

Pastor Jason Hillier: All right, hey everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. Happy Mother's Day to you. You came on a great weekend because this is going to be the kind of weekend where we celebrate all day long. And so, in just a second, we're going to spend some time praying for mothers, but before that, we're super excited to celebrate our next-gen graduation here at Valley Creek. You see, at Valley Creek, we're all about raising up generations of hope carriers. We believe that the next generations, the place where they start, their floor is going-- or, their ceiling is going to be our floor. Wherever we go into the love of the Father, as far as we go into that, they're going to go even further and farther. And so, all these hope carriers that are represented across all the generations, we're celebrating that they've learned so much about who they are, who God is, and what they were created to do. So today, we get to celebrate all the people that graduated different parts and facets of both the Kids Leadership Experience, Student Leadership Experience, VCLA, high school graduates, college graduates, trade school graduates, we're celebrating all of them, because they're going to take a next step into a new season. And so if that's you, if I just said you, come on down. We want to pray for you also. If you're one of those graduates in any of those areas, we want to pray over your next season, maybe just raise a hand as a sign of blessing to the ones that are down here out front, so go ahead and raise your hands with me as we pray over all of our graduates into this next season. You see, they don't go forth alone, they go forth with the people of God. And so right now, we pray over every single one of our graduates. Thank You, God, for what You're doing in their life. Thank You for the fact that You're with them, and You're leading them, and they will truly go out in joy. They'll be led forth in peace, and that the Word deposited into them is not going to return void because You are the one, Jesus, that's taught them who they are, who You are, and what they were created to do. We speak an identity over each one of them. We speak a peace over their next season. We speak so much life into wherever they're going to go, wherever You're going to take them. Thank You, God, that there is an entire family, the people of God, that are here praying for them. And so I just want you to hear this. Wherever you go, know that you have an entire church that goes with you. You have a people that loves you. You have a people that's praying for you. And a people that wants to see you become everything that God has called you to be. Thank You, God, that You are raising up a generation of hope carriers here. You're raising up a generation of hope carriers that's going to carry the hope of Jesus everywhere they go. They do not do it alone; they do it in Your name. Amen! Come on, God's so worthy. What if we just took a second to give him a shout of praise? Come on. God, You're worthy. You're worthy of the glory. We give You praise. Praise Your name. All right, it is a day of celebration.

We're going to just take a second to say, Happy Mother's Day. Moms, we love you, we need you. We hope that you feel seen and known and special today. And we also know that on something like a Mother's Day, it's filled with so many different kinds of emotions. For some people, it's a lot of disappointment. It's a lot of memories that are difficult. It's maybe places where your heart needs to be healed. So we first of all just speak to that part and just say, may the Lord heal you. And may He heal those places that are hurting inside of you. And Mother's Day also represents all kinds of things, including the fact that we're not even just celebrating

only mothers, we're celebrating spiritual mothers. We're celebrating those that want to be mothers. We're celebrating single moms, and all kinds of moms in all areas of life. Really what we're doing is we're celebrating women that are made in the image of Jesus and that carry His beauty and His creativity. We're celebrating all of you that are women in the room. We want to do that by just praying a blessing over you today. So if you came with a woman in your life, if you're here with her, I want to encourage you to just lay a hand on her shoulder and pray for her. If you see somebody in your area that maybe is here by themselves, you can ask them, if you can bless them and pray for them, because we celebrate all the women that are made in the image of God, and we pray a blessing over them. So right now, Jesus, we just pray over every single mom, every single spiritual mother, all the women in this place, we pray the hope of Jesus into them. We pray the life of Jesus into them. Specifically, we want to pray that any places where the world has tried to tell them who they are, or somebody's trying to speak lies over them, we speak the truth of Jesus. And we speak the love of the Father into their life. Anytime that they've maybe not been seen, not been known, we speak that they are known, and they are seen. In fact, I say that to you right now. You're seen, you're known, you're loved, and His grace is more than enough for you. So may you have a feeling that Jesus Himself is smiling down upon you today. It's not just your family praying for you, it's that the Father looks down upon you, and He looks at you with love. He looks at you with rejoicing. May you have dreams that rise up in your heart. May you have visions for a future and a hope with Jesus. May you know the best is yet to come. The best of your life is yet to come in Jesus' name. And so we speak that over every woman in this place, and we just see that they say that Jesus has been faithful to you. He will continue to be faithful to you now and forever. Come on. In Jesus' name, we worship You, God, because You are faithful to the end. You are faithful to every woman in this room. You are faithful to every mother in this room. You are faithful to every person in this room. In Jesus, we are seen, we are known, we are loved, we are valued, and we are wanted. And we have faith because You are faithful. So today, Jesus, we turn our attention and our affection and our focus to You because You are worthy of it all. Today, we celebrate You, in Jesus' name we pray. Amen!

Hey, whatever campus you're at, why don't you go ahead and grab a seat. Once again, let me welcome you to Valley Creek. We are so glad that you are here with us on this Mother's Day. On this day of celebration because today we're not only celebrating mothers, we're celebrating graduates, and we're celebrating all the amazing things that God has been doing in our next generation ministry. And so, I want to introduce to you Pastor Dave Scriven, our Executive Pastor of Next Gen. And Sebastian Mancillas, our Central Student Director. Dave oversees all of our next gen ministry. Sebastian oversees all of our Student ministry. And they're going to share with you some of the amazing things that God has been doing in our next gen as we keep celebrating how God is moving in this time, in this season.

Pastor Dave Scriven: Yeah, what a great day of celebration. And we truly love what God is doing in this season. Specifically, we love what God is doing in the lives of our next generation. So you guys may not realize it, but on any given week across all of our campuses, we have

about 1,500 kids and students that engage with us through our weekend experiences, through Wednesday nights. And on top of our kids and students, we have this growing and thriving young adult community that is literally getting plugged in. They're serving, they're leading in all aspects of our church. And see, what that means is, we're not just a church that believes in the next generation. We are a church of generations. And this has always been God's heart. See, it's always been about multiple generations coming together to serve God, to advance His kingdom. And that's why everything we do is about raising up the generations to come. See, if you ever wonder, like, why we make such a big deal about our kids and our students and our young adults, why do we, like, lay down our preferences and our priorities to raise them up? This is it. See, it's why every single weekend we are focused on helping our kids grow in their knowledge and understanding of the four core truths. That God is good, that Jesus has forgiven them, that they are loved, and that everything is possible. The same four truths that we declare over ourselves each and every weekend and that's because it's the core of what we believe, it's the foundation that we want them to build their lives upon. Right? It's why every single weekend, we invite our students to come and be part of this experience and not just be part of it, it's why we give literally the front and center of every Worship Center to our student section. So the students can lead the way in worship and raising up an atmosphere of faith and passion.

It's why every month we do things like Student MVMNT Nights, kind of like our "come one, come all" big gathering for students where literally every student can come and encounter the presence of God, and hear about Jesus, and learn how they could activate their faith. It's why we do Student Circles every Wednesday night. It's a place where like, students that are in motion in some way on their journey with Jesus can connect with other godly relationships; where they could press into what God is doing in their lives, where they could come together to learn how to engage the Scriptures and pray together. And it's why we do things like have Young Adult Gatherings and Hangouts every single month. Man, again it's all about raising up the next generation. And while those are some of the core things that we do, there's more than that. See, we have incredible leadership experiences for our next generation that is raising their hand to say they want to learn how to rearrange their lives around the things of Jesus. In fact, this year alone, we had more than 300 kids, students and young adults that participated in either Kids Leadership Experience, Student Leadership Experience, or VCLA. And we don't talk a lot about numbers but that is an incredible number. And if you're not familiar with those experiences, see basically what it is – Kids and Student Leadership Experience – it's a nine-month experience, where kids and students, they come and they learn how to genuinely grow as disciples of Jesus and how they could lead their generation today. Again, that's kids and students that's raising their hand to say, "I want to learn to live a different way." That "I want to be impressed upon. I want to be shaped, and molded, and formed into the image and likeness of Jesus." That they want to grow in character and accountability and they are surrounded and led by incredible coaches, literally some of the greatest leaders that we have in their church that have given up their lives to invest in our kids and our students, right? These are leaders that are leading the way to raise the standards, to raise them up in all things that

God has called them to, and to set an example with their own life. And finally VCLA, Valley Creek Leadership Academy, come on. So VCLA, it's a two-year college experience where our young adults can make the decision to invest in their personhood and their future while they pursue their education. See, while so much of the world right now is choosing the wide road and the broad gate, VCLA is full of students that recognize that narrow is the way and small is the gate that leads to life. See they've counted the cost and they said that they're willing to give up two years of their life to invest into who they're becoming so they can grow in personal holiness and purity, and ultimately fulfill everything that God has for their lives. So again, there is so much going on in the lives of the next gen. So much goodness and faithfulness that we see in what God is doing. Man, there is so much today that we want to celebrate.

Sebastian Mancillas: Yeah, and it has been an amazing year. And over the past several weeks, we've had our end-of-semester graduations and celebrations and man, what we would love then, to recognize every single kid, student, and young adult because they're all deserving of recognition. One of the things that we did new this year was recognize and award those that excelled in specific areas that we want to draw your attention to. You see, while we would love to share every single one of their names and share their journey that they've been on this year and as you can see there's a lot of them, but there's so many of these students that are joining with Jesus at a different level. But what I want to do is share the heart of each one of the awards so that we together can celebrate what they're being recognized for and what God has been doing in their lives. You see, in a Kids Leadership Experience, we awarded the Kids Leadership Award and that award went to our fourth and fifth graders who embodied the heart of who we are as a church. Who embodied the kingdom culture. Who lived out the gospel, and lived as a hope carrier in their lives and we're really excited that we got to recognize those kids in Kids Leadership. And for our students and our VCLA graduates, we got to celebrate them with these three awards that are behind them. See, the Kingdom Culture Award, and that's the heart of who we are. And this embodied the student and VCLA graduate that truly walked out kingdom culture, that advanced it and really embodied the values of Valley Creek, and by doing so, everyone around them experienced the culture that we want everybody to be a part of. The Three Circles Award was given to the students and VCLA graduate who embody living with a heart of the gospel in their lives. You can see the gospel, the kingdom, working in and through them everywhere they went. And the Hope Carrier Award was given to students and a VCLA graduate who just lived on mission. They are living as a disciple on mission to change their world, both in the church and outside the church.

And in these awards, if you can catch it, represent our visual language, a movement of hope for the city and beyond. Everything we do and everything that we're recognizing these students for is embodying all of who we are. The calling on our lives of raising up generations of hope carriers. So if you ever wondered why we do what we do, this is why we do what we do. If you ever wonder why we give, this is why we give. It's so that the next generation can truly go further and farther than we have ever gone. So man, I want to encourage you, if you know a kid, student, or young adult that needs to be involved in what's going on in this generation,

man, go to our website or scan the QR code in the seat back in front of you and invite them to get involved into everything that God has for them in this season. And if this inspires you, and if this is what you're giving goes to. Man, if you go scan the QR code in the seat back in front of you, man, we have made it really easy. Man, if your heart wants to be attached to the mission that we're on, to give to a VCLA scholarship. Man, this allows us to continue to do what we get to do to raise up generations of hope carriers. So if you're inspired by this and that's what God is leading you, man, we would love for you to consider that. But come on, these students right here are the ones saying, "I want to continue to grow as a leader, as a disciple of Jesus, rearranging my life around the things of the kingdom." So will you join me in giving them a hand right now? Come on, let's celebrate them. And we're already doing this. So at every single campus, come on, if you're not already, go ahead, stand up and let's cheer on this amazing generation of leaders.

Pastor John Stickl: Oh, come on. What a good day. Come on. What a great day. Go ahead and grab your seat, whatever campus that you're at. Today is a day of celebration because we are a movement of hope for the city and beyond. And we want to raise up generations of hope carriers. And everything we do is about the next generation. We really want our ceiling to be their floor. We want our summit to be their basecamp. The things we take by faith, we want them to be able to enjoy by sight so they can go and take new things by faith. And so everything we do in this church is geared and designed to help the next generation follow Jesus with everything that they've got. And that really is a picture of the gospel. The entire gospel is the story of laying down your life so that someone else might live. Jesus laid down His life so that you might live. And now He invites us to lay down our lives so that someone else might live. And so we will never apologize for celebrating the next generation, for giving up our preferences and opinions for the next generation, for designing everything around the next generation, because that's what it looks like to be a church of generations. In fact, I love what Nehemiah says, "Remember the Lord who is great and awesome and fight for your brothers, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes." Come on, fight for your sons and daughters in Jesus' name, fight for your sons and your daughters in Jesus' name. Like, it matters. They matter. And they need the generation ahead of them to fight for them, which means you got to pick up the shield and you got to pick up the sword and you got to get in the game, which means you got to stop complaining about how bad the generation is and you got to start believing how great they can be in Jesus' name, which means you got to not make it about you, and your preferences, and your opinions, and your money, and your time, and your vacation, and how you like it. No, no, no, no, no. I got to remember the Lord. And the more I remember the Lord and how great and awesome He is, I start to believe how great and awesome this generation can be because they're made in His image and His likeness. And God has appointed them for such a time as this. And He has decided that they would be a generation of hope in a world that is hopeless. Hey, fight, fight for your children. Some of you have just abandoned your own children to the chaos of the world. You've abandoned the generations of the chaos of the world. Fight in Jesus' name. Just like if someone broke into your home, you wouldn't just let it happen and just sit there and allow

them to do whatever they want, you would fight. The world has broken into our homes. Fight in Jesus' name and believe you already have the victory through Him. Come on.

This is why God tells His people, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts, impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home. And when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up again." God says that we are responsible to impress His commandment, His laws, His decrees, His ways, His words, His wisdom, His kingdom, His life. We're supposed to impress them upon our children at home. Impress, shape, form, mold. Do everything you need to do to make sure God is at the center of every conversation you have. So what is this saying? He's saying, "Hey, you want to know how to raise your children?" Because parenting is hard. Every parent want to agree with that? Parenting is really hard. He says, "Hey, you want to know the way to do it? Make sure that I am at the center of everything you do. Make sure that talking about Me is at the center of everything that you do. The decisions you make, how you do your energy, what you do for life, what you do with work, how you handle hard situations, how you correct, how you discipline, how you celebrate, how you encourage. Make sure I'm at the center of it. Impress My life upon your children." And not just your biological children, your spiritual children, the children of this church, the children of this House, the children of this generation. See, I'm all in on this deal. And I think a lot of you have figured that out by now and this is like my whole life. And I have no idea how I would impress all the things of God upon my children without the other people of this church. Like, I'm all in on this deal and I fully acknowledge I can't do it on my own. I have a 14 year old and a 16 year old. They're both involved in students and the Student Leadership Experience. And so like my daughter has Meredith, and Virginia, and Sherry, and Eileen, and my son has Ron, and Greg, and Brian, and Josh investing into their life every single week. Not to mention Nicole, and Justin, and JZ, and Zach, and Charlotte, and all these amazing adults who aren't paid to do anything. They have decided they want to give their life to raising up the next generation. And so they encourage, and they correct, and they challenge, and they inspire, and they raise up, and they invest, and they're faithful, and they show up, and they show my kids what walking with Jesus looks like. See, you can't celebrate a generation of hope carriers without acknowledging there's a whole bunch of amazing leaders and serve team members who invest in them every single week. And we have outstanding leaders and serve teams in this church. In fact, they are worth celebrating right now. So we just at every campus, come on, every leader, every serve team in the next generation, every person that invests in somebody else's kids, somebody else's students, somebody else's young adult. You're outstanding. You helped me raise my kids in the ways of the Lord. And we need a whole lot more of them because we got a whole lot more of the next generation coming to this church than we had leaders and serve teams, who are willing to give their life to invest into them.

We're reaching so many lost, lonely and broken kids, and students, and young adults who have no parents who are interested in pressing anything upon their children except the world. So we need people to rise up and say, "God's commanded us to do this? Then I'm in on this deal." And you say, "Well, I can't do it. I'm like an empty nester. And I have nothing in common with

this generation." Some of our best leaders are grandmas and grandpas who don't know the lingo or the language, but they love so well. And you might say, "I'm a young adult. I don't have anything to offer this next generation." Oh, some of our best leaders are young adults who are walking with Jesus, showing this generation that it's cool to follow Jesus. You say, "Bro, I'm just trying to raise my own children. I'm up to like here with my own kids." Some of our best leaders are moms and dads who have decided, "I'll be a leader and that will help hold me accountable to get my kid or my student to the thing. Oh, yeah. Because now I'm accountable to be there, which means I'm going to get my own kid there. And I'm not going to lead my own kid there. That's probably not a great idea. But we're going to be there and we're going to be a part." Before you tell me this isn't for you. Can I just ask you, have you ever asked God if it's for you? I get it. But if you ever asked God, "God, is this something You want me to be a part of, this whole next gen thing?" And before you tell yourself no, just, just ask God. I mean, look what He says, "Train a child in the way he should go. And when he is old, he will not turn from it." Train a child in the way, train. Don't hope, don't have wishful thinking, don't assume it's all going to be alright, don't step back, don't abdicate, don't just let it all happen, don't just hope for a good result. No, train a child in the way. Not a way, because there is only one way and His name is Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life. The problem is this, is we spend so much time abdicating the spiritual reality of our children, but we train them to be athletes, and we train them to be educated, and we train them in music, and theater, and we train them to be like the world. What are you training your children in? In all honesty, what is your plan? What's your vision? Because we've been talking about this kind of verse all year, "Train yourself to be godly." And we said that that requires practice and discipline and doing things I don't want to do and being told no at different times. What are you training your children in? Because when they are old, they will not turn from it.

Isn't it interesting how, when life gets hard, we fall back on our training, not our desire. It's shocking how many of us in this room are exactly like our parents. Like, "Oh, I'm not anything like my mom." "I've spent my whole life trying to not be like my dad." And yet, isn't it ironic? That when life gets hard and trials come, you don't live according to your desires, you fall back on how you've been trained. Now you can retrain yourself in Jesus' name. It takes a lot more work than the original training. And so, what we're trying to do is train our children in the ways of the Lord. And so when life gets hard, they're going to fall back on their training instead of their desire, because training is stronger than desire. It's a lot of what we've been talking about in this series. And so what are you training your children in? What are we training this generation in? And it's really hard to train somebody to walk in a way that you don't walk in. Listen, I'm all in on this, this is like my life. My whole life is trying to train up the next generation. I don't want to build things for myself. I don't want to acquire a bunch of things for myself. And I don't want to just enjoy life by myself. I want to lay down my life to raise up the next generation. Can I ask you a question? Are you building for yourself? Are you acquiring for yourself? Are you just trying to enjoy life for yourself? Or are you like, man, I am training up this next generation to walk in the way of Jesus. And I don't know how, and I feel inadequate, and I feel unequipped. Great. That's where the Spirit of God shows up and does a deep work in your

life. In fact, I love it when John says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth." John had no children. So he's talking about his spiritual children. "I have no greater joy than to hear my children are walking in the truth." Can I just tell you, there is a joy that so many of us will never know because we don't train our children to walk in the way of the Lord. And he says there's no greater joy than that. The greatest joy is watching your children walk in the truth and not just your biological children, but your spiritual children. There is a joy many churches will never know because they don't raise up the next generation. And hear me, if you don't see this place as family on mission, this whole experience thus far today is like being at a high school graduation of people you don't know. We done? Can we move on, can we get to the good stuff? But if this is family on mission, oh, this is a day of joy. You actually don't even care what we do for the rest of the time we're together because you're so full of joy because you're watching the children of God. The children of the family you're a part of walk in truth. So you have something to celebrate and something to be excited about and something to move forward on.

And so if you're here and this feels like challenging and convicting of your own life, listen, that's okay. You're like, hey, you're like, "I totally blew it, I didn't do any of that. My kids are like, 30." Great. And what do you do today? You own it. You just go and say, "Hey, I'm really sorry for the choices I made. I did not train you to walk in the way of the Lord and I have now had revelation and I was wrong. I'm sorry. Will you please forgive me? I am trying to learn to walk in the way of Jesus and I hope someday you will too." That's how you start. Or you start by saying like this. "My kids are in this season now and I know, that means I probably need to rearrange my life. If I'm going to train them in the way of the Lord, that has to be the first priority. It can't be like, the last." Here, can I just tell you what we do? We do this. Like, what sports are we going to play? What clubs are we going to be a part of? What activities are we going to do? What road trips are we going to take? What commitments are we going to make? What am I going to do for work? What are we going to do for hobby? What are we going to buy? Are we going to get this? Oh, and then church. Like, just I know. And you're like, it's Mother's Day. Don't do this to us. Listen, just so we're clear, bringing your child to church when you have time is not training them in the way of the Lord. It's training them in the way of the world because the world gives God its leftovers. The way of Jesus is, "Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and everything else will be added unto you." So what if you arranged or rearranged your entire fall – you got all summer to think about it – around, how am I going to train my child in the way? Because I will give an account to the Lord one day for it. And we will give an account to the Lord one day for how we do it as a church. And so even if you're a part of this church and you have no investment in the next generation, one day you will give an account to the Lord for how this family raised up the next generation. And you say, that means I need to be a leader or serve team or, no. But it means you're giving, you're praying, you're creating culture, you're encouraging, you're celebrating, you're interceding, you're giving up your preference and your opinion. Why? Because we're trying to teach this generation to go further and farther than we ever did. If it's taken you 40 years to figure out how to be a disciple, imagine if when you were 14, you knew how to be a disciple. How different would your life be?



How many mistakes would you have avoided? How much pain would you have not experienced? How much freedom would you have in the here and now? "I have no greater joy than to hear my children are walking in the truth." So I just declare in Jesus' name that your child is worth fighting for. Whether your child is 60 years old or six years old. I just declare that this generation is worth impressing upon the commandments of God into their life in Jesus' name, and that whether your child is 25 or two. That it's going to happen in Jesus' name. And I just declare that this generation is worth training, practicing, disciplining. Asking them to do things they don't want to do. Huh. That would actually be parenting. Huh. For whatever it's worth, for all we want to dogpile on the next generation, I actually think there's more to dogpile on in parenting than there is the next generation. But it's Mother's Day, we're not going to do that. All I'm trying to do is lift up your head. And say, in Jesus' name, you can do this. God has entrusted your children to you because He believes in you. And God has entrusted this generation to our church because He believes in our church. Let's live a life worthy of our calling in Jesus' name. You're with me on this? Okay.

Well good morning. I'm so glad that you're here. Today is a day of celebrating. And if you've ever been here, you know we like to celebrate. We're loud, we cheer, we hoop, we holler, we sing, we shout for the Lord. And if the first time you came, that was like, super disorienting to you, I get it. I get it because it's not normal in church, but it's supposed to be. You see you might know that we celebrate but do you know why we celebrate? We celebrate because celebration is a spiritual practice. Celebration is actually a spiritual discipline. See we've been in this series for most of this year called A Different Way. Talking about doing the things that Jesus did so we can do the things that Jesus did. And we've said that if we want to do all the things that Jesus did, like love His enemies and pray for those who persecute Him, and live free from anxiety, and have no worry, and not love money, and be full of joy, then we have to first do the things that Jesus did, like His practices. Like Scripture, and meditation, and celebration. If we want to do what Jesus did on-the-spot, we have to do what Jesus did behind-the-scenes. And when we look at Jesus' life we discover that Jesus' life is full of celebration. He's always celebrating. And it's actually a discipline. A discipline is doing what I can do now, so I can do what I can't do later. A discipline is doing what I don't want to do right now, like celebrate, so I can do what I can't do later, like have joy in the midst of a hardship. Huh. Like have faith in the midst of a storm. Like see the goodness of God when my whole life is crumbling around me. That happens when we first start by practicing the simple discipline of celebration. And celebration is really simple. It's just simply paying attention and calling attention to the goodness of God. That's all it is. Celebration, really simple word, really simple concept. Paying attention and then calling attention to the goodness of God in my life. It's looking around and seeing God's goodness and then acknowledging it. Elevating it, declaring it, praising Him for it. And if you read the Gospels, you see Jesus celebrate all the time. One of my favorites is in Luke chapter 10. The disciples were on mission, they come back, they bring a good report to Jesus. It's a good day with the disciples. There aren't many of them in the Gospels. This was one of them. And it says, "At that time, Jesus, full of joy through the Holy Spirit, said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise

and learned and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure.'" Jesus, full of joy, celebrated the goodness of God. The words "full of joy" in the original language literally mean "leaping and dancing." Okay. Can you picture Jesus leaping and dancing? I mean, I think we pictured Jesus as like, stoic, and stern, and angry, and frustrated, and like, guys, all the time, leaping and dancing, celebrating, singing, joyful, top of His lungs. I mean, I don't even want to try to do it up here for you, but can you just picture? Jeez, I don't know what's harder to picture, me leaping and dancing or Jesus leaping and dancing. But either way, the point is, is that Jesus was constantly celebrating, turning water into wine at the wedding feast, playing with the children, hanging out with His disciples. He's always celebrating. And because He celebrated in the easy times, He was able to celebrate in the hard times. Because He practiced paying attention and calling attention to the goodness of God when things were easy, He was able to pay attention and call attention to the goodness of God when things were hard. Because He could do it on a good day when the disciples came back and things were good, He could do it in the storm when the boat's about to sink. And He could see the goodness of God when His disciples all deserted Him. And He could see the goodness of God when He was on His way to the cross. Maybe if we spent more time leaping and dancing, we would have more faith when life gets hard, because we got to practice in the easy so we can be trained to do it when it's hard.

In fact, I love what God says to the people of God, this is in the Old Testament, the Israelites, He says, "Three times a year. You are to..." say it, "celebrate a festival to Me." Three times a year, they arrange their entire lives around a celebration. It didn't matter who you were. It didn't matter where you lived. It didn't matter what you were doing. It didn't matter what the situation or circumstance was like in your life at that season. Nope, everything stops. All the work, all the sports, all the activities, all the programs, all the things that we get so stressed out about stopped. And they all celebrated the goodness of God. They literally built their entire calendar, their life rhythm, around paying attention and calling attention to the goodness of God. We're supposed to be people who celebrate. "Rejoice in the Lord always and again, I say rejoice." "The joy of the Lord is your strength." "The kingdom of God is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Celebration is the way of the kingdom. And we need to learn to practice it in the easy so we can see it in the hard. I mean, do you remember when God is leading the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land? He sets them free from 400 years of slavery. He's leading them towards the Promised Land. And I want you to catch this. It says, "In the desert, the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. The Israelites said to them, 'If only we had died by the Lord's hand in Egypt, there we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted. But you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.' So Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, 'The Lord has heard your grumbling against Him. Who are we that you should grumble against us?'" Who are we? "You are not grumbling against us, but against the Lord.'" So I want you to catch it. God is leading them from Egypt to the Promised Land and they are grumbling that they can't eat the food of the world. They're grumbling that they can't eat the food of the world. It's like they have nothing to celebrate. And you say celebrate, well, what would they have to celebrate? Oh, I

don't know. How about getting set free of 400 years of slavery? How about the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night over them? How about being declared a kingdom of priests? How about being declared as God's special possession? How about being led by God to a Promised Land, a land full of milk and honey that He was going to give you? Oh, I don't know. But they were so busy complaining, grumbling, that they had no room for celebrating. And I think this story is a whole lot more like my life than I care to admit. I think sometimes I'm so busy grumbling that I have no room for celebrating. I'm so busy focused on what's wrong with the world that I can't see what's right with God. And if I would spend more time focused on what's good with God, I would have no room left for grumbling, complaining, about what's wrong with the world.

See, if celebrating is paying attention and calling attention to the goodness of God, then grumbling is paying attention and calling attention to the brokenness of this world. And if we're honest, we grumble a whole lot more than we celebrate. And we constantly talk about all of the things that are wrong with the world instead of all of the things that are right with God. And you might look at this and you might say, "Yeah, but you don't know what's going on in my life and all the places that I've been, and all the things that are happening, and all the things that I don't have that I want in the world." Oh, I don't know, you might have something to celebrate, like being rescued from the kingdom of darkness and brought into the kingdom of light, like the Spirit of the living God dwelling inside of you, like living in the kingdom of God in the here and now, like being called God's beloved son or daughter. You see, this is a perspective issue. Two people can go into the exact same situation and one person pays attention and calls attention to the goodness of God, and somebody else grumbles by paying attention and calling attention to what's wrong with the world. And what I want you to see is that God takes grumbling personally. "The Lord has heard your grumbling against Him. Who are we? You're not grumbling against us, but against the Lord." Listen to me, whenever you're grumbling, God takes it personally. Because when you're grumbling, you're saying there's more wrong with the world than there is right with God. He's going to take that personally. When I'm grumbling, I'm saying there is more brokenness in this situation than there is the goodness of God in this situation. And make no mistake about it, there is always more of the goodness of God than there is the brokenness of this world. It's just have you trained yourself to see it? And so, like Jesus, we have to practice it in the easy so we can see it in the hard. "Who are we? You're not grumbling against us." Just so you know, you're not grumbling against your spouse, or your parents, or your boss, or the government, or this church, or your friend, or your parent, or that person, you're grumbling against God. And you're saying there is more wrong in that situation than there is the goodness of God in that situation. God takes that really personal.

The cool part is, on the flip side, when you celebrate anyone or anything's goodness, God takes that personally too because every good thing comes from Him. So today when you cheer for a next generation student, you're actually celebrating God. You're not actually even celebrating them, you're actually celebrating God because every good thing comes from God. Every good thing is done by God's work in our lives. So He takes that personally as well. "Who

are we? You are not grumbling against us but against the Lord." Who are we? You are not celebrating us, you are celebrating the Lord. And you have to understand that celebration is offensive to the grumbling spirit. If you start practicing celebration, here's what I'm going to tell you, what's going to happen is the grumblers around you are going to be offended by you. Why? Because when you start paying attention and calling attention to the goodness of God, surrounded by people who can only see what's broken in the world, they're going to get offended. They're going to think you're ignorant. They're going to think, "Don't you see all these problems and don't you see this stuff?" All these things are real and they might be facts. But there is a truth that is higher. And it's that God is good and He is good in the here and now. And I choose to train myself to see that instead of this. This is why, in the story of the prodigal son, when the prodigal son comes home, and the father throws a... party, and celebrates, and what happens? The older son refuses to come in and celebrate. He's offended, he's offended at his father paying attention and calling attention to the goodness of God, because all he can see is what's wrong with his brother. Celebration offends the grumbling spirit. That's why in church, when people are celebrating, there are always people that are offended, and it's so silly because it's the way we've trained ourselves to live by sight or to live by faith. I don't know about you, but I have more to celebrate than to grumble about, but I have to practice it, because otherwise I will complain about all the food I wish I had, too. But oh, I don't know, I've just been set free from slavery, the Spirit of God is leading me, and I'm on my way to the depths of the kingdom. So I actually have more of God's goodness, than the brokenness of the world, but it's a training, it's a thinking. You're with me on this?

You see, "They will celebrate Your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of Your righteousness." They, in context, this is generations. The generations, whatever generation you are, and whatever generation the person next to you is, will celebrate Your abundant goodness because it's everywhere, we just have to practice it. If I can be super honest with you, out of all the practices we're going to go through, this one is going to be one of the hardest ones for me personally. I am super gifted at seeing what is wrong. I mean, it's like a, I don't know, I was trained that way, I guess. I can walk in here, stand here and I'm just telling you right now, I can stand here and in three seconds, I can tell you that lights out, there's a piece of paper on the floor over here, there's five more people in this section than there is in this section, this guy's on his phone, this couple back here is fighting. And that thing on the wall is crooked. That's before I even say, "Hey, everybody, welcome to Valley Creek." Okay. That's my life. And so, for the last year, one of the things that I've been doing, I make my coffee in the morning and I go sit in my chair. And before I even open my Bible, before I pray, before I do anything, I just sit there and I practice celebration. I try to sit there and I try to celebrate the goodness of God from the day before. And some days it's so easy, some days I can sit there I just be like, oh, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. And some days I sit there and the coffee gets cold. And I have to work really hard and ask the Holy Spirit to show me His goodness when I can't see it. And so I'm practicing. I'm training on a daily basis because I can't run that marathon yet, but I want to do more than walk to the mailbox. And so I practice and I'm growing and I'm learning and I'm trying and I'm working it out with God, because I want to be

the kind of person that walks in and before I even say "good morning" to you can see I see the mercy of God over here. I see the compassion of God back there. I see the love of God right here. I see the provision of God over here. I see the protection of God in this. I want to train myself to pay attention and call attention to the goodness of God instead of training myself, or having been trained by the world in my flesh, to pay attention and call attention to what's broken in this world. And it's not easy. It requires you slowing down, it requires you lifting up your head and being aware and it requires humility. See, you can't celebrate the goodness of God if you're going a hundred miles an hour. You can't celebrate the goodness of God if your head's always down in your phone, you actually have to lift it up and look around and you can't celebrate God's goodness when you have a spirit of pride. Because celebration is not about looking at how good you are, it's looking at how good God is.

Celebration is not paying attention and calling attention to how good you did, it's paying attention and calling attention to how good God is. And hear me, it's all over your life. The goodness of God is all over your life. But like a deer in the woods, you have to train yourself to look for it and spot it, it's like, there it is. And the more you pay attention and the more you call attention, the easier it becomes. And you start to become the kind of person who did what Jesus did, so you can do what Jesus did, which is have faith and see the goodness of God in the storm, and the chaos, and the brokenness. So your practice plans for this week, really simple. And then we're going to do something together. Every day, this week, when you first wake up or right before you go to sleep, celebrate the specific goodness of God in your life. If you're like, "What's a practice plan? I haven't been here in a while. What is this?" Every week at the end of the practice that we're talking about, we're just saying, here's a practice plan to train yourself. We want to train ourselves to be godly. And the way we want to practice it this week is just every day and right when you wake up first thing in the morning or right before you go to sleep at night, take a few minutes, just sit, just celebrate the specific goodness of God in your life, pay attention and call attention. And some will be so easy. Here will be the easy ones. The easy ones will be all the things God's given you. "Oh God, thank You for my house, I thank You for my spouse, I thank You for my parents, I thank You for this..." Those are the easy ones. And then you go a little deeper and you start celebrating the goodness of God in things like, "God, thank You for a hot cup of coffee. Thank You for this good meal, like, I just enjoy it." Like God wants us to enjoy our life. Like, I just, "God, thank You. I see Your goodness in this sunrise. I see Your goodness in this friend who is just kind to me." And then you kind of get through that little list. And then all of a sudden you're like, now what? Now you're in the good ones, because now you actually have to rely on the Holy Spirit to start showing you the goodness of God in your life. And you'd be amazed at how you start seeing things different. Because when I'm busy celebrating the goodness of God, I don't have any room left to complain about the brokenness of this world. Okay? So here's what we're going to do? Instead of me teaching you a bunch more about celebration, here's what I want to do. I want us to actually practice it right now. So if you'll grab your journal with me real quick, hopefully you have your Different Way journal with you. If you didn't get one of those, we'd love to get you one. And if you don't have any kind of journal, that's fine. Grab a pen, grab a piece of paper or grab your phone, if you

need to just go to a notes and space. And for the next five minutes, I just want to invite you to write down where you can see the goodness of God in your life. Just about five minutes. These guys are just going to play to keep you in the space. Let's just practice it right now, it's not just be hearers of the Word, let's be doers. I can see the goodness of God in my church. His Word in my life, the way He protected me this week, in the way He just forgave that brokenness in my life. Five minutes, I can see God's goodness in. And at every campus, I would just ask you, if you don't want to participate, that's fine. Could you just be still for the five minutes so as to not disturb anybody else? Holy Spirit, come show us. Help us pay attention and call attention to Your goodness in our lives because it's everywhere in Jesus' name.

Pastor Jason Hillier: Man, He's so worthy of the glory. He's worth celebrating and He is worth giving our lives to. And so, I'm thankful for all that we've got to celebrate today. I'm thankful we had an amazing day of practicing joy in the kingdom. In fact, what if we just gave Him another round of applause? Thank You, God. Your joy is our strength. This is great church. This is what it is to experience great church, to be in the church together. Thanks for being a part of it. If you need prayer for anything, right down the front, we'd love to pray for you and your family. Maybe if you want to come up with your graduate and pray at the end together. If you want to give, man, all of this is what we're given towards. All this raising up the generations of hope carriers. That's why we're doing it. That's what God has called us to. So you can give as you leave in the boxes or online at [valleycreek.org](http://valleycreek.org). But as you go today, may you go with the joy of the Lord, knowing that God is good. Jesus has forgiven me. I am loved and everything is possible. We'll see you back next week.