

We are a movement of hope for the city and beyond and this is our story. Valley Creek church was started in 1992 in the home of Pastor Kevin and Lisa Evans in Lewisville, Texas. With a heart to see Jesus move in the city over the next 19 years, the church grew and met in five different locations, finally landing in our Flower Mound location. In 2010, our founding pastor, Pastor Kevin, took his next step and moved to China as a missionary. Pastor John Stickl became the new lead pastor of Valley Creek and a new season was born. In 2011, we started to follow the cloud, believing that wherever God is leading us is always better than where we've been. God led the Israelites from Egypt to the Promised Land by giving them a cloud to simply follow one next step at a time. And so our vision was to help people take the next step on their journey with Jesus.

We simply ask, listen and respond to the voice of God doing whatever He invites us to do. Also in that year, by faith we declare that we were going to become a worshiping church and started learning how to experience and encounter God together. We're passionate about the presence of God, believing His presence is the greatest change agent in the universe. Worship is a big deal to us. In 2012 as we focused on reaching the next generation, we became one of the fastest growing churches in the country. We felt like God was inviting us to build our own leaders to disciple the people He was bringing to our church. Developing kingdom leaders of all ages became a part of our culture and 95 percent of our staff has been raised up from within our own church. We believe that everyone was created to be a kingdom leader.

As we continued to grow in 2013, we took a huge step of faith and launched our first Missional Move: Acts 1:8. A missional move is simply when we take a next step so someone else can take theirs. We expanded our Flower Mound campus, launched our Denton campus and launched a church planting school in India. Also in 2013, our current icon was created and solidified our culture of being a Jesus-focused, spirit-filled and life-giving church. And in 2016, we started Missional Move: Breakthrough, and through this we launched our Lewisville campus, our Venue campus and the Next Steps Center so we could better serve the city. In 2017, the three circles was born as a simple way to teach the gospel. The Father's heart is for us to live free as beloved sons and daughters and this theology has changed our lives. In 2019, we rolled out our new vision to be a movement of hope for the city and beyond and we launched Missional Move: Hope for the City, our biggest step of faith yet.

We doubled down with a heart to go from four campuses to eight, putting a harbor of hope within a 20-minute drive of everyone in North Texas and raising up hope carriers who would change their world. In 2020, even in the midst of a global pandemic, we continued to advance God's kingdom and launched our Gainesville campus. Because of the generosity of our church, we continued to be a debt-free church and own all of our campuses. In 2021, as the world continued to change, we responded by launching our online campus. We leveraged technology to present the gospel and we went from being a church for the city to a church for the world and have hope carriers all over the globe. So here we are, this is our story. We're not where we're going, but we are so much farther than where we've been.

This isn't a you-should-have-been-here-when kind of church, this is a we're-so-glad-you're-here-now, let's-go-write-the-next-chapter-together kind of church. You see, looking back on God's faithfulness gives us the faith we need for today. And as we look back at what God has done, it fills us with hope for what God wants to do. We are a movement of hope for the city and beyond. This is our story and this is now a part of your story.

Alright. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad that you are here with us. Whether you're in Denton, Flower Mound, Gainesville, Lewisville, The Venue or online somewhere in the world, come on, let's just celebrate each other for a moment. I am so glad that you are here with us, and we have a great story. Sometimes it is so good to stop and just look back on what God has been doing. He has been so kind to us, He's been so gracious to us. And sometimes when you look back at God's faithfulness it gives you the faith that you need for today. You see, we're not where we're going, but we are so much farther than where we have been. And if this is your church, no matter when you came or when you became a part of this, that is now a part of your story because you either took that ground by faith or you're enjoying it by sight. But either way, we're all responsible to steward it together. And it reminds us that we're on a journey of following Jesus and no one follows Jesus alone.

We're a family on mission, a community of faith, the body of Christ, the church of Jesus and she withstands any storm that the world brings against her. And we haven't always gotten it right and we've made a lot of mistakes along the way, but I can tell you this, we have always had a heart to say, "Jesus, whatever you ask us to do, that's what we want to do because we believe that wherever you're leading us is better than where we've been." And so with all of that in mind and kind of based on that, I want to start a new series today of timeless principles simply called Follow the Cloud. Now, if you've been a part of our church for any period of time you've probably heard the term 'follow the cloud', but it is so much more than a book or a tagline, it really is the core of our church.

It's how we live our lives, it's how we lead this church and it's how we got from where we were to where we are and it's how we'll get from where we are to where God wants us to continue to go. And I think this is the perfect time for us to talk about the principles of follow the cloud because if we're honest, if you look around at the people in our lives, the people in this world, instead of following the cloud a whole lot of people are chasing the crowd. Instead of taking next steps, a whole lot of people are stuck in apathy. Instead of listening to God's voice, a whole lot of people are listening to the world's voice, the voice of fear, the voice of the news. And instead of allowing the gospel to transform us from the inside out, a whole lot of people are trying to change other people from the outside in. And if you think about the questions that many people are asking, questions that maybe you're asking, they're questions like this, like what do I do now? Where do I go from here?

How do I move forward? How do I get unstuck? What am I supposed to do with my life? And it was five years ago that we released follow the cloud, the book, and did the message series around it. Five years ago. You realize, we haven't taught follow the cloud from the platform in more than five years. And so after a global season of transition where so many people have come and gone, we've got to go back to the basics, to the core, to who we really are and how we live our lives. And so I love what Peter says at the end of his life. He says, "So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory and I will make every effort to see that you will always be able to remember these things. At the end of his life, Peter says, I know you've heard this before, he says, but I don't care.

He says, I'm going to make every effort to make sure you know what matters most. I don't want you to forget this because this is what matters. And I realize there are three types of people here today. First group of you, you love follow the cloud. It's changed your life, theology, the concepts, it's how you live your life, it's how you do your whole spiritual journey. You're like, oh, I could hear about this every week for the rest of my life because you know, you're only in thirtyfold revelation and you want to get to a hundredfold revelation. So you're like, let's go bring it on. Then there's a second group of people in here that you're like trying to right now figure out, you're like, follow the cloud. You've never heard it before, it doesn't make any sense to you, you're wondering if a cloud is about to appear right here in the middle of the room with us, and this is going to be a journey of discovery and learning and revelation for you.

And then there's a third group and that group is kind of like, really man, like we've already done this before. Do we really have to do this again? Can't you give us something new? Well, can I just say to you the question is not 'do you know this', the question is not even 'can you teach this', the question is 'are you teaching it?' If you think you know it, are you living it and are you teaching it to others? Because in the Kingdom of God, you know you've received something when you start giving it away. We have a responsibility to give that which we've received. Jesus says, "Freely you have received, freely give." So in the Kingdom of God, you know you've actually received something when you start to release it, give it away, teach it to others. And so if you're not actually releasing it into the lives of any other people, you have yet to receive it for you. And so we kind of have to go back to the core of what matters most.

In fact, I love it, after the 40-year journey of following the cloud, when they're about to take the Promised Land, Moses sits everyone down and he basically looks at them and he says, "Only be careful and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them." Moses sits everyone down, this is Deuteronomy, and you realize Deuteronomy is basically a repeat of Exodus. Pretty much everything that's said gets said again. You do realize that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are four gospels, four accounts of basically the same thing. You do realize that all throughout the Bible, God basically says the same thing over and over and over again, just through different generations. Yes. Why?

Because He doesn't want us to be arrogant and prideful. Because He wants us to be careful and watch ourselves and to not forget who He is and what He has done.

I love this, "Don't let it slip from your heart." Can I ask you a question? What revelation has slipped from your heart over these past two years? What important things that God has shared with you have you lost sight of over this past season? He's saying, don't forget and teach your children because the same principles that got us from where we were to where we are or what they're going to need to go in and actually take the Promised Land so that they can live free as well. Picture Moses sitting around a bonfire with all these children saying, let me tell you the story. And there's this sense of responsibility of passing it on to those that weren't there, to those that do not know. In fact I love this verse that says, "Train a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not turn from it." Like parents, you have a responsibility to teach your kids how to follow the cloud, how to take next steps and listen to God's voice and move forward by faith and trust Him above all things.

You have a responsibility to do that and you will be held accountable to the Lord for that. And when we think about this, we think about physical children, physical age. But do you realize, this is also true spiritually? Do you realize we have lots of spiritual children in our church? Spiritual babies, spiritual adolescents, spiritual teenagers. They might be 75 years old, but they're a spiritual baby because they've just met God so we need to train them in the way they should go so that they will know how to walk in it as they continue to mature on the journey. Come on, remember church is a harbor of hope, a training center for life and a family on mission. Sometimes you come just to get some hope, sometimes you come to be trained up in the way you should go and sometimes we're a family on mission and we're moving forward together in Jesus' name. And so we have a responsibility to steward the revelation that God has entrusted to us.

In fact all, throughout the Bible, God refers to revelation or wisdom as gold, rubies, silver. He says, it's like a treasure, it's one of the things you need to steward the most in your life is revelation, things God has shown you. In fact, I love when Jesus says, "Consider carefully what you hear, the revelation you've received and discovered because with the measure you use it will be measured to you and even more. Whoever has will be given more, whoever does not have even what he has will be taken from him." In other words, whatever you do with what God said yesterday will determine what you hear from him today. If you use what He showed you and steward it and step into it, he's going to give you even more. But if you don't and you think you know it all and you got that and you got pride and arrogance building up in your life, then guess what, God says, He actually removes it from you.

And that's why it slips from our heart and we forget things we used to know. See, for those of you that have been a part of this church, can I just say this? I think follow the cloud is like an overgrown garden right now. The concept of follow the cloud in our church, it's an overgrown garden. From afar, it looks great. And you're like, follow the cloud, we got that garden, it looks

beautiful, like we know it, yeah, follow the cloud, oh yeah, that's what we do, okay. But if you actually walked up to the garden and looked at it, you realize there's a lot of weeding that needs to take place there's a lot of pruning that needs to happen there's a lot of stuff that's got to be cleaned up, I think that's follow the cloud. From afar in our church, it looks great, but if we actually got into underneath the hood in your life are the principles of follow the cloud alive and well and fruitful?

I mean you remember when Jesus sees the fig tree from afar and it looks great because it's leafy? And he walks up to it because he wants to eat some fruit from it? But it's leafy and there's no fruit, and so he curses it. And it withers and dies. Why? Because things in life are meant to be fruitful, not leafy. And religion always looks good from afar, but you get up close, it's got no fruit. The kingdom of God usually doesn't look all that great from afar, because it's an invitation to come and die. But when you get in there and you start to discover its fruit, it brings you life. Come on, familiarity breeds contempt. You can be so familiar with a conversation, a topic, a revelation that you completely become like repulsed by it or prideful towards it or arrogant but this is a revelation that's at the core of our church and we need to steward it together. And so I just declare over you that as we go through the series, I think God's going to speak to you.

He's going to show you some next steps. He's going to answer some questions that you've been asking, not even to Him, but pondering in your own heart. He's going to show you the way you should go. He's going to unstick some things that have been stuck. He's going to blow some wind in your sails because it's time to follow the cloud again, okay? So what is follow the cloud? Some of you are like, please finally tell us. Follow the cloud is a physical picture of a spiritual truth. After 400 years of Egyptian slavery, God looks down on his people and it says he sees their misery, he hears their cry and he is concerned of their suffering I have indeed seen the misery of my people I have heard them crying out and I am concerned about their suffering so I have come down to rescue them and to bring them out of that land into a good and spacious land.

God sees their misery, hears their cries, he's concerned of their suffering so he comes, why? Because the heart of God is always drawn to the cries of men. And He comes to bring them out of slavery and into the fullness of the freedom of his kingdom. And so He raises up a man named Moses. Moses, to be a deliverer, a shepherd, a mediator for the people. And Moses goes and confronts Pharaoh, the most powerful man on the face of the earth, a picture of the kingdom of darkness, a picture of the king of darkness. And through some of the most significant miracles that have ever taken place on the earth, in a matter of a few short days, Egypt is completely destroyed, the people are completely set free and you got more than a million slaves that have now just been turned loose.

But now what do you do? Like how do you lead a million people who used to be slaves into a life of freedom? I mean these are broken people. There's a big difference between being set

free and living free. They were set free in a moment, but let's be honest, they were far from living free. They had broken thinking, they had broken perspectives, they had broken hearts, they had broken relationships, they had a broken worldview and so what do you do? You give them a cloud to follow. By day, the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night, neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night, left its place in front of the people. So picture it, a million people more than set free and here is this giant cloud in the sky, the presence of God. By day, it's a cloud to guide, to cover and to surround.

By night, it's a pillar of fire to warm, to give light and to protect. It wasn't just fire or a cloud, it was literally the presence of God, His love on display. God knew they were going to need grace to get from where they were to where He wanted them to go, so he gave them himself. And he gave them a promise, his presence and a next step. And one next step at a time, he began to lead them along the way. And the thing that you've got to catch is that it was never about getting somewhere, it was about enjoying someone. It wasn't about getting to a land, it was about learning who they were, who God was and what they were created to do. It was the sense of journey and discovery and life, finding this freedom. Yes, they had been set free, but they were not living. They didn't know how to live as free people. And so God said, just follow me. From within this mighty cloud he speaks follow me one next step at a time.

When I move, you move. When I stop, you stop. Where I go, you go. Keep your eyes on me and I will lead you to discover who you are, who I am and what you were created to do. And yet, they struggled with it because most of the journey was about revealing and exposing the brokenness within them. They get to the red sea and all of a sudden they panic and they freak out because they question the goodness of God in their life. They get through onto the other side and then they're three days into the journey and they get to bitter water and it says they panic and they freak out and they grumble. Why? Because it's revealing the bitterness that's actually in their heart. And then they grumble against Moses, the leader, and against God because there's no food and they're hungry. So He brings manna from heaven because they didn't believe that He would provide for them.

And then they want fresh water and they question whether or not God is with them, so God brings water from a rock. And then God invites them into His presence on Mount Sinai, but they withdraw because they didn't yet catch this concept of grace. There was this constant sense of exposing and revealing so He could heal and restore. And the same is true with us. God has seen your misery, He hears your cries and He is concerned of your suffering. He sees the misery of your life, the anxiety and the depression, and the worry and fear. He hears your cries over the pain and the loneliness and the brokenness and the lostness and He is concerned of your suffering, suffering in that marriage or in that job or in that situation or in that circumstance, so He has come because the heart of God is drawn to the cries of men and He has come to not just set you free but to help you live free.

So He sent Jesus, the ultimate deliverer, shepherd and mediator between God and men. And He has set you free, the kingdom of darkness has been destroyed and He now wants to lead you on a journey of the heart to discover who you are, who God is and what you were created to do. It's not about getting somewhere, it's about enjoying someone and becoming someone in the process. And while the Israelites followed an actual cloud and the disciples followed the physical Jesus on earth, we now follow the Holy Spirit. Since we live by the spirit, let us keep in step with the spirit. It's the spirit of God that is the cloud, He is not beyond us, above us, away from us, He is right here with us by grace and love, giving us a promise, I will give you abundant life, His presence, the Holy Spirit and the next step one after another, after another to lead us into everything that God has in store for us.

A journey that's designed to expose and reveal so he can heal and restore. Because let's be honest, these last two years were the greatest invitation to follow the cloud in your life that you've ever had. See, if you can catch that for a second. Two years ago, just like that, everything changed. And we had a choice. Were we going to follow the cloud, listen to God's voice, take next steps, trust in him, keep our eyes fixated on Him? Or were we going to be like the Israelites and grumble and gossip and complain and rebel against leaders in our life and always want to go back to Egypt?

These last two years was the greatest follow the cloud invitation you've ever had. And so this is my point, it's an overgrown garden. We think we knew the concepts. The question is how well did you live them out over the last two years? Because it was the greatest season of unknown you've ever had in your life. I mean when I've been studying this, this time around, and just going through it, you know the number one thing that you see for the Israelites that you know and they weren't following the cloud? It's they grumbled against the leaders in their life. So I would just submit to you that if over this last season, you've grumbled against your boss, coach, teacher, the government, police, the spiritual leaders in your life, your parents, you name it, your heart wasn't following the cloud. It was wanting to go back to what was. So maybe it's time to follow the cloud again.

Because the truth is the security of slavery is often more appealing to us than the unknown of freedom. Like sometimes, we'd rather go back to the bondage that was because it's comfortable, it's controllable, we know what to expect as opposed to actually trusting God and moving into spaces that we've never been before. That's why I think we all wanted to go back over these last two years. We want to go back, we want to go back. We grumble, we gossip, we complain, we want to go back. We want to go back. We grumble, we gossip, we complain. Should we do it again? We want to go back, we want to go back, we crumble, we gossip, we complain. That'd be a good song. Brandon, write that into a song for us. No, that's a terrible song. We want to move forward. You know, I can't come up with a better one right now. But you catch what I'm saying. So could there just have been more bondage in your life before the pandemic started than you were aware of? Could God have actually used these last two years to expose and reveal bondage that was normative in your life that you weren't even aware of?

That he was trying to set you free from to bring you into a new place, a new space, a new opportunity because we trust Jesus to set us free my golly. But we don't trust him to help us live free. Set me free from Egypt. Pharaoh, let my people go, but I don't want to follow you across the Red Sea or trust you for manna from heaven today or water from a rock, right? So as you look back over these last two years, I bet you there's more stuff that was exposed and revealed that God wants to heal and restore. Come on, let me ask you a really honest question. How do you live your life? Like you. How do you make your decisions? How do you decide what to go, what to do, where to go? Like do you do what everyone else is doing? Do you chase the crowd? Do you listen to the news? Do you do what feels good to you, what you want, what's best for you right now? Or do you do what God tells you to do?

Like parents, how do you make decisions about what your kids should be a part of? Students, how do you decide what activities or commitments you're going to be a part of? Singles, how do you decide who you're going to date and why? How do you decide what car to buy, what house to have, where to move, what job to take, what job not to take, what opportunities to step into, what opportunities to step away from? Like how do you actually decide what to do? What was the last thing God asked you to do? Did you do it? That was an invitation to live free. Are you with me on this? Because God's not trying to take something away from you, He's trying to help the broken thinking, the broken relationships, the broken heart, the broken perspectives be exposed and revealed so they can be healed and restored.

See if you can catch this. I love this. This is -- again, Deuteronomy is basically Moses telling the Israelites this is what's just happened over the last 40 years and then redeclaring all the things God told them in Exodus. And so after the journey, he's telling them, like this is kind of what happened. Do not be terrified and do not be afraid of them. This is the first time when they're supposed to take the land. The Lord your God who is going before you will fight for you. In spite of this, you did not trust in the Lord your God who went ahead of you on your journey in fire by night and a cloud by day to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go. See if you catch this, the Lord your God goes before you. He is searching out places for you to camp and He is looking for the way you should go.

When was the last time you stopped and thought God is going before me? The creator of heaven and earth, the maker of all things, the creator, sustainer, redeemer, the God of wisdom and power and supernatural and grace and abundance and love and life and light, He is actually going before me. He's going to try to figure out the best way. He's going to try to find that spouse that I'm supposed to have someday. He is already ahead of me preparing that job that He has in store for me. He's already in advance going and looking for the right situation and circumstance so that I can experience wisdom and revelation and life and hope and healing. He's looking for a place for me to camp. Where do you camp? In a place that's restful and peaceful to show you the way that you should go. Come on, wherever you're going is better than where you've been. But following the cloud expands your life.



The reason so many of us live these small little microscopic lives is because we want to just have a life that we control. We don't care what God's doing because we're just going to decide what we're going to do today based on what works for us. But God wants to expand your life. Come on, the Bible says call to me and I will show you great and mighty things which you do not know. No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has in store for those who love Him. God will do immeasurably more than we can even ask or imagine. We are God's workmanship and God created us in Christ Jesus to do good works which he prepared in advance for us to do. Do you believe that? That He has gone ahead of you and He is showing you the way. And the reason we stop following the cloud is because we stop believing that. Let's just be real clear, if you really believed that God was taking you better and wanting to expand your life, then you would do whatever He asks you to do.

The problem is for a lot of us is we stop believing that. And maybe over these last two years for some of you, this is when you stopped believing that. Because it's been hard and there's been deserts and wilderness and battles and all kinds of things. I hear you. I've had to wrestle through that stuff in my own life too, but we got to remember that He is before us, searching and looking for the way to go. And yet in spite of this, you did not trust He says. See, listen to me, your behaviors reveal your beliefs. You can say you trust God, you can say you follow God, you can say you walk with God, you can say you love God all day long, and that's great. But your behaviors reveal what you actually believe because you do what you believe.

So what do your behaviors even right now tell you about what you actually believe? Are you doing your way, your thing, your ideas, your plans or are you walking with God? See, following the cloud is all about one simple word, trust. You follow whoever you trust. Whoever you trust is whom you will follow. So if I follow myself, then I trust myself more than I trust God. Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Trust in the Lord, not your opinions, not your perspectives, not your ideas, not the world, not the news, not what's happening around you, and lean not on your own understanding even if it doesn't make sense, even if it's not comfortable, even if it's not convenient, even if you don't get it.

In all your ways acknowledge Him. Listen, God has ways and His ways are higher than our ways and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts and the way we acknowledge Him in our ways is we say, God, I don't want my way, I want your way. So I'm going to take your way in finances and your way and my family and your way and how I do my job and your way and how I do relationships and I don't like this way. In fact, I'm going to be very clear, I don't like it at all, but I'm going to choose to acknowledge you in this way and trust you in this way because you promise you will make my path straight. In other words, you don't just set me free, you want to help me live free. And so I think our trust with the Lord got broken over this last season and I think the Lord wants to restore that trust to so many of you.

And it starts by just looking back at who He is and what He has already done that gives me the confidence to follow Him into the future. You with me on this? Now, let me tell you a little bit of stories. You say, where does all this follow cloud stuff come from? Well, about 11 years ago, Pastor Kevin, the founding pastor of Valley Creek Church, took his next step, moved to China to be a missionary. At that time, I was 29 years old, I was one of the associate pastors here and our elders prayed and sought God and in unity they felt like God was inviting me to be the next pastor here at Valley Creek. And you have to understand, I was 29 and I didn't have a clue what I was doing. I had -- somebody said amen over there. And if you were here, you know. I had preached maybe 10 messages in my entire life. So not only did I not know how to lead a church, not only was I 29, I'd never preached before. So I had to learn how to preach.

So when I first started learning how to preach, I literally, I would study and I would hand write my messages, full manuscript, word for word, hand write it all the way down. I would memorize it and I would pre-preach it seven times before I ever got up and shared it with you. So I had to learn how to do this. And if you were here in the early days, if you think I talked fast now, I was like a speed talker and I was like a caged panther. I was just pacing back and forth, you know, like trying to figure this thing out, okay? So a lot of you, you were very gracious with me to help me fan my flank get into flame. And so we didn't know what we were doing, we didn't have a lot, but we had a team and we loved each other and we wanted to follow God. And so because we didn't know what we did, what we're doing, just out of a sheer sense of desperation, we were like how about this, whatever God tells us to do, let's just do that. Ting. And that's literally how it started. Whatever God asked us to do whether it made sense or not, we're like, that's just what we're going to do because we're not smart enough to do anything else.

So let's just do that and we started doing it. And God started moving and people started getting touched and life started happening and we went through this whole season where 50 to 100 people a month started joining our church. And we would sit there and we'd be like, we don't even know what to do with this and how do we respond? But we just kept doing whatever God asked us to do no matter how ridiculous it was. And then you get to the election of 2012, okay? We thought people lost their minds then. Play your lessons forward. And it was the Saturday before service and I told you how I did my message, I wrote my whole message, we were in a series and it was like Saturday afternoon, 12 hours before the weekend experience was going to start and I felt like God said, I don't want you to talk about that this weekend, I want you to give people kingdom principles on how to respond to this election. And I remember saying back to the Lord God, God, like I can't write a message in 12 days. I've already practiced this one like seven times, like I can't -- and I felt like the Lord just said, but this is what I want you to do. Okay.

And so he kind of downloaded some things to me, I wrote them down and I got up on Sunday and said, hey, we are in this series but I feel like the Lord is inviting us to follow the cloud today. First time we used that term. And I felt like the Lord was inviting us to move in this

direction when we thought we were going in that direction, it was the first time we shared it and we kind of talked about that principle. And as that kind of crystallized to us, we started studying the Israelites' journey and following the cloud and what it looked like and what it meant and we just kept moving with God and life just started happening. And God just kept moving and blessing. And then we got to this place where we outgrew our space, the Flower Mound campus was half the physical size and we didn't know what to do. And so as we prayed and sought God, we felt like He was inviting us to double the size of Flower Mound, start a Denton campus and start something in India. And it was like 14 million dollars, it was overwhelming. I didn't think we could do it. We had it all figured out. Sat down with the elders and they were like in total unity, this is what we were supposed to do. And I was like I don't think we should do it.

And after a whole lot of praying and prayer and time and wrestling, the elders finally looked at me and I'll never forget sitting in the meeting with them, and they said, we're all in 100 percent unity on what God's saying. You're the one person out. So are you willing to allow us to be the voice of God in your life because we think you're following fear and we don't want to follow your fear, we want to follow God. And so I had to humble myself and seek the Lord and move forward by faith because nobody follows the cloud alone. And that really became a part of what we do. Listen, everything we do around here, all the decisions you like and all the decisions you don't like, they're following the cloud. Listen, epic, we had this thing what we did for kids. We had the biggest thing in the whole region where we had this whole week-long summer amazing experience and then we felt like God was inviting us to stop putting all the energy into one week and turned it into a kid's leadership experience and be focused on discipling kids.

Hub Camp. We had one of the greatest things going with Hub Camp, we bring like over a thousand kids to camp, it was amazing and then we felt like God was inviting us to stop putting the energy into a one-week experience and put it into a student leadership experience and disciple students. Giving at the doors. We stopped passing baskets because we felt like God was inviting us to do that and let people give on their way out. How we did the pandemic over these last two years, whether you like it or don't, I promise you in unity we seek the Lord. And whatever he asks us to do, we then just say, by faith no matter what it costs us, we're just going to do it. And the more you start to grab ahold of that as a people, you start to say, let's go because what's being exposed and revealed in me right now, why am I grumbling, complaining, why am I afraid. Come on, follow the cloud, the book, do you know I didn't go try to write a book. A publisher heard about what we were doing called us, asked me to write it into a book and I said, no.

And then I took it to our elders and they said, yes. And they said, this is what God's doing. He's inviting us to take our tribal knowledge and put it into writing and I process with the Lord and God said to me, they're the voice of God in your life right now. And if you don't write it, I'll give to somebody else who will. I don't want to miss what God's doing. And I don't get anything

from the book, anything from the book goes into the missional move, the future of our church. Why? Because it's who we are as a church. Does this make sense to you? Come on, think of Peter. I don't have a lot of time left on here. Think of Peter. One day Jesus comes to Peter, a struggling, wrestling fisherman. He strives, he performs, he earns, he tries, he's just trying to make a life, man, make some things happen. And one day, the cloud shows up into his life and Jesus says, follow me and I will make you. We follow, he makes. And his ability to make is so much better than our willingness to follow. And Peter had a choice to make.

Am I willing to let go of everything that I've got in this life that I've built and follow God to a place that I have no idea where he's taking me? And Peter had to wrestle through because the more clearly you see Jesus, the more clearly you see everything else. And I think that's so much our story, right? We strive, we struggle, we perform, we earn, we try to do all this and hold on to all the stuff and Jesus comes and invites us to follow him to make us. Notice, not to take you somewhere, it's not a destination, it's a journey of the heart, a process, a transformation, it's discipleship. And the problem is we can't do everything we want to do and everything God wants to do at the same time. This is why we think the cloud moves too fast because we're trying to do our fishing business and change the world with Jesus at the same time. Nope, you got to let go so you can grab hold. This is why some of us freak out and we're like, it's so hard being a student circle leader and doing my life at the same time.

You're right, you can't do everything you want to do and everything God wants to do at the same time. That's why some of you are like, I can't read my Bible every day and do everything that I need to do for work or school. You're right, you can't do everything you want to do and everything God wants to do at the same time. Some of you are like, I can't do this job and raise my family at the same time. You're right, you can't do everything you want to do and everything God wants to do at the same time. The cloud's not moving too fast or too slow, it's just right. It's just right to get you to a place where you got to decide, am I willing to let go of my performance, my striving, my struggling, my control to grab ahold of what Jesus is offering me even though it's this unknown? The security of slavery though is a whole lot more convenient than the unknown freedom. And Peter goes from being this shaky, broken, stressed out guy, to becoming the rock a kingdom leader and one of Jesus's best friends.

I don't know how you view yourself today or what the life circumstances are, but if you will let go and follow, he will make you into a rock, a kingdom leader and one of his best friends. Following the cloud is just being a disciple and letting Jesus be Lord of your life. And so in a minute when we release you, there's keychains in the atrium and I want to invite you today to by faith go out and just grab ahold of one. They just have different phrases on it from this concept of following the cloud. Keys represent authority and access, they unlock things. And I believe God wants to unlock some things, some freedom for you in the season. And so by faith grab ahold of one. Maybe it's live free, maybe it's receive His grace, experience His presence, release His kingdom, hope carrier, momentum.

I don't know. By faith, just grab one. They're for you. Just take one and by faith start asking God to release that in your life. Ask Him to unlock some of the places where you've been stuck and unable to move forward because I believe if we will lean in over this next season, the fresh wind is blowing, we can raise our sails and harness the momentum little by little that God has for us. It doesn't matter what you did in this last season. You may have moved away from God, He hadn't moved away from you. You may have stopped following the cloud, He hadn't stopped following you. You may have left God, He hadn't left you. By His compassion and His grace, He's right here with a promise, His presence and a simple next step.

He has seen your misery, He has heard your cry and He is concerned of your suffering. And so He has come not to set you free, but to set you free and help you live free, in Jesus' name, it's time to follow the cloud again. So close your eyes with me. Come on, what's the Holy Spirit want to say to you today? What's He want to stir up in your heart or in your mind? What's He exposing and revealing even right now? That's His goodness and His grace. His heart is drawn to your cries and He cares and He knows and He sees and He is here.

He wants to help you discover more of who you are, who He is and what you are created to do. And so maybe even in our own way we can just repent, repent of not maybe following the cloud over this last season, repent of trusting more in ourselves and in the things of this world, repent of grumbling and complaining and questioning the goodness of God. So Lord Jesus, we thank you that you lead us one next step at a time out of the old and into the new. Thank you for this revelation that you've entrusted to our church. Lord, we acknowledge with humility, it is a treasure to be stewarded.

And so may we not let it slip from our hearts, but may we teach it to our children and to their children both physical and spiritual. May it become even more a part of who we are as we move forward into this next season that you have. Lord, reveal and expose so you can heal and restore us. We choose to follow the cloud again in Jesus' name we pray, amen.