm 23, they're like "I'm doing it, I'm doing it!" I heard of so many families doing it together, I heard of people deleting social media or going through who they follow and unfollowing people they don't want to lead their thoughts. Here's what happened this past week, we started training ourselves to be godly.

We started training ourselves to be Godly, we said, let's not just talk about this, let's actually try, let's train, let's put some effort into this, let's arrange and rearrange our life in a different way and watch what God will do. And so if you participated in any way, if you got one verse, you got one verse more than you had last week hidden in your heart. You might not be able to run the marathon yet, but you got to the mailbox, you maybe got around the corner, some of you took a nice two-mile run, you're training to be godly in Jesus' name. And so my hope was this silly simple little exercise that we did this week is opening up your mind to what we've been talking about, what it actually looks like to train, to rearrange our lives to become like Jesus. See, remember this is not a religious community center, where we just comfort and entertain people. This is not just a rec center where you come and play pickup ball when you feel like it. No, this is a training center and we're training for something that matters – to become godly in Jesus' name. And so we're learning how to do the things that Jesus did, and what we learn about Jesus is that He arranged His life around the Word of God. He memorized and meditated on Scripture, filled His mind so full with the Word of God until He thought God's thoughts, spoke God's words, and lived God's ways. And if we want to do the things that Jesus did, we have to think the thoughts that Jesus thought, and that's the practice of meditation. So we got through part one, let me kind of start back again and let's kind of start walking through it and then let me take you to some new places with me on that?

Okay. The practice of meditation, what is meditation? Meditation, a big word, simply means to think deep about deep things. Meditation simply means to take a Scripture, take God's Word, put it in your mind, and turn it over and over and over again, the way a cow would chew its

chewing on it, breaking it down until you're able to actually absorb it into who you are. It's breaking God's Word down to this place where you actually absorb it to this place where it starts to frame your opinions and your thoughts and your perspectives and your judgements, where it starts to determine your feelings and your emotions, and it becomes the way you actually perceive reality. It's not just changing your thoughts, it's actually changing your thinking and your very mindset. You see, meditation isn't just thinking, it's thinking with the Spirit. It's thinking under the influence and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, where we take God's Word and we talk to the Holy Spirit about it and we say, "What does this mean? And why did You choose that word? And what does this look like in my life? And what do You want me to see in this?" You see, meditation opens us up to receive God's Word as it is.

This is why it's different than study. When you study something, you try to analyze it intellectually, understand it, and we can try to control God's Word to make it say that which we want it to say. But when I meditate on God's Word, I allow it to control me, and I'm now open to it submitting and surrendering my life, submitting and surrendering to how it wants to shape and fold and mold me. You see, meditation is simply having a vision for your thought life. We have a vision for so many things; meditation is having a vision for my thought life. It's intentionally choosing that which I want to think about before the day even begins. And meditation makes you incredibly stable. You don't become this person that's erratic, all over the place, emotions, feelings, chaos, crisis. Why? Because Jesus says, "Whoever hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a man who built his life upon the rock." So when I meditate on God's Word, I become steady, and I become stable, and I become strong. And the good news is, every person in this room, you're already a gifted meditator. You know how to meditate. Like, worry. Worry is simply meditating on the future without God. Regret is meditating on the past without God. Anxiety is meditating on the present without God. The inverse of those is true. Dreaming is meditating on the future with God. Gratitude is meditating on the past with God. Peace is meditating on the present with God. If you've ever been angry, or offended, or in love, or really excited about something in your future, you have practiced meditation. The only question is, who or what are you meditating on? You see, God has given you a mind made in His image and His likeness, and your thoughts lead your life.

Right thinking leads to right living, wrong thinking leads to wrong living, and whatever you fill your mind with, your life will become full of the reality of. So if I fill my mind full of the thoughts of God, my life will become full of the reality of God, and if I fill my mind full of the thoughts of the world, my life will become full of the reality of the world. And too many of us, we believe we're a victim of our own thoughts. That we don't choose our thoughts, but our thoughts choose us. But you are not a victim of your thoughts; you are a product of them. You cannot choose the situations or circumstances in your life, but you can certainly choose your thinking. So we need to give thought to our thoughts, and we need to think about what we're thinking about and this is what meditation is.

This is why it says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world." The world has a pattern, the world has a way. The world has a sense of this is what is good, and this is what is true, and this is what is right, and they want to conform you, shape you, press you, mold you like a cookie cutter. They want to make you think their thoughts, because if the world can make you think its thoughts, it can influence your entire life. And "the mindset on the flesh is death, but the mindset on the spirit is life." We're transformed by the renewing of our mind. Change the way you think and it'll change the way you live. If we will renew our mind, renovate our mind, restore our mind by meditating on the Word of God, it's literally telling us that our mind will start to radiate the very glory and beauty and wisdom and reality of heaven. People who meditate on God's Word radiate the very glory of God to the world around us. This is why Jesus teaches us to repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Meditation on God's Word is how we actually repent, change our thinking. Because you might not be able to go from this thinking to this thinking, but every day I meditate on God's Word, I go from there to here. And then I meditate on it again, it goes from there to here, and there to here, and there to here, and there to here, and before you know it, I actually start to naturally and effortlessly think God's thoughts and therefore experience His kingdom.

Then and only then will you be able to test and approve what God's will is. You see, only a renewed mind can see God's will. Only a renewed mind can see God's kingdom. And the reason so many of us can't see God's will, even though it's right in front of us, is because we think like the pattern of this world. You can't see that what you're not looking for, you can't understand a language you don't speak. And you won't find that what you're not interested in. You'll only see God's will if we first learn to think God's thoughts. In fact, look at this, "The god of this age" – Satan – "has blinded the minds of unbelievers so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel." Satan has blinded the mind, not eyes, mind. When Satan can get us to think his thoughts, our mind becomes darkened and we literally cannot see it. This is why when you look at the world and you look at people around you and you think, "What are they thinking?" They've lost their... [mind]. They literally have. Satan has blinded their mind so they cannot see. If God's Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light into my path, and if my thoughts are not full of God's Word, then my mind has no light. So I literally cannot see. See, whoever influences your thoughts determines what you see. If Satan influences your thoughts, all you see is the world, when God's Word influences your thoughts, all you see is His kingdom.

Unbelief blinds you; faith gives you eyes to see. So here's my question for you. Where has Satan, the god of this age, blinded your mind? Where are you unable to see? The answer is, you have no idea. Why? Because that's an area you are blind and you literally can't see it. So we need the Word of God to turn on the light so I can actually realize that which I didn't see. That's what happened last week. The Word of God kicked on in so many people's lives that the spirit of revelation and repentance was released, we could see it like turning on a light in a dark room, and you're like, "Oh my gosh, that's been there all along." Yes, it has, and then we can respond in faith in Jesus' name. You see, here's the good news, no matter how blinded or darkened your mind has been, Jesus can heal it. "Jesus loved the church and gave Himself up

for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the Word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish but holy and blameless." Listen, no matter how stained or wrinkled your mind is, no matter how darkened your imagination is, no matter how stuck your mindset might be, no matter how vile the thoughts that are in there, no matter how much of a lack of vision or dreaming you have, no matter how much mental health struggle you may have in your life, in Jesus' name, He wants to wash your mind, make it radiant without stain or wrinkle, holy and blameless, cleansing it in Jesus' name through His Word. You won't get to wash your mind through education, or enlightenment, or just sending yourself good vibes, or the three steps on social media to having a healthy mindset. It's the Word. It's the Word that washes our mind, and this is why God invites us to memorize it and meditate on it so we radiate His very glory.

You see, when Joshua was going in to take the Promised Land, a picture of advancing in the kingdom of God, this is what God tells him, He says, "Do not let this book of the law" – God's Word – "depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it then. Then" – then, and only then – "will you be prosperous and successful." God tells Joshua the key for victory, the key for his life, is to meditate on God's Word. You see, the book of the law is God's Word, and it tells us what is good, what is true, and what is right. And He tells us we're supposed to meditate on it. Turn it over and over in our mind, day and night, in the morning, in the evening, when you get up and when you lie down, in your coming and your going, when it's good, when it's bad, when it's hard, when it's easy. No matter what's going on in your life, fill your mind with God's Word so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Because you can't align your life to that which you do not know. And so, the key to prosperity and success is to meditate on God's Word. And He says, "Don't let it depart from your mouth." We're not just supposed to read God's Word, we're supposed to speak God's Word. And so, hopefully this week, as you are going through your life, you're speaking God's Word to yourself. "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul." Hopefully this week, when something hard happened in your life, you are saying things like, "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me." Hopefully this week, when you made a mistake, you reminded yourself, "Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

We're supposed to not just think about it, we're supposed to speak it. And if you remember a couple of weeks ago, we said that you are the most important preacher in your life. Meditation is choosing what you're going to preach on. I spent a lot of time every week figuring out what I'm going to preach on to you. Do you spend any time thinking about what you're going to preach on to you? Meditating on God's Word is choosing, "I'm going to preach on this to myself." This week, I'm choosing to preach Psalm 23 to myself over and over and over again until I get it in Jesus' name. Now, I've been thinking about this all week. Why don't we believe that this is true? Why don't we believe that meditating on God's Word is the key to prosperity

and success? Because if we believed it, we would do it, right? Because you do whatever you actually believe, not what you say you believe. So why don't we believe this? I think it's because, inherently, we know it's not true. Inherently, we know that meditating on God's Word will not give me the prosperity nor the success I desire. Because I think a lot of us have the world's definition of prosperity and success more than the kingdom's definition of prosperity and success in our own soul. See, there are very different definitions. The world's definition of prosperity and success is fame, fortune, and freedom. It's doing what I want, when I want, how I want. It's a life of ease, and comfort, and convenience, and consumption, where I am in the center and everything else revolves around me. The kingdom's definition of prosperity and success is becoming like Jesus and accomplishing God's purpose for your life. It's about submitting and surrendering, dying to self, picking up the cross, saying, "Not my will, but Yours be done. Your kingdom come; Your will be done in my life." And Jesus becomes the center in which everything revolves around. And inherently, we know meditating on Scripture will not get me this and you're right.

I mean, let's think about this for a second together, okay? Take a 30-year-old. Let's say you've got a 30-year-old who has graduated from a prestigious university. They've got a big job with a fancy title. They're making a ton of money. They've got a massive social media influencing. They've got lots of followers. They've got a brand-new car, a nice house, they're sleeping around, they don't have any integrity, and they are gaining the world, and yet losing their soul. Now compare that to a 30-year-old who's working really hard at a behind-the-scenes job. Who's hidden from the world and isn't really known or seen by lots and lots of people. Who's making just enough money to get by and has an old car and lives in an apartment, but loves his wife, has the Fruit of the Spirit growing in his life, is a disciple of Jesus, and is living on mission with Him. Which of these two is prosperous and successful? Now, I know we're in church, and so, you know, you have to say this answer. But let's pretend we're not at church. Which of these two is prosperous and successful? How about this? Which of these two do you want for your life? One more, parents, which of these two would you rather have your children live? Because if we're honest, we want the world's definition of prosperity and success, even if it requires a little bit of sin, a little bit of immorality, a little bit of a lack of character, a little bit of evil, a little bit of worldliness. See, I think we forget that John the Baptist was beheaded, and Jesus went to the cross, and Peter gave up his business, and Paul knew what it was like to have nothing, and we would declare them as prosperous and successful. And we look at Pharaoh, and we look at Potiphar, and we look at Herod, and we look at Saul, and they had everything the world offered, but they completely missed God's purpose for their life. Oh, they got the world's definition of prosperity and success, make no mistake about it. They just didn't hit the kingdom's definition of prosperity and success. And so maybe we need to repent about what prosperity and success actually looks like, because the world's way won't get you to the kingdom's prosperity and success, and the kingdom's way won't get you to the world's prosperity and success. So you've got to figure out which destination you want to get to, and then choose that way. Maybe there's some repentance that needs to take place.

And it's not saying that prosperity and success in the kingdom is poverty, having nothing, a life of hardship. No, it's saying whether you have a lot or a little, whether wealth or poverty, whether everything or nothing, it really doesn't matter, because my goal in life is to become like Jesus and accomplish His purpose for my life. So maybe there's some repentance there. And maybe that's why we struggle with this. And if you've said that kingdom prosperity and success is my destination, then meditating on God's Word is the way, is the way to get there. Meditate on it, not understand it, meditate on it, engage it by faith, put it inside you. This is why it says, "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes it grow." Our job is to plant and water the Word of God in our life, it's God's job to make it grow. I plant it, I read it, I engage it, I memorize it, I water it, I meditate on it, but I leave the growth to God. I leave the understanding and the revelation and the wisdom and the insight and the aha, light bulb. I leave all of that to God. My job is to plant and water; His job is to make it grow. But He can't make it grow if I didn't plant it nor water it. And no matter how much I plant it and water it, only God can make it grow. And this is the spiritual practice that we've been talking about. I can't do it without God, and He won't do it without me. This is opening myself up to the life of grace, allowing God to do a deep work inside of me. I plant, He waters-- I plant, I water, He makes it grow.

In fact, catch this, I love this. This is one of my favorite things for this week. "The Word" – Jesus, the Living Word – "became flesh and made his dwelling among us. And we have seen his glory." Right? Jesus is called the Living Word. And Jesus came, He took on flesh, and He moved into our neighborhood, and He dwelt among us. Jesus didn't come for a visitation; He came for a habitation. Jesus didn't come and make an appearance and disappear, He came to abide. And the moment, He moved into the neighborhood, the moment He came to dwell, everything changed. He walked with us, and He talked with us, and He saved, and He healed, and He set free, and He delivered, and He blessed, and He anointed, and we saw His glory to the same level that the Living Word came to dwell in this world. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." To the same way that the Living Word dwelt among us in our neighborhood, the written or the spoken Word of God is supposed to dwell in you richly. God's Word isn't supposed to be for a visitation, it's supposed to be a habitation. It's not supposed to show up for an appearance on a Sunday, it's supposed to abide in you all week long. And when I make room in my heart for Him to come and dwell through His Word, then guess what? Everything changes. He starts to walk with me, and talk with me, and I start to experience salvation, and healing, and being set free, and being delivered, and being made whole, and being blessed, and being prosperous. All of a sudden, I start to be anointed. And when the Word of God dwells in me deeply, I eventually will see the very glory of God in my life. The Word of God is supposed to dwell in you so deeply that you literally see the glory of the one who spoke it. Everything you see in Jesus' life in the gospels is available in your life, if you will choose to allow the Word of God to dwell in you richly. Meditation and memorization. You with me on this?

Remember, last week I talked to you about the Jewish culture and how they built their education system around God's Word. As they're going in to take the Promised Land, here's what God says to them, He says, "This is for all of the people of God. Fix these words of mine in your hearts and your minds." There it is again, you choose what you think about. Your thoughts don't choose you, you are not a victim of them; you are a product of them. "Fix these words" – choose to put My words – "in your hearts and your minds. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads." They would take little boxes and they would put the Word of God rolled up into the boxes, and they would tie the boxes to their wrists and around their foreheads. Might not have been fashionable and trendy, but the point of that was what? That the Word of God would influence what they did and what they thought about. That every action they took and every thought they thought was supposed to be submitted and surrendered to the very Word of God, as the people of God. "Teach them to your children." They were literally responsible to teach another, a part of this in Deuteronomy 6 says, "Impress upon them." They were literally supposed to, like the way a mason would take a chisel and carve something out of marble, they were supposed to carve the very words of God into their children. A lot of work, hard effort, manual labor, sweating, grit, struggle. But they were supposed to carve the very words of God, the very thoughts of God, into their children so that they would forever think that way and be shaped and formed once and for all, for all the rest of their lives. But it's hard to teach something you don't know, and it's hard to impress something upon someone that hasn't been impressed on you.

We're supposed to "talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you get up." Like, fill your conversation with the Word of God. How much does the Word of God come into your conversation? You don't even have to give the reference, like the address, and the street number, like, but just like, how often when you're talking does the Word of God come into your conversation? "Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates." Catch this, they literally would write Scripture on the doorframes and on the gateposts. What does gates and doors represent? Access and entry. They would write the Word of God on the doorposts and on the gates, so that only things that were submitted and surrendered to God's Word had access to their lives. What is the gate and the door of your life? It's your mind. So here's the question, what's written on the doorposts and the gate of your mind? What, what have you written in the doorposts and the gate of your mind? Because when you put God's Word in there, the things of the world don't get access or entry. When you write, "Forgive as I have forgiven you," on the gate of your mind, then guess what? Offense never is able to come in. When I write, "Freely you have received, freely give," on the doorpost of my mind, then guess what? Greed never gets to enter. When I write, "There is no fear in love, for perfect love casts out fear," then fear never gets to get into my life. When I write, "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus," then shame never gets through my gate. When I write, "My peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you," then guess what? Anxiety doesn't get access to my life. The problem is, is we don't have any truth written on our doorposts or on our gates, so the world comes barging in the gate, right through the front door, tramples on our garden, and brings death,

darkness, and destruction into the very home of our life. What have you written on the doorposts and the gate? What are you giving entry and access to? Because when the Word of God is true in your mind, lies can't get in.

"So that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land the Lord swore to give you." In other words, then, then, then you will be prosperous and successful wherever you go. This is how they were supposed to live. This is how Jesus would have grown up, and this is how we're invited to live in the here and now. And yet, since we do "not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, He [gives us] over to a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done." This verse was killer last week. When we don't think it's worth retaining the knowledge of God and say, "I want to think like the world, God." He says, "Okay." And we get a depraved mind that's dark and foolish, unapproved, and cannot stand the test of this life. And then I find myself doing the things that I really never wanted to do anyways. Okay, see, at some point, you have to take responsibility for your own life and stop making excuses and just start acknowledging that it just wasn't worthwhile. Like, at some point, we've got to stop making excuses. "It was too hard." "I didn't understand it." "I was too busy." "It didn't make sense." "I didn't know how." We got to stop making excuses and take responsibility for our own life, because repentance starts where excuses end. And just say, it just wasn't worthwhile to me. But I want to take responsibility for that, and I want to repent. Okay, so leaders, can we talk for a second? This week we told the church to ask you about how memorizing John 15 was going. How'd those conversations go? Was it awkward? Was it uncomfortable? Were you a little irritated? Were you able to share? Were you excited about the journey? See, remember, if you're a leader, you chose to be a leader. A disciple of Jesus who takes responsibility to create kingdom culture, make disciples, while accomplishing a specific task. And we want our leaders to be people who let their yes be yes, and their no be no, and do whatever they're doing with all their heart and can say, "Follow me as I follow Christ." And so, if you are irritated or offended that that was even brought up, why would you be offended about being held accountable for something you committed to do?

Accountable, give account for that which you're able to do. We say, "Well, that's not fair." But listen, Jesus says, "To whom much is given, much is required." Jesus says He holds us account to that which we're able to do, that we will give Him an account for that which He has asked us to do. That we're called to live a life worthy of our calling. And we have this demonic influence in the church from the world that says you can't hold anybody accountable to anything. Look at the world, schools, education, the police, teams, work. You can't hold anybody account for what they're able to do, because people make excuses, they make defenses, they deflect it, they say tolerance, they say mental health struggles, all these things. But we're the people of God. Are you kidding me? Do you know how much Satan wants you to deflect accountability? Why? Because he doesn't want you to live a life worthy of your calling. He wants you to live down here, this average, subpar, mediocre life, and accountability is to give an account for that which God has made you able to do. So Satan wants you to get offended about being held accountable instead of actually thinking about what God has made you able to do. And even if



you're held accountable up here, and you've got to hear, you still got a lot farther than you were. I want to live a life worthy of my calling. And so, Student Leadership Experience students, how have you been doing in your journal? The things you committed to do, the verses you committed to memorize, the practices you committed to do? VCLA students, how are you doing in the things that you wanted to be held accountable for, the life that you said you wanted to live? Leaders, John 15, how's it going? It would grieve me that we would have a single leader in this church that doesn't think it's worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God. Leaders, what in your life is so important that you didn't have time to retain the Word of God? What in your life is so busy and overwhelming that you didn't see it important to retain the knowledge of God? Maybe our life isn't arranged as much around Jesus as we thought and we need to take responsibility. Responsibility or repentance starts where excuses end. You're not a volunteer coordinator doing Habitat for Humanity; you're a spiritual leader ruling and reigning with God, moving into the future, releasing His very kingdom. And a depraved mind can't lead other people to repentance. So it matters. Account-able; what you're actually able to do. Everybody memorizing Psalm 23. Here's the good news: you just blew up every excuse you ever have about your inability to memorize Scripture.

Look at this: "When Your Words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight." Here's what I'm trying to tell you, you will never love God's Word more in public than you do in private. If it's not my joy and my delight in my Bible, it will not be a joy and a delight on this monitor. If I don't love it in private, if it's not the joy and the delight of my life in my Bible, then guess what? It will be something I tolerate and eventually get offended by on this monitor. People who love God's Word don't get offended in this room, just so you know. Man, we might go to the third week of this because you've got to stay with me, people. I have never met anyone offended in this room who loves God's Word out of this room, not one. Why? Because if I love God's Word, if there's a joy and delight out there, then when I come in here, I'm actually waiting for God's Word to come. And I don't get offended by God's Word, I allow God's Word to offend me. I allow it to change me and convict me and shape me. I don't try to control it. I realize there's a part of my life that's been conformed to the pattern of the world, and I want it to shape and form me. You see, some of you have been in church for 20 years, and you should have 20 years of maturity. You have one year of maturity 20 times, because I have never loved God's Word in private; I've only been remotely interested in it in public. And the extent of your spiritual maturity is about all we can give you in a transactional, consuming, entertaining, religious construct. It's the extent of the maturity you'll ever reach. And you can go from church to church and preacher to preacher, and they're great churches and great preachers; go for it. Just saying, if you don't have a joy and a delight in it out there, why on earth would you think you're going to find joy and delight of it in here?

If when He speaks, "When Your Words came," when He spoke and it didn't mean anything to you out there, why do we think that when He speaks, it's going to mean anything to me in here? And so leaders, this is the John 15 conundrum. If it wasn't important to you out there, you're already declaring it's not important to you in here. This is just why I'm trying to turn the

light on and help us see with me on this? Alright? I'm going to give you this one, and then I don't know what I'm going to do. Just hang with me for a second. I've been wanting to use this verse for like six weeks, so I'm just going to use it just in case. Look at what God says: "'Is not My Word like fire,' declares the Lord, 'and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?'" "My Word is like fire and like a hammer that breaks a rock into pieces." Okay, what is fire? Fire gives light, fire burns, fire purifies, fire consumes, fire is powerful, and it's contagious. Okay, what does a hammer do? A hammer breaks, a hammer smashes, and a hammer builds. So God says His Word is like a fire that's inside of us. It turns on the light so we can see. It burns, it literally consumes, overtakes our life with passion. It purifies us and burns off all the impurities of our life, our heart, the way we think, the way we act, the way we live. It literally is powerful; it's like the power of God inside of us. And it spreads, it's contagious, it's passionate. And it's like a hammer that comes into our lives and breaks the hardness of our heart, it breaks my pride, it breaks my shame, it breaks my ungodly beliefs, it breaks my strongholds, it breaks my addictions, it breaks the generational curses, it breaks down all the things of my life that are hardened to God. And then He puts them back together and builds them into something beautiful. So could it be that the reason there's not a lot of passion and softness of heart in the people of God is because we haven't put His Word deeply inside of us? Could it be that the Church of Jesus is so apathetic and so hard-hearted because we haven't put His Word inside of us that He says will make us passionate and soft? Here's a question for you: Do you have the courage to let God set a fire inside of you and carry around a hammer in your heart?

Do you have the courage to let God set a fire inside of you and carry around a hammer in your heart? I think for a lot of us, the answer is no, and this is our main reason we resist the Word of God, because I know if I put it inside of me, He's going to burn out some things that I find comfort and convenience in, and He's going to take that hammer and smash the idols of my heart. And I'm just not so sure I want to lose this and lose this. If we want to be a people of passion and wholehearted, soft devotion to Jesus, we have to arrange and rearrange our life around the Word of God. The very fact that we get offended about being asked to memorize and meditate on Scripture shows the hardness of heart, because a soft heart doesn't get angry; a soft heart is open and humble and receptive. A soft heart realizes there are so many more hard places in here that I need him to break up. So if this is going to help break that up, break it up, baby. A passionate person realizes there's so much more of their life that needs to be set on fire. So they don't resist the torch; they say, "Bring it, baby. Light this thing on fire." Cause there are blind things in me that I don't even know are there. Turn it on; let me see. Let's purify it. I don't want to walk according to the ways of this world. My vision is not prosperity and success of money, fame, fortune, and followers. No, no. My vision of success is to become like Jesus and accomplish God's purpose in my life. But I can't do it without this, without this. We're sort of excited about that.

Do you got the courage? Do you got the courage? So many of you this week, memorizing Psalm 23, that was the greatest step of faith you've made in a long time. Man, I celebrate you. Man, I celebrate you. You bought a pair of sneakers, you put them on, and you went around

the block. And I hope that invigorates you to keep going. And this is a little bit of a correction for some of our leaders who think we're beyond that. We're beyond needing a fire and a hammer because we know that we're coordinating volunteers like Habitat for Humanity, but that's not what it is. It's about bringing the open heaven realities to the world around me. And if I don't have a fire in here, why on Earth do I think I'm going to light a fire in a 15-year-old boy? A 15-year-old boy who's got wet wood, who is literally looking for someone to turn it on, for someone to light him on fire, for someone who has something that's bigger and better than what social media shows him is out there. But he's in the dark. He can't see. So he needs people around him who have raging infernos that when he gets around them, it's so hot that he knows there's something different because when he goes back out in the world, it's so stinking cold. So I want to get back around that guy, and I can't even put words to it, and I'm 15, and so I'm awkward, so I don't even know how to say it right, but I just know there's something different, not because they're a good volunteer coordinator, but because they're a leader who feels it's worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God and lives with a renewed mind and therefore does what ought to be done.

Well, not sure what we're going to do next week, but the practice plan for this week is to now meditate on Psalm 23. So last week we were memorizing it, trying to get it in. Meditate on it this week. You say, "What does that mean?" Well, I was going to teach you in those last 10 slides what that meant, but just go with what we've been talking about. Think about it, pray it, dream it, embrace it. If you didn't memorize it, keep memorizing it. And whatever you have memorized, start now thinking, "The Lord is my shepherd... the Lord, the Lord God, the Creator, the sustainer, the Redeemer, the one who has life in Himself, the one who knows all things. The Lord is my shepherd... shepherd, leader, guide. He knows me, He cares for me, and He's my shepherd. I didn't choose Him, He actually chose me because He wanted me." Think deeply about deep things and keep filling your mind with the Word of God, and watch what God will keep doing. Come on. Don't lose your energy from last week to this week. We'll figure out next week. This is my whole point. We're just not in a hurry this year. We're just trying to live a different way. So I'm okay, you're okay, because genuinely... Garrett, go back to the fire slide, please. No, fire slide. Because I want to see God's Word be a fire and a hammer in us and change us from the inside out in Jesus' name.

So close your eyes. Holy Spirit, come light a fire in me. Come bring a hammer to the hard places of my heart. Give me courage to trust that You are a good shepherd. So whatever You light on fire needs to be burned, and whatever You break needs to be broken. That's what Psalm 23 teaches me. Psalm 23 teaches me that I can trust Him to light a fire, and I can trust Him to carry a hammer in the deepest places of my soul. So I just declare over your life that the embers of a fire are beginning to burn. I just declare over your life that light is beginning to be turned on so that you can see. I just declare in your life that the hardness of heart is beginning to be broke up in Jesus' name. I just declare over your life that the idols that you have trusted in that have let you down and failed you time and time again are starting to be broken up by the hammer of the spirit in Jesus' name, and He is going to rebuild it into something beautiful

and glorious. I just declare over your life that your mind, your mind has the ability to radiate the very realities of heaven, and so may the glory and the beauty and the holiness of heaven begin to shine through your thinking, that the very realities of God may be manifest in your life. So Jesus, thank You for Your church. Thank You for a community of people that are training together, training to become godly. We are not in a hurry. We are walking with You, the Good Shepherd, at your pace, cause You lead us on paths of righteousness for Your name's sake. So lead us, God. This week, Holy Spirit, illuminate Psalm 23 to our lives. Illuminate it, turn the light on, show us something, apply it to our lives. May we not try to analyze it, study it, correct it, control it, may we just be open to that which You want to show us and that which You want us to become in Jesus' name. Lord, You are our shepherd, and we get to dwell in Your house forever. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!