

All right, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We're so glad that you are here with us and Jesus, we welcome You. And we are so glad that You are here with us. Thank You, Jesus, for coming to where You already are. Thank You that You're the reason we're here. Thank You that we are here to gather around You, meet with You, know You, hear from You. You are the one thing, You are the main thing, You are the only thing. Jesus, we welcome You here.

You see, it's been a great start to the fall here at Valley Creek. All our next gen ministries have launched amazingly over the last few weeks. Now we had an amazing Leader Summit this weekend for all our leaders. Circles kick off today. And so, there is lots of great things happening. And we are in our year-long series, our year-long season, A Different Way: Do What Jesus Did. And really, what we're talking about behind all of that is this one simple question. It's this question, who are you becoming? It's really the question we're just asking all year long. It's like, who are you becoming? And do you like who you're becoming? Are you growing? Are you changing? Are you maturing? Are you becoming freer and healthier? Who are you becoming? And maybe a better question to ask is, who do you want to become? Do you have a vision for who you want to be a year from now, five years from now, 20 years from now? And have you arranged your life in such a way that you can become that kind of person? Because if we want to become that kind of person, we probably have to live our life a different way and do what Jesus did. And so, what we've said all throughout the series, that if you want to do the things that Jesus did, you have to first do the things that Jesus did. If I want to do what Jesus did, I have to first do what Jesus did. You say what does that mean? Well, if I want to do what Jesus did, like raise the dead, and heal the sick, and cast out demons, and preach the Gospel, or just be a person of joy that has a healthy heart, a healthy mind, that has deep relationships, is free from money, and greed, and lust, and power, and has a deep connection with God, then I first have to do the things that Jesus did, like, pray, and engage the Scriptures, and fast, and Sabbath, and silence and solitude, and service and generosity. Like if I want to do what Jesus did on-the-spot, I have to first do what Jesus did behind-the-scenes. If I want to do Jesus' work, I have to first walk in Jesus' way. If I want Jesus' life, I have to first take on Jesus' lifestyle. If I want Jesus' health, I have to first build my life around His habits. If I want to do what Jesus did, I have to do what Jesus did.

You say, what did Jesus do? Here's just an example of the life we see of Jesus. He had peace in chaos. He had joy in every circumstance; hope in the midst of despair. He had love in all His relationships. He was free from the world. These are the things that Jesus did, and these are the things that you and I are pursuing in some way, shape, and form. But if I want to do the things that Jesus did, I have to first do the things that Jesus did. This is the lifestyle of Jesus. See, this is the life of Jesus, but this is the lifestyle of Jesus. Things like Scripture, and meditation, and fasting, and silence and solitude, and service and community, and celebration. And so, if I want to do what He did, I have to first do what He did, and arrange and rearrange my life around the way that He lived His life. And Jesus thinks you can do it. In fact, He says, "I tell you the truth," as if He lies, all the time. "Anyone who has faith in me will do what I've been doing." Jesus is like, "Hey guys, you got this. You can do everything I did." Why? Because

Jesus came to show us what it was like to be human. We forget that Jesus came to show us what it was like to be human, what it was like to be alive. Jesus came to show us what it looks like to be a person filled with the Spirit of the living God, in relationship with God, living in God's kingdom. He is not only the Son of God, He's the Son of Man. The Son of God means He shows us exactly what God is like. Son of Man means He shows us exactly what humanity is supposed to look like.

This is why the Bible calls Him the prototype. He is the standard and the source of what a new creation looks like. And so, when we look at the life of Jesus, that's the normal life of humanity. Not stressed, not afraid, not controlling, not selfish, not greedy. Like, He shows us an entirely different way to live. In fact, if Jesus only did what He saw the Father doing, then Jesus' lifestyle is the lifestyle the Father wants for all His children. Even though Jesus lived in a different time and place than you, the lifestyle He lived is the lifestyle of humanity, of what it looks like to be a new creation. And this is why Jesus says, "I am the way." He's not just the way to heaven, He's the way to be human. "I am the way the truth, and the life," He says that first and then He says, "I tell you the truth. Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing." Can you see it? If I want to do what Jesus did, I have to first do what Jesus did. If I want to do what He did on-the-spot, I have to do what he did behind-the-scenes. If I want His health, I have to take on His habits. Jesus is not just the way to salvation, He's the way to live free as a human. His lifestyle is the lifestyle that God has for you and me. And so, what we're doing is I'm just trying to take two weeks to pull us all back together, so we can move forward into Season Three because the theme verse for this series has just been this, "Train yourself to be godly." Train yourself to be godly. Don't try to be godly. Don't wait around and hope God just makes you godly. Don't allow the world to train you to be worldly. Train yourself to be godly. And in context, Paul is using an example of physical training. In other words, like if you want to run a marathon, you probably can't do that today. But you could start by training. By buying a pair of sneakers, and then walking to the mailbox, and then the next day, one block loop. And then the day after that, around the block two times. And the day after that, a one mile walk. Day after that, a two mile walk, day after that a three mile walk. Day after that, a one mile run, day after that, a two mile run. And you're like, "We got it bro. You've said that so many times." I know, and I'm trying to show you there's a process, and it takes time and it feels irritating to even hear the process over and over again. But we think we can do what Jesus did on-the-spot without ever doing what He did behind-the-scenes. Like if you want to play Beethoven, you can't sit down and just jam. But you could sit every day, and for 15 minutes, practice score, chords, and scales, and all kinds of things. You can't go to China and just speak Mandarin. But if every day, you worked on the language and learned it, you would begin to grow. And here's what I'm trying to tell you. For the last nine months, I've been using those analogies. Do you realize that if nine months ago you would have sat down and started training for a marathon, today you could run a 5k? If nine months ago, you would have started practicing piano, you could super impress your friends at a dinner party right now. If nine months ago, you started learning Mandarin, you could actually probably get your way around a Chinese airport right

now. So, if nine months ago, you would have started training yourself to be godly, how much more would you have become the kind of person you want to be?

See, time matters. And I think we just think, it's just a series, it's just a week. I'll get around to it one of these days. It's been nine months since we've been talking about training yourself to be godly. Do you at least have a plan yet? Because you can't train yourself to be something that you don't have a plan for. Are you catching me? Nine months of your life has gone by. Have you become more of the person you want to be? But before I can train to be godly, I first have to decide I actually want to be godly. And this would be the big word "disciple." I have to decide that I want to be a disciple. Jesus says, "Come, follow Me, and I will make you." Jesus says, "Come, follow Me." This is not figurative, subjective, flowery language like, "Hang out with Me every once in a while, identify with Me, come to church when you can." No, it's like, "Come, follow Me, like come actually be with Me, and learn from Me, how I live My life. And if you will take on My lifestyle, I will make you. I will change you and transform you to become the kind of person I know you can be." Disciple, a learner, a student, a follower, one who becomes like the one they're following. A disciple is someone who has decided they want to think like Jesus, and talk like Jesus, and act like Jesus, and live like Jesus, and believe like Jesus. A disciple is someone who has considered their way, considered the way they live their life, and counted the cost of what it would look like to follow Jesus on His way of life. And they've decided that cost is worth paying. They've counted the cost, they acknowledged, to follow Jesus, I'll have to deny myself and give up my flesh and my pride and my sin, because they've also counted the cost of not following Jesus. And the cost of not following Jesus is much higher than denying yourself. It's having a life that's joyless. It's having no hope, and no future, and no freedom. And so, a disciple is someone who has come to Jesus to say, "Be my teacher. Be my Rabbi, show me how to live my life." They come to Jesus with this intent to follow, this intent to obey, saying, "I want Your kingdom to be the reality in my life. And I don't have it all figured out, but I will be quick to repent. And I know what the world has to say. But what I want to know is, what do you have to say Jesus?"

In fact, this is why Jesus says, "A student is not above his teacher. But everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher." A disciple is a student of Jesus who is training to become like Him, who is arranging and rearranging their life around, not just what He did, but how He did what He did. Not just His life, but His actual lifestyle because they believe, He's a better way than what the world has to offer. In fact, Jesus says, "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?" Can I just show you something for a second? The difference between the crowd and the disciples is one simple thing, obedience. The crowd calls Him "Lord," disciples do what He says. That's the difference. The crowd calls Him "Lord," and loves the bread and the fish, and loves the things He has to say. But the disciples actually do. They come with this intent to obey even if they don't like it, understand it, or get it, because they've already decided that they're a disciple of Jesus. And what He says is good, true, and right even when it doesn't feel good, true, and right, because He's either right about everything, or He's right about nothing. So, the question is, have you ever decided to be a disciple of Jesus? Not by

faith, believe in Jesus. Not come to church, not trust Him for salvation, and then go back and live your life. I'm like, have you ever decided, I'm a disciple of Jesus, which means I've come to Him with an intent to obey. And whatever He says is what I am going to do. And I'm not going to get it right all the time, but this is the direction of my life. Have you ever made that choice? Because make no mistake about it, you're a disciple of someone or something. Someone is shaping, molding, and forming you into some kind of person. Like, someone is teaching you what to think and what the vision for your life should look like. Someone is giving you a definition of what is good, and true, and right. Someone is telling you what is normal. Someone's values are being imprinted into your heart. You are a student, a learner, a follower of someone or something. Is it the right thing? Is it the right someone and is it going to lead you where you actually want to get? Have you ever decided to be a disciple of Jesus because until you do, you can't actually walk out a different way, because I won't come to Him with this intent to obey.

See, the resurrected Jesus, in this very familiar verse says, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I've commanded you." Here's our problem with this verse. We jump to the last line. We just try to jump on-the-spot, and do the things that Jesus did, not really realizing that there's an order, that I first must be baptized, immersed. Not into water, but into the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, and the power of the Holy Spirit. I literally have to be immersed into the reality of the Trinity. But I can't be immersed into the reality of the Trinity until I have first decided that I am His disciple, He is my teacher, and I will follow Him. Once I've decided that I am His disciple and I will follow Him, then I can be immersed into the reality of the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, the power of the Holy Spirit, and this is what the spiritual practices do. This is what the spiritual disciplines do. You say, how do I get immersed into these realities? The spiritual practices that we're talking about, the lifestyle of Jesus opens you up to be daily immersed into the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, the power of the Holy Spirit. So, then you find yourself naturally and effortlessly obeying, and doing everything He commanded you on-the-spot, because you have created a lifestyle behind-the-scenes that is immersing you into this reality, because you have decided He is the way that I go. I like it. And here's what happens. When you become a disciple, you start to arrange and rearrange your life differently. You can't not rearrange your life, because you've decided to follow Him which is different than the life you are living on your own. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, all these things will be given unto you. The problem is, we arrange our life around all these things, and hope to find Jesus in the process. But we're supposed to arrange our life around Jesus, and then all these things will be given to us as well.

So, a thing we've been saying for nine months is following Jesus is about arranging and rearranging your life. It's about ordering and reordering your life. So, can I ask you a question at the beginning of the fall? How have you arranged your life? Who or what is at the center? And everything else takes second seat to that? Sports, education, work, hobby, activities? Like if you put any intentionality into how you're arranging your life, or are you a victim of the times

and just stand there, and let everybody else hand you their calendar of what's important to them, and now your whole life is running after theater, and after sports, and after homework, and after work, and after the hobbies, and after what my mom needs me to do, and all these things. Have you arranged your life? Because only you have the authority to decide how it's ordered and how it's arranged. And when we think of rearranging, we often think of, like, furniture in a living room, like taking the same furniture and just shifting it around. No, to rearrange in Jesus' name is to get rid of things that we no longer need, to create space, so I can bring in new things for the new life that He has for me. And as I start to arrange and rearrange, because you never one time arrange your life, "I got it guys, I have arranged my life, I'm arrived." No, you grow with Jesus, and He's constantly asking you to rearrange things. And as you do that, you begin to grow, you begin to change. It's a process that we go through. And what happens then is we actually start to change. When you start rearranging your life, you actually start to change. Here's the paradox. We all sit in church, and we trust Jesus for salvation. But we don't trust Him, or believe that He can actually change us in the daily realities of our life. Like, we like, think, like, is it even possible to change? I know who I am, I know who I've been for the last 20 years. I know my anger, my judgement, my pride, my selfishness, my sin, like I've tried it. I can't. That's not -- not only is it possible to change, it's normal to change. And not only is it normal to change in God's kingdom, it's expected to change. Why? Because I'm a new creation in Christ Jesus. The old is gone, the new has come. I go from glory to glory. The more I behold Him, the more I'm transformed into His image, into His likeness.

Yes, you can change. And most of us don't believe that. Most of us feel like Paul most of our life. "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do, I do not do. But what I hate, I do. For what I do is not the good I want to do. No, the evil I do not want to do, this I keep on doing. What a wretched man I am. Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Do you ever feel like that? Like you can't do the things that you want to do and the things that you swear you'll never do again, you find yourself running back to them literally like the next day? And it feels hopeless. But he goes on to say, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ, our Lord, because through Christ Jesus, the law of the spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death." In other words, this is how I feel. But this is not true, because I have been set free from sin, and flesh, and the grave. I have the Spirit of the living God. I have grace inside me. And yes, I have been formed in the ways of the world. But I can be transformed into the ways of Jesus if I will train with Him. And so, we talked about, way in the beginning of Season One, we talked about, how do people actually change. And the great theologian, Dallas Willard has this great thing. Once you believe, you can actually change, he says this is how people change. They just have vision, intent, and means. Once you believe you can change, the way you change is, you have a vision. A vision of who you can become, an alternative reality, something that can be, something that must be, something that captivates your heart, and takes over your whole life, because you can see it. And then when I have a vision, then I take on intent. I intend to do it. I am committed, I am devoted, intense effort despite difficulty. I will go after this with all I got, no matter how hard it gets. And then once I have intent, I actually need means, methods, next steps, teaching, programming, opportunities, equipping, trainings from other

people. And this is how we change, vision, intent, and means. And he gives a great example. And he says, why does almost every other nation in the world, why do people want to learn English as a second language? Because they have a vision for it. So, they see how if they can learn English, it's going to give them opportunity and advance their lives. So, they see what can be in the midst of what is, so they have intent. They're willing to do it no matter what it costs them, intense effort despite difficulty, so then they find the means. Duolingo, English-speaking cafes, English programming, whatever it might be, and they learn the language. And he goes on to say, why is it that so few Americans ever learn any second language. Like, why haven't you learned Arabic or Japanese or Mandarin? Because you don't have a vision for it. It doesn't captivate your life. You don't see how it would improve your life, so you have no intent to actually do it. And so, it doesn't matter that there's more means right now than there has ever been in history to learn another language. You don't have the intent, because you have no vision. So, it doesn't matter that there are means. So, the problem for a lot of us is, the reason we don't change is because we don't have a vision to be a disciple of Jesus and live in God's kingdom. So, we never intend to actually do it. So, it doesn't matter if there are more means available for us to be transformed than there have ever been in history, we're not going to access these because we haven't intended to do it, because we have no vision for it. Could it just be that you haven't changed because you don't want to? I mean, in all honesty, could it just be that you haven't changed from that anger, and that judgment, that lust, that pride, that addiction, that thing, could it be that you just haven't changed because if you're just honest, and you could step back for a moment, you don't have to blame anybody, you'd be like, yeah, I don't know that I really want to. I don't know that I really have a vision, and an intent to do so.

I mean, do you remember the paralyzed man? 38 years, he's paralyzed. He's sitting by the side of a pool. Jesus comes walking along and asks him one simple question. "Do you want to get well?" He just asks him like, "Hey, hey, bud, do you want to change?" Notice, Jesus didn't ask him, "Why haven't you changed yourself yet? Why haven't you got yourself well yet?" Jesus can't ask him that question, because the man can't make himself well. The man can't change himself. Jesus can ask him, "Do you want to get well?" because only the man can answer that question. Jesus can't make him want to get well. Jesus can make him well if the man wants to, but He can't make him want to. And the man sits here and gives a bunch of excuses and a bunch of reasons why he hasn't gotten healed. And Jesus is like, "That's not the question I'm asking you." The question Jesus is not asking you today isn't, "Why haven't you made yourself well?" The question Jesus is asking is, "Do you want to get well?" Like, do you really want to change? Because maybe the reason you and I haven't changed is because we just don't want to. Because the change is inconvenient, it's costly, it's uncomfortable. We lose control. We've figured out how to manage our life. That would cause us to step into the unknown. Maybe it's just, we haven't changed because we don't want to. See, all the change starts from the answer to this question. Yes, I want to change. It starts with the will of the human soul saying, yes, I want to change. I can't change myself. But boy, I want to. It starts by saying, God, Your kingdom come, Your will be done. I surrender my kingdom, my queendom to You. I lay down my crown. I want Your will. I want to change. I want to become like You. I don't know how to do

it. I don't even know that I can do it. In fact, I know I can't do it, but I do want to do it. That's how change starts. You have been saved by grace through faith. You couldn't save yourself and you can't change yourself. It's grace that saves you. It's grace that changes you. But just like God won't force you to be saved, He won't force you to get well. You have to want it. You have to want it.

See, last fall we did some Men's Nights, once a month, and I called all the guys of our church together. I just felt like from the Lord, I just wanted to call them up. And I said we're going to meet once a month, and this is only for guys that really want to be here. And I'm going to challenge you to grow. And we're going to give you some practices and some trainings. And so, I gave them every out that you could give for an out. And the first practice, for the first month was to memorize Psalm 1, six verses. And we gathered back together that first night and I said, "Okay, everybody who has memorized Psalm 1, stand up on your feet." And you literally would think like I just cursed at everybody, because we're so not used to being called up in spiritual things. Jesus did it all the time, by the way. You can read it in Scripture, it's all over the place. But we're almost like, "Is this okay, did he just violate the Bible? I don't know." And the guys that did stood up and I talked to them. Here's what I said. I said, "Here's the thing. You are exactly where you want to be spiritually." It's six verses. So, you can sit here and say, "I didn't have time, I couldn't do it. I can't memorize, I can't..." all this stuff. No, the truth is at the end of the day, you just -- the guys that didn't do it, you just didn't want to do it. And that's okay, but just say it that way. Don't make excuses. Don't complain. Don't be like this man and make it about everything that it's not. Just say, "I just didn't want it." Like, you're ready for this? You know why I can't run a marathon? Because I don't want to. But you're ready for this? God has given me a body that actually could. You know why I can't play the piano? Even though everyone in my life that knows me would tell you, I would love to be able to play piano, but why don't I play piano? Because I just don't want it enough to do something about it, even though God has given me fingers that work. Do you know why I don't speak Mandarin? Because I just don't want to, even though God has given me a mind that is well capable of learning. Okay. So, could it be that you haven't changed, not because of everyone and everything else, but because you just don't want it enough yet. You can't change yourself, but it starts by wanting. This whole different way, if you don't want to get well, no one can drag you down. Jesus won't drag you down that path, because He won't violate your free will. He calls you, He summons you, He invites you, but you got to choose it. Before you get offended at me and make all these reasons why, "That was just mean to say that." Oh, here's why, just stop and back up and just be like, whatever that thing is in your life, do I, at the pit of my soul, do I really, I really want to change? Because if I did, I would probably rearrange my life dramatically differently.

This is what happens with addicts who never get set free and addicts who get set free. Addicts who get set free rearrange their life dramatically around the grace of God. They don't look at their addiction and say, "I got to get rid of it, got to get rid of it, got to get rid of it, got to get rid of it." No, they look at Jesus and say, "Jesus, I need You, and I will arrange my life around

You." In fact, look at what God says. God says, "You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all of your heart." This is just another example. God says, "Hey, you have as much of Me as you want." None of us like this truth. But He basically says, "You have as much of me as you want." You say, "No, I want more of God." Well then, you have to ask yourself the question, are you seeking Him with all your heart? Because if I wanted more of God, what would I do? I would arrange my life where God is. Where is God? "He inhabits the praises of His people." So, I would be here all the time. I would come early and come late if I really wanted more of God. He says, "Where two or three are gathered, there I am also." I would get myself in a Circle, and I wouldn't miss a week, because I'm so desperate for Jesus, and He says that's where He is. If I really wanted to find Him, I would engage the Word every day, because He says He is the Living Word, and the Scriptures are leading me to Him. They're the very breath of life. If I really wanted more of Jesus, He says, "Whatever you've done for the least of these, you've done for me." So, I would get on a serve team, and I would serve every single week, because He promises that's where I will find Him. So, I can't say He's not available when I'm not willing to rearrange my life. Are you catching what I'm saying? It's the "want to" factor that really matters.

Look at this verse in a different translation. "When you come looking for Me, you'll find Me. Yes, when you get serious about finding Me, and want it more than anything else, I'll make sure you won't be disappointed." Here's all I'm trying to say to you. Have you gotten serious about changing? Have you gotten serious about who you're becoming? Have you gotten to the point where you want to become more like Jesus, more than anything else? And some of you, you're sitting here, you're like, "Yes, and you're making me feel bad, because I'm not changing." If you're serious, and you want it more than anything else, then keep walking, because He promises you won't be disappointed. I'm not talking about you who is serious and wanting it. I'm talking about those of us that say, "I can't run a marathon, because my kids have sports, and you know, I got a bum knee from high school and you know, the sneakers don't fit my feet right. They don't make them like they used to." That's what I'm talking about. It's just, because you just don't want to. So, all through the rest of the fall, as we go ask yourself the question, do I really want to get well? And be honest. Do I really want to get well? Do I really want to change? That's a great question. Like I have so much more I need to say to you, but I have just want to stop right here, and just be like, just think about that this week. Do I want to change? Because we think we can't change, but oh, we can change. You know why we can change? Because you died and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. You're dead to sin. You're alive to God in Christ. You're a beloved son or daughter. You're righteous. You're free, you're forgiven, you're holy. In fact, you know what you are? "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus to the saints at..." Valley Creek. The Bible calls you a saint. A saint is not a dead person who lived a long time ago. A saint is someone who is included in Christ. Why? Because they're dead to sin and they're alive to God in Christ. So, you're a saint, and it's pretty important to acknowledge if you're a follower of Jesus that you're a saint, because if you walk around thinking you're a sinner, what are you going to do? You're going to... [sin.] Yeah, because identity determines behavior. So, my sainthood can't be determined on my behavior. My sainthood is determined



on Jesus' behavior. And once I acknowledge I'm a saint, I now wake up to the fact that I've got to stop living down to who I used to be, because I can take off the old self, put on the new self, I'm a saint. If you just walk, I am a saint in Jesus' name. Your wife doesn't think you're a saint. I can tell you that. Your children might not think you're a saint. Your parents might not think you're a saint. But if you're included in Christ, He thinks you're a saint. So, now when I start to believe that, I can now start changing how I live, I can start taking off the old self and be like, I don't have to do that anymore. I don't know how to not do that right now, but I know I don't have to do that anymore. So Jesus, I've got to arrange my life around You, because that no longer defines me.

And if you sit here and you're like, "No, bro, I'm a sinner." Okay, then you're doing what I'm saying. You're saying that your behavior has more authority in your life than the finished work of Jesus. That's just -- you just don't -- you just be careful. Just be careful. What you're declaring is you don't want to change. If you refuse to believe who God says you are, just so you understand, it's not a theological nuance. It's a heart posture, that's a defiant will saying, I don't want to change. And it's easier to define myself as a sinner, so I don't have to change. Because if identity determines behavior, the more I declare I'm a sinner, the more I'm free to... sin. So, now I don't have to change. My wife can't make me change. Who is she? I'm a sinner. I'll always be a sinner. Thanks God for His grace. I'll get to heaven one day. That's just not in the Bible though. That's fine. But it's just not in the Bible. You're a saint. Do you want to be one? Or, live like one, because you are one? And this starts to change the mindset. This starts to change the game. And every time we make an excuse of why we can't change, because it's someone else, something else, I've forgotten who I am in Christ. That's what I'm trying to go all the way back to. When we say, who do you want to become? I already am! I'm just trying to figure out how to live in alignment with who I already am, because I've been so deeply formed by the world that I got to take off the old self, which I'm dead to, which has no authority in my life, put on the new self because this is who I am, so this is who I can be. So, someday my wife, and my kids, and my friends, and the people in my life are going to actually think I'm a saint, because that's who I am in Jesus' name. And so, I'm so locked into that vision that by the time I die, that's how they'll view me. That's called having a vision for your life. And then you have an intent. And then all of a sudden, it doesn't matter what's happening in activities, and events, and things, and hobbies, and family, and work, and all the junk. It's fine, it's important, but no longer does it define you, and no longer is at the center of the onion. I've actually removed it because this vision has so captivated me. No one cares when you die, how much money, how many trophies you won, how beautiful you were. They care whether or not you lived like a saint. So, does that capture you yet? I don't know. I can't, I can't capture your heart. Only Jesus can. So, then you go back to, do I want it? See what I'm saying? If I don't want it, I won't do it. But then I'll blame the church, and I'll blame John, and I'll blame my wife, and I'll blame my children. This is called work out your salvation with fear and trembling. There should be a walking out who I now am with a fear and trembling like, "Oh, my gosh, He says, I'm a saint. I got to figure out what that means. And that's way more important than anything else I do." Thanks, Greg. So, this is important. You should watch week four of Season One for that.

What we're talking about is spiritual formation. That's just a different word of it, the process of being formed into the image of Christ to become a person of love. Every one of us has had a spiritual formation. Hitler had one, Mother Teresa had one, Osama Bin Laden had one, the Pope has one, you have one. You have been formed into a certain kind of person. You naturally and effortlessly do certain kinds of things. We can change that by partnering with God. "Spiritual formation is a process..." It's not an event. It's not a one-time moment. It is an ongoing journey that has ups and downs, and back and forth, and valleys and mountaintops. It's this process of God working on us. "...Of being formed..." We don't form ourselves. You couldn't save yourself. You can't change yourself. Only grace can do that. But I'm the clay, and I can put myself on the potter's wheel. And I'm the garden, and I can open up the gate and ask the gardener to come in. And I'm the gold and I can throw myself into the refining fire. I can't do it without Him; He won't do it without me. "...Into the image of Christ..." because He is the standard and the source. He is the prototype of what it means to be human. "...To become a person of love." Ultimately a person that has good will towards God and towards others. This is spiritual formation. You've been formed into a certain kind of person. Do you like who you've been formed into? If not, you can change how you practically live this life. You can be formed. Your identity is resolved in Jesus. You're hidden in Christ. But who you actually are as a person, character, your spiritual formation, can be changed. And in a sense, this is what the spiritual practices and disciplines that we're talking about in this series are. A discipline is doing what I can do now, so I can do what I want to do later. It's forming me. That's all it is.

A spiritual discipline is a practice. It's something that I can do now that opens myself up to the grace of God, to change and transform me from the inside out. So, eventually, I can do what I can't do now, later. Say what? A disciplined person is someone who can do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. If I can't be patient, I can't just jump on-the-spot and try not to be angry. What do I have to do? I have to go back here and practice, practice things like fasting. You're like fasting, and angry, because fasting is denying myself. And if I practice back here, eventually I'll be able to do it here. If I can't forgive people when they hurt me, don't keep trying to forgive, back up and practice generosity. Why? Because generosity teaches me how to give things away to other people who don't deserve it. And then, maybe I'll be able to do what I want to do on-the-spot. If I can't on-the-spot, if I'm always selfish, and I'm always controlling, don't go after control and selfishness, back up. So, how do I deal with selfishness and control? By being a servant. So, I'm going to get on a serve team, because I'll have to die to myself and give up control when I'm not poked like a bear in the moment and then, I'm training myself to be able to do it. Does that make sense? You have to train, you have to form, you have to grow. This is why, like, a disciplined business person is not someone who gets up at four in the morning. They're just the person that can make the right choice in the right moment. A disciplined athlete is not someone who is in the gym all the time. A disciplined athlete is someone who can make the right play in the game. A disciplined follower of Jesus is not someone who does all the spiritual practices. There's someone who can do what Jesus would do when Jesus would do it. But I got to train to become that kind of person, and this is

the word character. Character is what you do without thinking about it. That's what character is. We're like, "Oh, they're a person of character," and we get kind of lost in that word. Character just is what you do without thinking about it. It's what naturally and effortlessly just comes out of you on-the-spot. That's your character. When you're driving down the road and someone cuts you off, genuinely, how you respond in that moment is actually your character. You're like, "I was kind of with you till there." This is why storms, and crises, and surprises are really important, because they show us who we actually are. Because when I have time to think, and adjust, and formulate my response on how I will say back to you, what you did, how you just did, no, that's not character. That's premeditation. Character is what comes out of me on-the-spot. And character doesn't change by talk, it changes by action. This is why people sit in church for 50 years and never change. They've got talk; they've got no action. If I want to change what comes out of me on-the-spot, I have to back up and do something different behind-the-scenes. This is what the spiritual disciplines are. This is the practice. This is how you actually start going in a different way. But you can't do them until you actually first want to do them.

See, don't worry. Spiritual practice is really simple. They're just not a measure of maturity. It doesn't matter how many you do. The Pharisees, they did them all. They were religious people. It's not a measure of maturity. The point of practicing the piano is not to practice piano. It's to play the piano. The point of the spiritual practices is not to do spiritual practices. It's to become like Jesus. Maturity is defined by the Fruit of the Spirit. Spiritual practices are an invitation, not an obligation. Hear us, hear me. You don't have to do any of them. You don't have to do any of them. If you like the way your life is going, you like how your life is arranged, you want to keep going, carry on. I love you, bless you. Come, hang out with us. Be a part of everything we're doing. If a leader, if a coach, if anybody tells you at Valley Creek that you have to, you can say, "Hey, I can show you the exact time and place that John said I don't have to do any of them." You don't. They're invitations, they're not obligations. I just don't know how to become the kind of person that has captivated my soul without them. If you can do that, go for it. Third thing is, they're not one-size-fits-all. So, as we go through these, through these Seasons Three and Four, remember, you don't have to do them all. Don't get overwhelmed by them. Everyone is not for everybody. If you're an introvert, you do not need to practice silence and solitude. You need to practice community. If you're an extrovert, you do not need to practice community. You need to practice... silence and solitude. Yes, that one, for you. If you're a thinker, you don't need to practice meditation. You need to practice prayer. If you're a feeler, you don't need to practice prayer. You need to practice meditation. Are you catching me? Whichever one on that list you can't stand, that's the one the Holy Spirit says is for you. They're done with God, not for God. You're not getting any bonus points in heaven for doing practices. We enter them with God in relationship with Him, opening ourselves up, being immersed in the love of the Father, the grace of the Son, the power of the Holy Spirit. I do not do them without Him. If I do them without Him, I didn't do them. I can't train to become godly without God. Learning something today. Are done in the secret place, they're not about anybody else. You don't need to show your little things and post on social media. Just, you and Jesus, and

other people that are walking on the journey with you, so they can celebrate you and encourage you and move forward with you. See, this is what we're doing. This is what we're doing. And here would be my guess, okay. I don't know where you are on the journey. Some of you, you started with us in January, and you've been trying. Some of you, you're new. So, you're like, wow, this is a lot. It was, I know. And some of you, maybe you tried a little bit, maybe not too much. You haven't decided you want to change. But today is the day you decided to want to change. But for those of you that have been trying, here's what happens. This is just the traditional J-curve that you'll see in a lot of different things. This is ability. This is time. Here's what happens. When we actually get serious about training in something, we often feel like we regress before we move forward. Like, if I just play the piano, right, it's like I might be able to sit there and play like five worship songs for myself. But if I get serious about it, all of a sudden I go into training, I actually feel like a terrible piano player, because I don't actually know the chords and the scales, and I can't read the music. But I can play five songs. So, I actually feel like I've regressed before I've moved forward. If I actually want to train to run a marathon, I might think I'm a pretty healthy person. I can go for a couple mile jog, like I'm great. But then you get with a trainer and you start training, you're going to be like, oh my gosh, I did not realize how out of shape I am. I feel terrible about myself. And what happens is we start engaging a different way, doing your life differently, a lot of you feel unsettled. You feel disoriented. You feel like you're regressing, because as you're moving forward, you're actually realizing how much formation God wants to do in you. But as it's happening, if you keep going, you're going to hit this exponential point and go. So, what I want to say is, keep going. If you feel unsettled, you feel disoriented, I feel like I've heard that from so many people, you're just right here. And you might be at that one right there. You're about to pop back into the realm of the land of the living. You're coming, come on. It's coming. Don't give up, and don't think you're out. Don't think there's something wrong with you when you regress before you advance. This is the journey of Jesus. He had to strip the disciples down from all of their preconceived notions of what it meant to be the people of God before He could actually form in them what it meant to be the people of God. So, God will strip away a lot of your religion and your pride and your self-reliance and your flesh, doing it in your strength without God. And you feel like, oh, my gosh. No. Thank you, Jesus, that You're taking it down, so You can build it back up.

See, my summary for you is this. I said it last week at the beginning of the message last week, and just listen. I love what we're doing. I love where we're going. And I love how it's going in me. What I want for you by the end of this year is that you can say, man, I love what we're doing as a church. I love the direction that we're going. And I at least like how it's going in me, because at some point in time, you actually have to pay attention to the whole that you're a part of and contemplate enough your own life journey to say, am I growing? Am I changing? Am I becoming? Do I want to change? Do I want to become or do I just want the path of least resistance? See, I hope you love what we're doing, and you love where we're going. And I believe by faith, by the end of this year, you're going to start loving how it's going in you in Jesus' name. And so every week, kind of in this series, we end with a practice plan. Here's your

practice plan as we get ready to start Season Three. Read through your Season One notes or the message transcripts. I tried to take just the weeks two, three, and four and added some new stuff in there. So, there's no way you got it. Go back and read your Season One notes. What did God say to you? What's the foundation? Or if you don't have notes, or maybe you don't like your notes, or maybe you didn't take good notes, read the message transcripts which we have on ValleyCreek+ for you. You'll see them on social media. I literally sat and read every single transcript. You can read it literally like a book, and you see it so different when you read it in print than when you hear it, or just podcast it while you're doing 50 other things. Why do you say, why do I care? Because to get Season Three and Season Four, your heart has to be settled with Season One. Because otherwise it will become religious, behavior modification, doing things for God instead of with God. This is about walking with Jesus. I don't care if you do any of them, all of them or none of them. I'm just trying to help you say we're training to become godly. This is the best way we know how to do it. This is how we believe Scripture teaches us how to do it, because this is what Jesus did behind-the-scenes. So, I want to do that, so I can do what Jesus did on-the-spot. So, next week, we'll start Season Three. Please do this. It will make your -- you know, it's like I want to have said, "Oh, just do it for me," but no, don't do it for me. I don't care. I do care, but I can't care, because it'll kill me. That's another conversation for another day. Do it for you as your first step of faith to say, "I want to want to get well. I don't even know that I want to change yet, but I want to want to change." It's a good start.

So Jesus, thank You for what You're doing in us, among us, through us. Thank You for a different way. Thank You that You come to me in my brokenness, my pain, my shame, my lostness, my formation from this world, and You ask really simple question. Just, "Do I want to change? Do I want to go a different way? Do I want to get well?" Holy Spirit, help us work through that question. I just feel like some of us, we just need courage to say, "I want to change, because I know if I don't change, it's going to cost my marriage dramatically. And it's going to cost my relationship with my parents. It's going to cost me maybe my job, or my friends, because our whole friendship is based on the things of this world." Jesus, give us courage, and strength, and faith to believe that Your way is better. Jesus, I just ask as we go into Season Three and Four together, that no religion will be formed in this church, that no behavior modification will be taken up into our lives, that no level of judgement or control of who is doing what and how they're doing it will take root in any of our hearts, but that this will be a running of our race with You, training to become godly, because You are the narrow gate that leads to a wide life. And there are green pastures ahead of us, because You are in that pasture. That's why I want to be there. I don't want to be there because it's good grass. I want to be there because You're there. So, I'd rather be in the valley if You're there or on the mountaintop if You're there. We want to go with You, Jesus. So, stir us up. You are the one thing. Be our one thing as we figure out how to live a different way together. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.