

All right. Hey everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. Come on, whatever campus you're at, let's just welcome each other together for a moment. We are so glad that you are here with us today. And it is officially fall. And we are starting a new series today called Kingdom Culture 101: Learning to Live a Life of Values. This is going to be a big series. It's an important series and I'm just telling you right up front, it's a long series. We're going to be in this all the way until Thanksgiving. Because it is incredibly important for you and I as followers of Jesus to understand what the kingdom culture looks like and what it looks like to live a life of values. And I'm going to tell you right out of the gate, I have two hopes, two prayers for this series.

First one is this, I hope to just remind you of who we are as a church. What is our culture, what are our values, what is the atmosphere and the environment we're trying to create that we hope that you experience? Because we've had so many new people join us over these last two years that don't know what our culture or our values are and we want them to know what they're experiencing. So that's the first thing. And the second thing is just this. I hope to interrupt your life. I hope this series disrupts your life. I hope this series causes you to stop and think and reflect and examine and look at your own life and ask yourself the question, "What values do I really have? What is the culture of my life? Does it look more like the world or does it look more like the kingdom?" You see, so much of what we would call "kingdom culture" is really just religion, old school church thinking and just good morals and ethics.

But the kingdom is so much bigger. It's so beyond, it's so much better than this little box that we've placed it in. And what you have to understand is, everything has a culture. Every business, every home, every family, every city, every school, every church, everything has a culture. And the interesting thing about culture is culture is really easy to experience, it's really hard to explain. If you think about culture, it's really easy to experience. This is what you sense, what you feel, what you experience when you're there. But sometimes it's really hard to explain and put it into words. Like for example, McDonald's and Chick-fil-A. They're both fast food restaurants, but they have radically different cultures. You experience it, but it might be hard to explain. Or how about Fort Worth and Portland?

Right? They're both cities, but boy, they have radically different cultures. How about the US and North Korea? Now, that one might be a little easier to explain, right? Freedom versus oppression? How about the Cowboys and the Browns? Radically different cultures, right? Culture is really easy to experience; it's really hard to explain. But culture is not what you declare it to be. It's what other people experience it to be. So McDonald's can declare what their culture is all day long, but it's not what they declare it to be, it's what you experience it to be when you walk into a McDonald's. You see, culture is simply what you sense, what you feel, what you experience when you're in that environment. It's a shared set of beliefs, behaviors, values. It's the way people think. It's how they talk. It's how they do things. It's what they celebrate. It's what they grieve.

Culture is like an atmosphere and environment, the DNA, the ethos of something. And when you get around it, you sense it, you feel it, you experience it. And culture is incredibly powerful. It has the ability to shape and mold and form, and it can lift you up or it can push you down. Like, think about it. If you're on a team that has a culture that everyone does their best, it's going to lift you up and help you do your best. But if you're on a team or no one really cares, it pushes you down, and you begin to care less. If you're in a class where everyone wants to learn, right, all of a sudden that lifts you up and helps you learn. If you're in a class where no one really cares, it pushes you down. If you're in a home that has a culture where people want to be loving and kind and servanthood, it lifts you up. If you're in a home full of harshness and bitterness and complaining, it pulls you down. Culture helps people become who they could never be on their own, and it helps people do things they could never do on their own, which is why culture is far superior to vision.

At the end of the day, culture is more important to vision. Again, this is causing you to think. You have to think with me on this. Every business, every team, every church has a great vision statement. I've never met a business or a church that has, like, a we-want-to-just-lose-in-life vision statement. They have these epic change-the-world vision statements. Why don't they ever accomplish their vision? Because their culture stinks. And culture determines how you actually live, what you actually do. And this is why we spend so much time here at Valley Creek talking about culture. Like, we've got an epic vision statement. Our vision is to be a movement of... hope... for the city and beyond. That's epic. That's like, massive. That's huge. But you know what's more important than that? The culture underneath it.

Because if we don't have kingdom culture underneath it, we will never actually accomplish that which God has caused us -- or has invited us to set out to accomplish. Culture is so important because it lifts up and it pushes down, and Jesus knew this. He spent so much time in the Gospels teaching about the kingdom culture, because it was so radically different than the world. This is why when you read the Gospels and you see Jesus say over and over again, the kingdom of heaven is like... The kingdom of heaven is like... The kingdom of heaven is like... You feel like it's on, like, repeat. Like Jesus, we get it. You got to say it again? And then he tells a parable or a story to help us understand, this is what the culture of the kingdom looks like. It's why Jesus says, "You have heard it said, but I say to you..." In other words, "The culture of the world looks like this, but let me tell you what the culture of the kingdom looks like." That's why Jesus's main message was, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

In other words, change your mind. Don't live down to the world's culture. Live up to this kingdom culture that I have come to bring. It is radically different, and it is upside down from everything we think. So we need to learn what it is and how to incorporate it in our life. Are you with me on this so far? And the question you have to ask is, where does culture come from? How do you create culture, whether intentionally or unintentional? It primarily comes from values. The values of your heart will become the culture of your life. The values in your heart

will ultimately determine the culture of your life. This is why Jesus says, "What is highly valued among men, the world, is detestable in God's sight."

He literally says, "Hey, let me tell you why the world's culture and the kingdom culture are radically different. And it's one simple thing, values." Values. I mean think about the world's values. What does the world value? The world's values self, selfishness, happiness, comfort, convenience, money. What does the kingdom value? Honor, integrity, servanthood, love, kindness. The values couldn't be any more different. And so, the values of the heart will ultimately create the culture of your life. What I love about Jesus is Jesus doesn't spend all His time giving us a bunch of rules and regulations. He tries to help us embrace or embody kingdom values in our heart. In fact, this is why when a teacher of the law comes to Jesus and says, "Hey Jesus, what's the greatest commandment? Like out of all the commands, out of all the rules, out of all the regulations, what's the most important one?" And Jesus says, "The most important commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. All of the law and the prophets hinge on these two."

In other words, Jesus says, if you will get the value of loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself in your heart, you will naturally and effortlessly fulfill all of the other commands of God. Why? Because it becomes a value of your heart, which will determine the culture of your life. And if you live by values, you will always live higher than the standard. But if you live by rules, you will always try to find a way around the rule. This is the difference between kingdom and religion. Religion is about rules. Regulations. Do this, don't do that. All this pressure. And so what do we all try to do when we live religion? We try to find a way around the rules. What do you do when you have the values of the kingdom in your heart? You live above the rules, beyond the rules, above the commands.

Why? Because it naturally and effortlessly begins to flow out of your heart. In fact, this is why I love, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." In other words, the values of your heart will determine the culture, what other people see and experience and feel when they are around you. Culture is always downstream of values. Why? Because values are not here. Values are here. And whatever is in here, the values, things you value, will flow into the culture that you release into every other area of your life. And so the question you have to ask yourself is this, how do you know what you value? Not, how do you know what you're supposed to value? No, no. How do you know what you actually value? Well, if you value something, it's going to cost you something. It becomes easy for you to do overtime. And look at what you celebrate and what you grieve.

If you really want to know what you value, it'll cost you something. Your values cost you something. It's why it's the word "value." It's costly. It means something. It requires something of you. So if you value integrity, that integrity is going to cost you a lot. And the more you value it, the more you'll pay for it. And as you start to do that overtime, it becomes easy for you

to live. Why? Because it's a value in your heart, so it naturally and effortlessly starts to flow out of you. And if you really value integrity, you'll celebrate when other people have it, and you'll grieve when they don't. Take anything you want. Work. If work is of value, then you will pay a high price for work. It becomes easy for you to like, sacrifice other things for it. You will celebrate and you will grieve it. Selfishness, fun, family. Like you pick the thing, whatever it is. That's how we know what we value. So the question is, are you valuing the right things?

See, as we follow Jesus over time, his values are supposed to become our values. And that's how culture gets released in our life. You have to remember that as a follower of Jesus, you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, the Bible says. Like, you are a stranger, an alien, a foreigner in this world, which means you're not supposed to be influenced or shaped by the world's culture. You're supposed to be an ambassador or a representative of the kingdom's culture, and you're supposed to bring that culture into every environment that you go. This is why it says, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven." In other words, we are mandated and empowered, sent by God to bring His kingdom culture, things that are on heaven, into the earth, wherever we go, in every space and shape of life. And here's what we say. We say things like this, "Yeah, but I can't change the culture of my work. I'm not the boss." But you can certainly change the culture around your desk.

Because the values of your heart will create the culture that is around you. You say, "Well, I can't change the culture of my school or my classroom." Well, you can certainly change the culture of where you sit and where you do life and where you go to lunch and your locker room. You say, "I can't change the culture of my home or in my family because my husband doesn't want it or my parents don't want it." But you can certainly change the culture in here because of the values that are in here, and it will begin to shape and make an impact and a difference in the world around me. The values of your heart determine the culture of your life, and you've been empowered not to get sucked down into the world's culture, but to release a kingdom culture. So let me ask you the really honest question then. What is the culture of your business? And not what you declare it is, what other people experience it to be. What's the culture of your home?

Not what you declare it is like, but the other people that live in it with you, what would they experience it to be? How about this? What's the culture of our church? Oh man, I can tell you what I wanted to declare it to be. But the culture of our church is not what I say or what you say. It's what the first-time person walks in here today and experiences. That's what it actually is. Okay, ready for this? What's the culture of your life? Not what you say it is; what other people experience it to be. When other people get around you, what do they see, sense, experience and feel? What words would they put to describe the culture of your life? Is it a kingdom culture? Or is it a worldly culture? And this is what we're going to talk about in this series. See, what I love about our church is we, from day one, have set out to be a value-based church. We have always wanted to not have rules and regulations and lists and commands and all these things; we wanted values in our heart that release a kingdom culture through our life.

We wanted to create an atmosphere and an environment. When other people come into it, it helps them become who they could never become on their own. It helps them do what they could never do on their own. It helps them taste and see that God is good and experiencing the living Jesus in the environment, the culture that we have created. But you have to know what those values are and what that culture looks like in order to help create it. And so we're going to go through our values, but they're not our values, they're kingdom values. They're the values of the kingdom that God has entrusted to us to demonstrate and declare that other people might taste and see that God is good. And if you think, "Well, I know all these," the question is not, do you know it? The question is not, can you teach it? The question is, is it actually a value in your heart? Is it actually, like, burned and branded into the very core of who you are so that it releases the culture of the kingdom into the world around you? Are you with me on all this?

It's going to require you to think. And I really hope it interrupts your life. I really hope some of you don't listen to anything else I say for the rest of the time I talk because you're sitting here thinking, "What is the culture of my home?" Because maybe it isn't what it's supposed to be. I hope some of you have just totally checked out and all you're sitting there and thinking about this business that God has given to me to run and to lead, is it a kingdom culture or is it actually a worldly culture with some religious jargon thrown into it? This is what I'm talking about, but this is the real life stuff. See, years ago when our church was growing so fast, so many people were coming and meeting Jesus, and people kept asking the same question. They kept asking, "What kind of church is Valley Creek?" And I hated that question because what they were really asking is, what kind of box can I put you in?

They wanted to know what the limits, what the labels that they could place upon us. They wanted to compare us to the experiences of their past so they could project their expectations of the future. But the kingdom is bigger. It's beyond, it's more than these stupid little boxes. And so we prayed, and we thought and we said, "God, what kind of church are we supposed to be?" And we came up with this really simple answer because we think this is the culture of the kingdom. The value of the kingdom is to be Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, and life-giving. The heartbeat of the culture of the kingdom of God, the number one value if you will, is to be Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving. Not self-focused, not flesh-filled, not life-taking. But Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving. Jesus-focused. We want to be more focused on what Jesus has done for us than on what we have to do for Him. If you think about all of creation, all of creation, it's about Jesus.

He is the center, He is the Creator, the Sustainer, the Redeemer of all things. In fact, He says about Himself, "I am the way, I am the truth and I am the life." He is not a way, a truth, or a life. He is not one of multiple choices. He is the one and the only, the epicenter of the entire thing. And whether you realize it or not, when you're focused on Jesus, you're focused on grace. You're focused on hope. You're focused on light and love and life itself, because that's who He

is. And all of creation, whether it realizes it or not, is on a collision course to eventually become Jesus-focused. "Therefore God exalted Jesus to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."

At some point all of creation will be focused on Jesus, bowed and declaring who He is and what He has done. The only question is, are you going to do it willingly or unwillingly? Because this is where all of creation is headed. Come on. Think about the story of Peter with me for a second. Some of you have heard me teach this before, but hear it fresh for the first time. At the end of Jesus's life, He's about to go to the cross and He tells us disciples He's going to be arrested and they're all going to deny him and betray him. And they're all confused and disoriented. And Peter, and only the way that Peter could, steps forward and he says, "Lord, I will never deny you. Even if all these other disciples, even if they all deny you, Lord, I will never deny you." And in that moment, he makes the classic mistake that you and I tend to make. He was more focused on what he was going to do for Jesus when he should have been focused on what Jesus was about to do for him.

And with a ton of compassion, Jesus looks at Peter and He says, "Oh, Peter. Even on this very night, you're going to deny me three times before the rooster crows." And what happens? Peter denies Jesus three times to a servant girl. Why? Because he was focused on what he was going to do for God instead of what God was going to do for him. What he should have done is he should have stepped forward and said, "Lord, I don't know what I'm going to do, but I know this, You will never deny me. I'm not focusing on my faith. I'm focusing on your faithfulness." "If we are faithless, He, Jesus, will remain faithful." Faith doesn't come by looking introspective, looking inside of ourselves, trying to create it or manifest it. No, it comes when we lift up our eyes and look at the faithfulness of God. Now compare that to John, one of Jesus's other disciples. John writes the Gospel of John, and when John writes the Gospel of John, he never refers to himself as John. He only refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

John, writing of himself, "One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him." You could say that is the most arrogant guy in the entire Bible. Or you could say, John got what we usually don't. The disciple whom Jesus loved, not the disciple who loved Jesus. Two words and the order matters. The disciple whom Jesus loved, not the disciple who loved Jesus. Why? Because he was more focused on what Jesus was going to do for him than what he had to do for God. And this is why he's reclining next to him. Because when you're focused on God's love for you, it draws you in. When you're focused on your love for God, it usually makes you feel a little bit empty, a little bit hollow, a little bit wondering where you stand. This is why at the end of John's life, John is known as the apostle of love.

And he writes, "We love because he first loved us." Like, he got it. He got it. That it's not about what we do for Jesus; it's about what Jesus has done for us. We serve because He first served

us. We're passionate about Him because He was first passionate about us. We are committed to Him because He was first committed to us. We love because He first loved us. The order matters. And the more you focus on yourself and look inward, the more you fail. The more you look to Him and who He is and what He has done, the more you find freedom and victory in Jesus' name. Come on, this is the whole Bible. Think of Peter walking on the water. Jesus comes walking by, disciples are in a boat, and Jesus invites Peter to walk on water. And while Peter's eyes are fixated on Jesus, he's walking on water, not just water, but a storm, the wind and the waves, like, effortlessly. But then it says when he saw the wind and the waves, and he took his eyes off Jesus, and he looked at the situations and the circumstances, he began to sink.

When we take our eyes off of Jesus, we begin to sink in the midst of this life. But when our eyes are fixated on Him, we naturally and effortlessly walk in victory. Or how about Paul? Paul, the guy who, like, writes most of the New Testament, he writes in that famous chapter in Romans 7 and he says, "The things I want to do I don't do and the things I don't want to do, somehow I end up doing them. What a wretched man am I! Who will save me?" And then he flips. "Thanks be to Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has rescued me from sin and shame and death. There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." And you catch this flip. It's like he's saying, "The more I look inside and try harder to be better and to do more, the more I fail, but the more I look at Jesus, I find myself walking in freedom and in victory." Come on, you got to get this stuff.

Even Scriptures, beginning with Moses and all the prophets, Jesus explained to the disciples what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. The Bible is not about what you have to do, it's about what Jesus has done. If you read the Bible looking for you, you will not like reading the Bible. If you read the Bible looking for Him, you will love it because it is life itself. This is why the psalmist says, "I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you." If the Bible, the word of God, is about Jesus, what he is saying is, "I've decided to have Jesus-focused be the primary value in my heart and that changes the culture that's released out of my life." One more. Just think of the old covenant and the new covenant. The Ten Commandments versus the gospel of grace. Ten Commandments are all about what you have to do. "You shall have no other gods." "You shall not make an idol." "You shall not misuse the Lord's name."

"You shall not commit adultery." "You shall not lie." "You shall not steal." You. And how did that work out for you? Not all that well. Now compare that to this, the new covenant. "This is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people, for I will forgive their wickedness and I will remember their sins no more." Religion is self-focused, kingdom is Jesus-focused. And when you catch that, it changes the culture that flows out of your life. It changes everything that everyone else sees and experiences and feels when they're around you. This is what I love about our church. If you just -- if I could say -- what I love about our

church is that we want to be Jesus-focused. We don't always get it right. Sometimes, like Peter, we drop our eyes, but as soon as we realize, we pick them back up.

"Come on, faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So whatever you're hearing, your faith in that thing grows. Some of you wonder, why don't we preach more on sin and commandments and do this and don't do that, is one very easy reason. Because whatever you're hearing, your faith in that thing grows. And none of us need our faith to grow more in sin and shame and failure and brokenness and the disappointment in and of ourselves. We need our faith to grow and the forgiveness and the goodness and the grace of Jesus. And the more we hear that, the more it changes us from the inside out and elevates us. Come on, Jesus-focused. Jesus-focused. The paradox is this, I think in this season, the problem is not even the Jesus side of the equation. I think it's the focus side. I read an article the other day that said the number one problem people are facing right now is focus.

A distant second was mental health. Focus. We can't focus. We've gotten confused and disoriented and foggy. We're not able to concentrate. Like we're kind of just aimlessly -- like some of you probably like you checked in for about three -- I clap, and you like checked back in but then, it doesn't last long, whoo, right? Because we can't focus. But we need to learn to focus. Attention, affection, the concentration of our heart towards Jesus. In fact, this is why it says, "Therefore, holy brothers who share in the heavenly calling, the kingdom culture, fix your thoughts on Jesus." Fix, focus, what you think about, meditate on, inquire of. Or how about, "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith." Faith doesn't come by looking at your faith. Faith comes by looking to Jesus. And the more I look at Jesus, the more He releases faith into my life. So here's the question. Are you Jesus-focused or are you self-focused?

Like, in this time, if you're really honest, what's the value of your heart? Are you more focused on what you have to do for Him or what He has done for you? Are you more focused on what you did or what He has done? Are you more focused on what other people have done to you or what Jesus has done for you? Is your conversation full of your failures or His forgiveness? Are you talking about your problems or His promises? Do you talk about your struggle and situation or His strength? Like, here's a really honest one. Do you just talk about Jesus in your home? And I'm not talking religious jargon. I'm talking like, do you actually just talk about the goodness and the grace of Jesus? And if you're sitting here and instantly you just went like, pwooh. Okay, then you just did it. You just went self-focused. No one's asking you to go, pwooh.

We're asking you to get your eyes off of your, ppwrooh and put your eyes on Jesus. Don't self-exalt yourself and lift yourself up. Don't self-condemn yourself and put yourself down. Those are both about self. Be Jesus-focused who says, "When I am lifted up I will draw all men unto myself." Lift him up with humility and focus over your life and He draws you to Himself. This is the primary value of the kingdom of God, looking to who Jesus is and what He has

done. Are you with me on that? Like the woman at the well. Jesus says there, "If you knew who I was and you knew what I offered, you would ask of me and I will give you springs of living water." If we knew who He was and what He offered, we would look to Him and it would change everything. Jesus-focused. Second thing is this, Spirit-filled. Spirit-filled. We want to walk in the character and in the power of Jesus. Do you realize that God longs to fill you with His Spirit?

Out of all the places God could dwell in the universe, He chooses to make you His temple, you His dwelling place. He wants to come and fill your life. All of creation was moving towards this reality. "In the last days, after Jesus has been resurrected, God says, 'I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your young men will see visions. Your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit.'" Okay, ready? Are we in the last days? Look around, people. Are you a person? Are you a son or a daughter? Are you young or old? Are you a servant of Jesus? Are you a man or a woman? Then He has said He has poured out His spirit upon you. You don't have to question. You don't have to wonder. If you're a follower of Jesus, this is what He wants to do. He wants to fill you with His spirit.

"Do not get drunk on wine which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the spirit." This is not a one-time event, this is a lifestyle. He compares it to drinking. What happens when you drink? You get drunk, you become influenced and surrendered to something else. But if you want to stay drunk, you have to keep drinking. So if I want to be influenced and surrendered to the spirit, I have to keep being filled fresh with the spirit every day. Every day, "Holy Spirit, fill me fresh today." Every day, "Holy Spirit, fill me fresh today." Every day, "Holy Spirit, fill me fresh today." Because how do you know when you're filled? When you're overflowing. You don't know you're actually filled until you're overflowing. I don't know a cup is full until it's actually overflowing. Otherwise, there's still some space there. And notice that it says Spirit-filled, not spirit-forced. The Holy Spirit will not force Himself into any area of your life that you say He's not welcome.

He waits for us to open up the space and say, Holy Spirit, will you come and fill me from the inside out? I mean, think about it. How would you get dirt out of water? How would you get all the dirty particles? Take the Red River. You just scoop up a big thing at the Red River, how are you going to get all that dirt out of there? You have to put it under a faucet, turn it on and just let it run. And eventually that clean water will remove every piece of debris that is in that space. When we open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit and say, fill me fresh day after day after day, we don't have to look inside and figure out how do we get rid of the sin and the shame and the struggles. It starts to purge it out of our lives. Less of me and more of you when I open myself up to it. And if you think about when the Holy Spirit fills your life, it is the culture of the kingdom. His kingdom has just come. His will is being done inside of you on earth as it is in Heaven, and so the value of your heart creates the culture of your life.

Filled with the Holy Spirit releases the character and the power of Jesus around you. You say, well, where are you getting this character and the power of Jesus thing? Well, think about when Jesus was here. When Jesus walked on this earth, He did everything that He did as a man filled with the Spirit of God. He did everything He did as a man. He poured out His divine powers when He came on and took on flesh, humanity, filled with the Spirit of God. In fact, this is why it says, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth." Anytime in the Bible it uses Jesus of Nazareth, son of man, it's talking about Jesus' humanity, not His divinity, that He's fully man, fully God. This is talking about Jesus. The man who was in right relationship with God "was anointed by the Holy Spirit and power, and then He went around doing good and healing all who are under the power of the devil because God was with Him."

Not because He was God, but because God was with Him. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. So what we know about Jesus is, He was a man in right relationship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit. So when He says, "You'll do the things that I've been doing," if He says that, and He did all those things according to His divine powers, we got no chance. But what He's saying is, you are a man or a woman who is now in right relationship with God because of the finished work of Jesus. The only question left is, how much of the Holy Spirit are you wanting or desiring to be filled with? So it means walking the character and the power. Character, fruit of the spirit, love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. Is that the character of your life? And then power. You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. This is why Jesus has followed me and I will make you fishers of men, character.

That's why He also says, "And the things I've been doing, you will do even greater things than these. I will anoint you with power." When we are filled with the Spirit of the living God, we are no longer walking in the flesh. So can I ask you a question? Are you Spirit-filled or flesh filled? Is it about your reaction, your opinions, your pride, your rights? Is it about how your flesh wants to respond? Or are you influenced and surrendered to walking in the spirit? He says He wants to put His treasure in your jar of clay. But the only way the treasure shines through that clay is when it's cracked and broken, humbly submitted to the Lord, saying, "You are what I value, come fill my life in Jesus' name." You with me? Okay. And then real quick, life-giving. We are on mission to receive and release the life of Jesus wherever we go.

Make no mistake, the value of the kingdom is mission. To destroy the works of the devil, to make disciples, to do good, to subdue things around us. In fact, everything the kingdom does is life-giving in nature. Everything the kingdom says, touches, looks at, breathes upon, releases life. Why? Because Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Jesus not only defeated death, He is the author of life. So in every situation, every circumstance, every moment, Jesus literally was bringing forth life. In fact, if you go all the way to the beginning of creation with me, you had two trees in the garden, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. And God says, "You can eat from any tree of the garden, but don't eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for the day you do, you will surely die." Eat from the Tree of Life. Why? What

is the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? It's a picture of religion. Good, bad, right, wrong.

Should, shouldn't, can, can't, do, don't, will, won't. Judgment, condemnation, criticism, and it's death. And if you can catch it, there's no seed in the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Why? Because when you eat of it, it only brings death. Life and fruit is found in the seed. That's what multiplies. So when we eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, religion, all this judgment and condemnation and shame and defining, it creates death within us, and it releases death into the world around us. But when we eat from the Tree of Life, not only does life come in, life releases out into everyone and everything around us. In fact, here's the question. What would the world say the culture of the church is? Not our church. Let's just say church in general for a second. If culture is not what you declare it to be, it's what they experience it to be.

Then I think the world would probably say the culture of the church is condemning, judgmental, harsh, elitist, exclusive, critical. Why? Because for too long, we've eaten from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and that's what we then pass on. It becomes the culture of our life. Good, bad, should, shouldn't, do, don't, can, can't, will, won't. Why? Why do you want to think that way? That's death. Instead, we should be eating from the Tree of Life. Asking this one simple question, "Is what I'm about to do, say, act, think, is that going to give life?" Not, "Is this right or wrong." Some of you, you're so black and white. Everything for you is, is this right or wrong? Is this good or bad? That's the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The real question is, is this going to give life? And who is the Tree of Life? Jesus.

And so if you think about yourself and think, are you a life-giving or a life-taking person? If you think, "Man, if I'm honest, I am a life-taking person with my words, my actions, my behaviors." Don't try harder, don't look in, apply what we just learned 10 minutes ago and look to Jesus. See how this all works together? When I am Jesus-focused, focused on who He is and what He has done, I can't help but be filled with His spirit, walking in the character and the power of Jesus. And when that is happening in my life, I can't help but receive and release the life of God wherever I go. And they are all connected together. It is impossible to be life-giving if you're not Spirit-filled. It's impossible to be Spirit-filled if you're not Jesus-focused. When I am focused on the grace of God in my life, it draws me into relationship with Him and it empowers me to live a life of purpose. This is the core value of the kingdom of God. Go all the way back to what I said in the beginning when Jesus was asked what's the most important, and he says, "Love God, love your neighbor.

All of the law and the prophets, all the commands hinge on those two." You get that value in your heart, you will naturally and effortlessly release the kingdom of God in every other space. This is just different words for that. If this becomes the value of your heart, all of the law and the prophets, all of the commands, all of the ways of God, all of the culture of the kingdom, all the other values that we're going to talk about, they will also be in your heart and flow from

your life if you get this one in there. The values of your heart determine the culture of life. Do you have the right values? Do you like the culture that's being released?

And if not, acknowledge that. Don't try harder. Don't do better. Don't behave more. Look to Jesus because you're probably sinking in the storm. Look to Jesus and who He is and what He has done. So you close your eyes with me. Come on, I realize for some of us today, those were some bigger words than we're used to and some things that we had to think about. That's good. That's good for your heart. That's good for your soul. What is the Holy Spirit wanting to say to you today? Where is your life being disrupted even in this moment, interrupted in this moment?

Holy Spirit, we long for the culture of the kingdom in our lives, in our homes, in this church, in our businesses, in schools and activities in the city. So, Holy Spirit, would You come and help us be Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled and life-giving? In fact, even in your own way right now, this is probably how I'm going to end every one of these messages for this series. Can you just ask? Lord. Help me be Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, and life-giving. Lord, would that become a value of my heart, that it might change me from the inside out. Jesus, thank You for Your kingdom. Thank You for Your values. And thank You for a culture that is so radically different from this world around us. May we be Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, life-giving people. In Your name, we pray. Amen.