

All right. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad that you're here with us today. We are a movement of hope for the city and beyond and we want to see God's kingdom come and His will be done. But before God's kingdom can come out there, it has to first come in here. Before it can come in here, it has to first come in here. So, I love what God is doing among us. I love the direction that we're going as a church. I love what we're doing and why we're doing it. God is deeply at work in the lives of the people sitting all around you right now. If you made me summarize some of what's happening in this season, I would say it's a season of purifying, a season of pruning, a season of sifting. It's like every person that really wants healing, and breakthrough, and freedom, and deep internal transformation, Jesus is offering it to them in the here and now. So, we've been in this series, really this season, just called A Different Way, talking about doing the things that Jesus did so we can do the things that Jesus did. Talking about being His disciples and who we're becoming and arranging and rearranging our life around Jesus. We're taking a look at like, 12 practices that Jesus practiced in His life so we can arrange our life around what He did so we can do what He did. By now, we should be at practice like, seven or eight. We're on number two. We've talked about Scripture. Today, I hope we finish meditation. What I want you to see in this is, I think God has slowed us way down to get our attention to be people who love Jesus.

I think God is trying to get our attention. He's not in a hurry. He says, "Hey, you need Scripture and you need meditation if you're ever going to do the things that I did and become like Me." I mean, we are a people of the kingdom. Look at what this says. "Since then you have been raised with Christ, set your heart on things above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above. Not earthly things, for you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory." He says people of the kingdom are supposed to have a totally different mindset than the people of this world. Our mind is supposed to be set on different things, on the kingdom of God. The reason we need the Word of God in our life is the Word of God shows us what the kingdom of God is like. It shows us what's available in the kingdom. It shows us who we are and who God is and what we were created to do. We need the Word of God to discover our life that's hidden in Christ. In fact, when Jesus says, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," He says repentance is the way we access the kingdom. But how can I repent of things that I'm not aware of? How can I repent from things that I don't know are inferior? So I need the Word of God. I need to set my mind on the Word of God if I'm ever going to discover my life that is hidden with Christ.

Our problem is, we have expectations of what we've experienced. We have a vision for what we've seen. We think our destiny is somehow tied up in what the world has demonstrated to us. The problem is what you've experienced, what you've seen, and what's been demonstrated to you has been the inferior realities of this world. So, we need to renew our minds by setting our minds on things above, the Word of God, so we can discover the kingdom of God that is available to you and I in the here and now. So, I've been thinking for the last couple of weeks, why don't we love God's Word? If we can just be honest and don't make it about you for a

second, just why don't the people of God love His Word? I mean David says, "Oh how I love your law!" – Your Word – "I meditated on it all day long." He says the reason I meditate on God's Word is because I love it. I won't meditate on it if I don't love it. But why don't I love it? I've been thinking about all the times in my life where I did not love the Word of God. I've been wrestling with it and thinking, why didn't I love the Word of God? Why don't we love the Word of God? Here's what I think. I think it's really simple. I think we're not captivated by God's Word because if we're honest, we're not really captivated by God. I think we're not really interested in God's Word because if we're honest, we're not really interested in God. I think we're not really all that passionate about God's Word because if we're just straight-up honest, we're not all that passionate about God. Let's just say it like this. I don't think we love God's Word because if we're really honest, I don't think we always love God.

I mean, think about a couple that first falls in love. They are captivated by each other. Because they're captivated by the other person, they're captivated by their words. Have you ever had that experience where you want to hear everything they say? You want to read every letter they write you. You read and reread the text. You'll stay up until two in the morning talking eight hours with them about everything and nothing because there's this mystery, and this intrigue, and this excitement, and this hunger. You're captivated by their words because you're captivated by their heart. Think of your favorite influencer. You are captivated by their words. You want to read every book they write. Make sure you get the podcast that just got released. You want to make sure your social media algorithm has them at the top of your feed. You're captivated by their words because you're captivated by their life. Or maybe your favorite musicians, you want to hear every interview, every song. You want to be the first to hear the words that they're singing. Why? Because somehow you're captivated by their life. So, could it just be that the reason we're bored with God's Word is because we're just bored with God? If the mouth speaks out of the overflow of the heart, I will only be interested in listening to the words of people who I am interested in the realities of their heart. So if I'm not captivated by God's words, it's because I'm not really captivated by His heart. It works in life and we know this. That couple that was captivated by each other, and therefore each other's words, 30 years later, isn't it interesting how they don't listen to anything the other one says? They still say I love you, but the other person starts talking and it's like, "Wah wah wah." Why? Because I'm no longer captivated by them. So, I'm not really captivated by what they have to say. If that's you, you don't have to sit here and feel bad and all of a sudden get discouraged and figure out, "Oh, my gosh, how am I going to be captivated by God's Word? I got to be..." No, no, just stop. Stop yourself. This is Jesus-focused theology. Don't focus on being captivated by God. Focus on the fact that He is captivated by you. Stop and ask, then stop to think that we love because He first loved us, and start to realize that Jesus Himself is captivated by me. He rejoices over me. He delights in me. He sings over me. I'm the apple of His eye. He has laid down His life for me. No one can snatch me from His hand. His mind is full of thoughts of me. When I start to realize He is captivated by me, I will become captivated by Him.

See, I love this. "But he who keeps (treasures) His Word (who bears in mind His precepts)" – meditates on the Word of God. "(Who observes His message in its entirety)." Not just the parts we like. Not just the encouraging verses that are on the knick-knacks in your house. The parts that correct and rebuke and train. "Truly in him has the love of and for God been perfected, (completed, reached maturity). By this we may perceive, know, recognize, and be sure that we are in Him." It says if I treasure God, I'll treasure His Word. I treasure His Word because I treasure Him. When I treasure His Word, meditate on it and observe all of it – not just the parts I like – then the love of and the love for God has been perfected in me. I have received the love of God and now I have love to give back. So, now because I understand God is captivated by me, I become captivated by Him. Because I'm captivated by Him, I am now captivated by His words. Because His words reveal His heart and I want to know His heart so I will listen to what He has to say. Does this make sense to you?

I mean, I love what Jesus says. "Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me." Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. Jesus' love language is obedience. The way He receives love is through obedience. Love for Him is to obey His commands, but I can't obey that which I don't have. I have to have His commands, know what His Word says, so I can obey it, so I can love Him. Jesus' love language is obedience, but I first have to have His commands. So, can I ask you the question? Do you have His commands? "Whoever has my commands." I can't obey that which I do not know. I can't submit and surrender to that which I am not aware of. So, if I really want to love God, I know I have to obey His Word, but I first have to go get His commands. I have to go engage the Scripture, and memorize, and meditate, and hide it in my heart, and put it inside of me, and search it with all of my life, because I want to love Him. But I need to know what He says so I can obey Him because He says obedience is His love language. So, do you have His commands? Then let me ask you a really pointed question. If obedience is Jesus' love language, does He feel loved by you? If obedience is His love language, does He feel loved by you? You say, "God has feelings?" Yes, He do-- Yes, He does. He's a person. We can grieve Him. We can please Him. Does He feel loved by you? What was the last thing He asked you to do, then did you do it because you just loved Him? His command came and you obeyed it, whether you liked it or not, because you loved Him. See, love for God is not going to church. Love for God is not calling yourself a Christian. Love for God is not posting something on social media that's a Bible verse. Love for God is obedience. If you came in and you came in and you were married and we had marriage counseling and we sat down and you both said, "We love each other, but neither of us feels loved by the other person," we would start talking and we would probably figure out very quickly that you're not meeting each other's love languages. That there are five simple love languages – time, touch, words, gifts... and service. Thank you. This person wants time and this person wants touch. So, you usually give that which you want to receive. So, the other person doesn't feel loved because we haven't studied them and brought ourselves to do that which they long for and that which they want. What Jesus wants is obedience. But I can't obey that which I do not know. So, are we searching out and seeking His commands so that I can submit and surrender my life to Him? Because I love Him, because he

loves me. Does Jesus feel loved by you? If not, here's what's great. You can do it today. Whatever that last thing He gave you in His Word. Just do it by faith, because He says that's how He is loved. With me on this? I'm not so sure. He's worthy of my obedience. But I can't obey that which I do not know and I'm convinced we do not know. That's why we can't obey.

See, two weeks ago, here's where we got. "'Is not my word like fire,' declares the Lord, 'And like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?'" This is profound to me. God said His Word is like a fire and it's like a hammer that breaks. If you think about a fire and you think about a hammer, what does a fire do? A fire illuminates. A fire burns and consumes. A fire purifies. A fire is powerful and it's contagious. And what does a hammer do? A hammer breaks. A hammer smashes. And a hammer builds. So, when we put God's Word inside of us, it's like a fire and a hammer. It's a fire that illuminates and shows me things that I did not see in the midst of a dark world. It begins to burn and consume and take over my life and create this life of passion and it purifies. It removes the impurities of my life that should never have been there in the first place. It becomes contagious. It spreads from my life to other people's life. It's the very power of God flowing through me. And it's like a hammer. A hammer that breaks my pride, a hammer that breaks my ungodly beliefs, a hammer that breaks my idols, a hammer that breaks my unbelief, and the generational curses, and the strongholds of my life. It comes in and it smashes and it tears down so it can rebuild back together. So the question is, is the reason there's not a lot of fire and softness of heart in the church today is because we don't put His Word inside of us? Is the reason there's so much apathy and so much hardness of heart simply because we won't take His Word and meditate on it and think about it and dwell deeply on it and turn it over and over again in our mind? I left you a few weeks ago with this question of just, 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 light a fire inside of you, carry around a hammer in your heart? I think the answer is often, if we're honest, just, no. Because I don't want an uncontrolled fire. Because I don't know what it will burn up. There are things I find a lot of comfort and convenience in that I do not want to go. I don't want a hammer swinging around in my heart because I've worked really hard to protect my heart and build this little life that I got. I know there are some idols in there that if that hammer starts wheeling, those things are coming down and I'm not ready for them to go. See, if I can just tell you like personally in my life, if you said, "Hey, the last two years, just tell me what God has been doing in your life?" Here's my summary statement for you of my life. God has lit a fire in my soul that I must attend to. You want to know the summary statement of my life in this? God has lit a fire in my soul that I must attend to. God has started a fire inside of me, a fire of His presence, a fire of His love, a fire of His Word. I must attend to it. I must fuel it and steward it and protect it and arrange my entire life around it.

Then I said it to you two weeks ago, I want the fire of God to literally burn my life down. I want everything that's of me to be burned to the ground and only Jesus and his kingdom left. I want Him to burn my pride. I want Him to burn my ego. I want Him to burn the false motives that I have. I want Him to burn up everything that is wood, straw, hay, and stubble. I want Him to

burn religion out of my life. I want Him to burn sin, and ungodly beliefs, and broken thought patterns. I want Him to burn up the world. I want Him to burn up myself. I want Him to burn up my flesh. Everything that's not of Jesus, I want to be burned. I want this fire to be uncontrolled. I want it to be uncontained. I'm trying to remove the fire ring so it can just go. So, here's my question for you. What are you attending to in your life in this season? Because I'm attending to a fire in my soul. What are you arranging your life around? Because I'm arranging my life around a fire in my soul. I want God to church that we must attend to. I want Him to burn out everything that's not of Jesus. I want Him to burn our sin and our pride and our rebellion and our duplicity and our worldliness and our broken thinking and all the programs and methods and things that we do that are not of Jesus, all the religious baggage that we bring in, all the traditions that we worship, every idol, everything that's wood, straw, hay, and stubble that is a part of this family of God, I want it to be burned. I want it to be uncontrolled and uncontained where it jumps the fire ring and starts burning things we didn't think it was going to burn.

It's easy to cheer for that until it starts burning the thing you don't want to be burned. If you've ever been in church for a period of time, maybe you've come from another place or maybe you've been here, there are good things that become bad things because we start worshiping them. If you've been here for years, things like HUB Camp and Soul Sisters and Epic and Thursday Night Church, they were good things. When it was time to move on to the next thing, when there is a response that's negative over moving on from something that was good but has now become an idol, you see how much we actually worship that thing. Here's a great question for you. What would you be upset about if it got burned to the ground in this church? What would you be upset about? What would cause you to get offended, take your toys and go home, pull back, start grumbling? What if there was no more kids ministry and you had to have your own kid with you in church? What if there was no more cafe and you couldn't get a coffee and a donut in the morning? But what if there was no more lights and music and the whole thing? What if church Sunday mornings at 9:30 and 11:00 got burned to the ground? You're like, "Well, you can't have church if it's not at 9:30 and 11:00 on Sundays and without kids and coffee." So, I mean, here's the deal. At the end of the day, you know what we need? The Word of God, the Spirit of God, the grace of God, the people of God, and the mission of God, that's it. I'm not saying we need to get rid of anything. I'm just saying, I'm open for the fire to jump and burn down anything that is no longer of Jesus and the different way that He's leading us. What's in your soul? Is there any fire in your soul? Here's the great news. If your heart is so hard that there's no fire, you know what fire does? Fire can actually burn up rock when it gets hot enough. It's called lava. God can literally take the hardness of your heart and when you just put His Word inside of you, He can literally burn down and make it soft again in Jesus' name.

I mean, I love what Jesus says. He says, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God." He says the moment you don't have an interactive relationship with the Scripture, not a mastery of, but you just don't know the Scriptures, you don't have a relationship with God's Word, your life is in error and you have no power. Your life

is in error. If you don't know the Word of God, your life is already inferior to what it could be. You no longer know what is good and true and is right. You now find yourself on the wide road, the broad gate that leads to destruction. You're in error and there's no power of God, there's no possibilities. But when I will know the Scriptures, all of a sudden, I start to live a righteous life, a life that is right, and good, and true. The power of God is all over me. I mean, if Jesus rules His kingdom through words and actions, then I have to value His words if I ever want to see His actions. The reason we don't see action of God in our life is because we don't listen to the Word of God in our life. There's an order. The Word comes before the action. If we don't see a lot of action or a lot of power, maybe it's just because we haven't valued the Word because we're an error because we don't know it, so we're out of alignment with God. He says, "Hey, you can be right. You can be on the good, true path, and you can have the power of God flowing through you if you will simply arrange and rearrange your life around God's Word." Because you become captivated by it because you're captivated by Him because you realize He is captivated by you. Are you with me?

I mean, just think spiritual warfare for a second. "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." You are in a real spiritual battle. Don't ever kid yourself and pretend that there is not the kingdom of God and the kingdom of darkness engaged in a war. We already know who wins, but there is a real war for the reality of your life in the here and now. We think spiritual warfare is a lot of demons hiding behind the bushes of the situations and circumstances of our life. But what this verse tells us is that the primary battlefield of spiritual warfare is in the mind. The mind is the primary battlefield of spiritual warfare. Most spiritual warfare does not happen in the situations or circumstances of your life, they happen in your mind long before you get to this situation or circumstance. We're so worried about a demon hiding in the situation or circumstance in our life, but here is the reality, he doesn't have to go hide in the situation or circumstance in your life. If he can influence your thought, he's already won the situation and circumstance before you even get to it, because whoever influences your thoughts leads your life. So, it says that the spiritual warfare we do is to take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ. In other words, I can't afford to think a thought that is not faith, hope, or love. I can't afford in my life to have thoughts of unbelief, despair, and fear. Why? Because I empower darkness in my life. We get all confused about how do I take captive a thought and what do I do and remove and replace and bind and loose and all these things? I've been waiting a couple of weeks to just tell you this. If you will just fill your mind full of the thoughts of God, there will be no room left for the thoughts of the devil. If you will just simply fill your mind with the thoughts of God, there's no room left for the thoughts of the devil. If I will fill my mind with God's Word and memorize on it and meditate on it, all of a sudden, there's no room left for a thought of the devil to get in there. Why? Because it's full. Think of a glass that's full when it's all the way to the top, there's no room for anything else to get in there because it's full. But the way, you know it's full is when it's overflowing because if I

get this close to the top, there's still this much room for something else to get in there. So, I know my thoughts are full or my mind is full of the thoughts of God when the words of God are actually coming out of my mouth. It's overflowing.

So, what I want you to see in this is meditation is an act of spiritual warfare. Literally, meditating on the Word of God is an act of spiritual warfare. Why? Because when I'm meditating on the Word of God, there are no thoughts to take captive because they're all obedient to Christ. When I'm meditating on God's Word, everything I'm thinking is in alignment and submitted and surrendered to the lordship of Jesus. So, rearranging your thought life around God's Word instead of the world is an act of spiritual warfare that brings you great victory because it's the primary place of battlefield. Here's our problem. Our problem is our mind is so full of the thoughts of the world that there's no room left for the thoughts of God. Our minds are so full of the thoughts of this world, filled and overflowing, because we can tell by the words that we speak that are words of unbelief and despair and fear, that there's no room left for the thoughts of God. Listen, those of you that really say you struggle with memorizing Scripture like Psalm 23 or John 15, can I just help you? I don't think it's that you struggle memorizing. I think it's your mind is so full of the thoughts of this world that there's no room left for the thoughts of God. So John 15 can't get in there and Psalm 23 can't get in there. Why? Because it's full and it's overflowing with the thoughts of the world. So, there's no room left. So, we go out in life and get smashed by darkness and then blame God. There's another demon hiding in that situation and circumstance. No, there wasn't. There was a thought that you chose to come into agreement with that is not of God. I mean, when Jesus goes to the cross in John 14, He literally tells the disciples, He says, "I'm going to the cross and Satan has no hold on me." You study it and you pull it apart. He literally says, "There is nothing in Me that belongs to him." I don't have a single thought in my mind that is in alignment with darkness. So, I'm not worried about the journey ahead because God has a stronghold on my mindset so he has a stronghold on my life. Whoever influences your thoughts is who has a stronghold on you. So, when Satan and the world influence my thoughts, then I have a stronghold of darkness in my life. But when, like Jesus, I can say, "There is--" oh, what would it be like to wake up one day and say, "Satan has nothing in me. There is not a single thought in my mind that comes from that pit of darkness because I've filled my mind so full of the Word of God that I am not afraid to go to the cross because I know who has a stronghold on me, and He's the good Father." You believe a lie, you empower the liar. Satan, according to this, is only empowered through human agreement. If Jesus says all authority has been given unto Him, then Satan has... none. So, he only has that which you give him. When I think his thoughts, thoughts that are rebellious to Jesus, I've empowered him to rule and reign in my life. So, that situation and circumstance, it takes me out because of my bad thinking way back here. This tracking with you?

I mean, let me give you one more on this. Remember when Jesus tells the disciples He's going to the cross and Peter steps up and he's like, "No, Lord, I'm never going to let that happen. That is the worst idea I've ever heard." "Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan. You are a stumbling block to me. You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of

men." Jesus says worldly thinking is agreement with the devil. "You have in mind the things of men." Worldly thinking. "Get behind me, Satan." Agreement with the devil. Worldly thinking is agreement with the devil. When we think like men, like humanity, we are in agreement with the kingdom of darkness. Logic, reason, common sense. We have all these good ideas that should come to pass. What the world thinks is foolishness, God says is wisdom. What God says is foolishness, the world says is wisdom. So, we have to acknowledge that worldly thinking is agreement with the devil, which means heavenly thinking is agreement with Jesus. I don't know about you, but I'm not real interested in common sense. I want uncommon wisdom. I don't know about you, but I don't really want logic and reason. I want the mind of Christ and thoughts that are above our thoughts. What some of you are sitting here and you look at this verse and you're like, "Man, that's a lot, but that ain't me. I don't think like God, but I certainly don't think like the devil. I think kind of right." You're like a "good, healthy, normal person." Do you understand? You just proved my point. That is a thought of man. To say there is not just two extremes. Good and evil. The kingdom of God, the kingdom of darkness. The Spirit and the flesh. The narrow road and the wide road. Gathering or scattering. I'm with or I'm against. There is no "I'm just a good person and I don't think like the devil." "I know I don't think like God, but I have good logic, reason, and common sense." According to Jesus, it's agreement with darkness. Influenced by darkness. Now, can you imagine if Peter would have said when Jesus says you're going to the cross, if Jesus would have said, "Lord, that breaks my heart. But I know that's of the Father, and so we will help you get there." Jesus would have said something like, "Peter, well done. As the Father has sent me, so I send you whatever you ask for in prayer, it's yours because I know you're already thinking in alignment with kingdom." I think a whole lot of the prayers we pray are out of alignment with the kingdom. That's why God can't answer them the way we want because we think like men saying it's good when it's not God. It's actually darkness.

I think it's fascinating that Jesus says, "You are a stumbling block to me." How many times are we the stumbling block to God's kingdom coming in our own life? How many times are we the stumbling block to the cross of Jesus being demonstrated for those around us and for ourselves to die and be raised to new life? I mean, it's logical to say. You can get Peter's perspective. Jesus, you're doing some good stuff. You can't go. That is a terrible thinking. But that was God's thinking. It just shows us how different the thought patterns actually are that we need to renew our mind in Jesus' name. Worldly thinking is agreement with the devil. If you think about the time and season that God has placed your life in, just like catch this for a second. Yeah, we went through the great pandemic of COVID, but we live in an epidemic of mental health. So, God has put you in a time and place of history in a world full of broken thinking. So, one of the greatest witnesses we have for the life of Jesus in the kingdom of God is to have a renewed mind. The people of God, we should be so full of wisdom and divine strategies, divine solutions, beautiful creativity, a holy imagination, visions, and dreams. Our mind should be so renewed that it literally radiates the very glory, beauty, and holiness of heaven. That people around us in the mental health trials see it and say, "You think so differently than me. Tell me how. Tell me how." So a great question to just ask yourself is this is,



are you inspired by your own thinking? Would you want your mindset? If the answer is no, why do you think anyone else would? Maybe we need to renew our mind with the Word of God so we don't think like the devil and call it God. So, we don't think like the world and try to tell everybody else to follow Jesus. Because I don't want your life if I don't want your thinking, because your life is a product of your thinking. Whoever influences your thoughts influences your life.

You see, in this fall, we had about 100-- or about 500 men memorize Psalm 1. If you're looking for another passage to memorize, to fill your life that reinforces everything we've been talking about, let me just read this to you. "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight, his delight is in the law of the Lord. On his law, he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. Not so the wicked. They are like chaff that the wind blows away. Therefore, the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish." He gives very graphic picture of the blessed man and the cursed man. He says the blessed man delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night. Because of that, he is like a tree planted beside streams of water, has everything it needs, its leaves do not wither, it bears fruit in season and he is successful and prosperous in the kingdom of God. There it is again. Compared to the cursed man who walks according to the foolishness of this world, whose life is like chaff, means looks really good on the outward because there are leaves and sticks and husks, but there is no seed and there is no fruit. So, they are tossed to and fro by this life because they have no stability, no anchor, no rudder because they have no truth. Because they spent their whole life standing in pride, they will fall at the judgment. So, can I ask you a question? Is your life more like the blessed man or the cursed man? Do you delight and meditate in the law of the Lord or do you walk according to the foolishness of this world? I mean, this is why David says, "I've hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." He says, "I put your word inside me that I don't want to miss the mark." I don't want to live an inferior life. I don't want to just be average and just get by. No, no. I want to be prosperous and successful. You see, when you read God's Word, it gets in your mind. When you memorize it, it gets in your heart. When you meditate on it, it gets in your Spirit. You read it, it gets in your mind. You memorize it, it gets in your heart. You meditate on it, it gets in your Spirit. It becomes a part of you. You literally soak it up until it actually becomes a very part of you. It's like a sponge put into water and it soaks everything up. All of a sudden, everything that's in that sponge is what it's been immersed in. When you squeeze that sponge, the only thing that can come out is that which is soaked up in the first place. The only thing that comes out of you when you're squeezed in this life is that which you've soaked up in the first place. So, when you're squeezed, what comes out of you? That's what you've soaked up into you and it's become a very part of you. I think we have no idea how much worldly thinking we actually engage in on a daily basis because we've soaked up the wisdom of this world and we've called it normal and healthy and good. Wouldn't you want every, I mean, who would want to go to the cross? So when we're squeezed, what comes

out of us is all this worldliness. That's why David says, "May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing." The words of my mouth come from the meditation of my heart. When my life is squeezed, whatever I've been ruminating on, whatever has become a part of me, whatever I've soaked in, is now what quickly comes out of me. Is what comes out of you pleasing to the Lord? If not, this isn't to make you feel bad. It's to bring a light on the reality of your life so you can see, I got to get off social media, man. I got to stop watching those Netflix series that are basically just like glorified porn. I got to stop listening to the music that I've been listening to. I got to break up with this girl or this guy because everything they say is just so bad, and I know I can't have this friend in my life anymore because their thinking is so broken. You know what? I might actually have to consider changing jobs and taking a demotion because this environment is so toxic for me, I can't do it. You know what? I can't sit at this lunch table anymore because all these things are soaking up into me and I'm starting to think them as normal. It's not normal. Set your heart on things... above, not earthly things. We're consumed with the earthly things and then wonder why we get thrashed in life. The people of God are so unvictorious. It's so sad. If I was a lost person and I looked at most of the modern-day church, I would be like, "I don't think I want your life. I mean, you say these things and you post a few verses, but you actually live a more miserable existence than I do. You don't even enjoy the bad things that we do. You use one hour a week to go to a building and sing some songs, listen to one guy talk. You give a little bit of money and feel guilty to volunteer. I don't want that." Would you want that? But that's what we present as Christianity because our thinking is so unbelievably broken. "I don't think like the devil. I know I don't think like God. I think like a good person." Jesus says there's no third thinking. Every thought is either influenced by God or it's influenced by Satan. There is no, well, "good person" thinking. There's hidden in Christ's thinking and there's living like the world thinking. The journey of renewing your mind is going through this process of acknowledging that's a worldly thought and I've thought that for 30 years. So Jesus, I need to confess and repent of that. Number one, acknowledge it, not make excuses. Then number two, I need to like, find things to remove that thought by filling my mind up with this over here. So, yeah, I'm not going to argue about memorizing John 15 because that would just be foolish because I actually want to think like God. I can make excuses of why I can't do it, but I'm realizing, my gosh, my mind is so full of thoughts of the world. There's no room for the thoughts of God. So, what happens when the cup is full and you want to put something else in there? You have to put something in there and it displaces everything. So, there must be a displacement. There must be a rearranging of your life if you're ever going to get there. Sort of lost you on all that, didn't I? We're either thinking deeply or we're wondering when it's going to be over. Don't worry. This is not long.

This is for all my bullet-point, black-and-white friends who for the last three weeks watched me flip through this slide and were like, "Dear Jesus, please show us the bullet points." This is really fast. How do you then actually do it? Don't worry. This is like three minutes. How do you actually do it? Pick a passage. Pick a passage. Don't be like, "I'm going to meditate on these 46 different things." Pick a passage. It can be a verse. It can be like we did Psalm 23, all six verses. Pick a passage. Maybe it's something we talk about on a weekend message. Maybe it's

something God shows you in our daily life. Maybe it's just a verse that God brings your-- maybe there's a struggle or a stronghold in your life and you want the antonym. Pick a passage and then keep it in front of you. Just keep it in front of you all day long as much as you can. Write it down on a card and put it on your dashboard. Write it on your bathroom mirror that you get ready in the morning. Put it on your phone screen. Put it in a little memo recording and listen back to it on your own. Work on memorizing it. You work on memorizing something that's in front of you all day long. One of the greatest things I can tell you to keep it in front of you, what I try to do in my life is, let it be the first thing you think of in the morning and the last thing you think of before you go to bed. Three, two, one, I'm awake. Don't touch your stinking phone. "What's the world have to say today? Oh yeah, I need more worldly thinking." I'm not sure what country I'm in with this accent, but don't touch your phone, and don't talk like that. Three, two, one. "Okay. The Lord is my shepherd. Doesn't feel like a shepherding kind of day, but Lord, You're my shepherd. I shall not want." Okay. Before you even touch the world, think about God. Then when you're going to bed at night, don't sit there. "What's the world have to say as I go to bed?" You want to know why you don't have good dreams and visions? Because you fill your head with the thoughts of the world right before you go to bed. So, Satan has your night because he has your thought. He has your mind. You go to bed watching something of darkness on the TV and then you wonder why I don't hear from God in the watches of the night like Scripture promises. Why? Because it just filled my mind with the thoughts of the world right before I go to bed. Turn it all off. Lay down. "Lord, today You were my shepherd. Fascinating as I think about my day, how much You are there." Find times throughout the day where you just sit down for five minutes and be like, I'm just going to sit down and turn it all off. I'm going to think about this passage from you. Keep it in front of you. See, we're so used to informational reading, reading for information as fast as we can to get the bottom. What does this mean? We want context. We want reason. We want information. Got it. Here's the da-da-da-da. Okay. But there's transformational reading. Transformational reading is, I'm not trying to get any information and I'm not trying to control the text. I'm opening my life up to say, "God, whatever You want to do in me through this passage, transform me." I'm not going to argue. I'm not going to fight it. I'm not going to defend it. Transform me. Then ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate it. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you God's Word and what He wants to say in the midst of it along the way.

Are you ready? Here's how it just-- "The Lord is my shepherd." The Lord, God, Yahweh, the maker of heaven and earth, the One who holds all things together, the One who has life in Himself, He is my shepherd. He's a shepherd. He leads me and He guides me and He's for me and He claims me and He owns me. He is my shepherd, not because I chose Him, but because He chose me and "I shall not be in want." Even though I feel like there are lots of things I want in my life, there really is nothing I need in my life because He withholds no good things from those who love Him and He promises to meet all my needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. "He makes me lie down in green pastures." Sometimes He asks me to do things I don't want to do, but they're always for my good. He's always leading me to places of abundance and "He leads me beside quiet water." Sometimes He takes me places where I

never thought we would go, but He's always bringing me to peace and there's only peace found in Him. "He restores my soul," which means He will fix the very depths of the broken parts. I mean, the deepest brokenness that I don't even know. He promises that He will restore it. If He will restore that, will He not restore all other things? You see it? That's meditating. That's thinking deeply and pulling and pulling and pulling.

Last verse for you and this is so important. Jesus says to the Pharisees. "You search and keep on searching and examining the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life. Yet, it is those very Scriptures that testify about Me and still you are willing to come to Me so that you may have life." Says there's a whole bunch of people that look at Scripture as a checkbox. Search it, examine it, memorize it, meditate on it, do the daily reading plan. Did I get the check? Did I need the check? Did I get the checkbox? Does this count? Does this? Did I get? Okay. Did I do? Jesus says, "Stop." He says, "The whole point of those Scriptures is to bring you to Me." He says, "If you memorize it, and meditate on it, and read it, and engage it, and get your checkbox, and your journal for the day, but you didn't come to Me, you missed the whole point." So, hear me, hear me, hear me. Hear ye, hear ye, hear ye. There is no win in memorizing Scripture if you don't come to Jesus. There is no win in the reading plan if you don't come to Jesus. There is no win in checking off all of your little boxes. Scriptures are the footprints that lead us to Jesus. Some of us follow the footprints all the way to Jesus and He's like right here and then we're like, because I got to get my checkbox. Did I get my checkbox? Did I get it? Did it count? I was one word off. Did it count? There's no counting. There's coming to Jesus. Okay, that's for some of you. Now, there's a whole bunch of others of you that are like, my whole life is about coming to Jesus. Oh, I don't memorize Scripture. I don't meditate. I don't do anything that anyone else asks me to do. I don't do things that smack of religion or duty or obligation. It's just me and Jesus. Whatever me and Jesus feel like doing, that's what we do. Just so that you're clear, He says those are the very Scriptures that testify about Him and bring us to Him. Jesus wants to reveal Himself to you through His Word. So, if I actually want to get to Him, I have to go the way that He says and it's through His Word. So the point is not getting the checkbox. It's coming to Jesus. But I can't come to Jesus without searching and keep on searching and examining, memorizing, meditating, seeking, dwelling, thinking, absorbing the very Word of God. Does that make sense to you? This is what spiritual practices look like. I don't do it to do it, but I know I need to do it so I can find the one who is captivated in me.

So, close your eyes. Actually, no. Here's what we're going to do. Here's what we're going to do. Here's what we're going to do. I got ahead of myself and we're done. Here's your practice plan for this week. Declare Psalm 23 out loud every day this week. Every day, Psalm 23, speak it out over your life. You'd be amazed at what happens. As you're doing it, what's happening is you're renewing your mind. You're transforming yourself. You're declaring God's Word out in life every day. Just try it. You're going to feel really weird the first time you do it and I'm going to give you practice right now. So, on every campus, stand up, wherever you are. Every campus, stand up. Here's what we're going to do. We're just going to declare it all together.

That's how we're going to end today. Okay? We're just going to declare it out together. If you have it memorized, great. If you don't, no problem. I'm going to get you started, but then I'm going to back out. You're going to do it. Ready? "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. He makes me lie down in green pastures, He leads me beside quiet waters, He restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." That's it. That's it. See? That's meditating. That's declaring. That's filling your mind with the Word of God. So, Jesus, thank You so much for Your Word. May we be people who love Your Word and practice the way of Jesus. We can't do the things that Jesus did if we don't first think the thoughts that Jesus thought. So, thank You for Your Word. Thank You for a fire that burns. Thank You for stirring up our faith. Thank You that You are the good shepherd. You lead us through dark valleys. Even when we mess up, Your goodness and Your mercy follows us all the days of our life. In Jesus' name, everybody said, amen.