

So here's a question for you, what's your why? What's your why? It's a really important question, a really big question. It's a question that the world has been asking a bunch over these past few years. And you hear people talking about what's your why. And you may be sitting there and you might be thinking, what's my why? What does that even mean? Well, your why is like your vision. It's your purpose, it's your cause, your why is why do you exist? Why are you here? Why do you wake up in the morning? Why do you do what you do? Why do you make the decisions that you make? Why do you keep pushing through? Like what's your why?

The thing that gives you meaning, and purpose, and passion in life? You see, I think if we're honest, a lot of us, we're not really sure what our why is. And years ago, King Solomon said, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." In other words, if you don't know your why, you'll spend your life aimlessly wondering through this life. And if we're honest, I think a lot of us, we're not really sure what our why is. We don't have a vision or a purpose or a cause in our hearts. So we just kind of wonder from place to place. And we've been in this series called The Essential, talking about do I really need in life. And what you really need is to know your why. And in this past season, when so many of the non-essential things have been removed from our life, it's actually been a gift of God, a once in a lifetime opportunity for you to get off the hamster wheel of life and actually look at your life.

And try to figure out what's your why because if we're honest, we just do a whole bunch of things in life because everybody else is doing it. But once you grab a hold of your why, it locks you in. It helps you move forward, make decisions, and you know exactly where you're going. And as we've been in this series called The Essentials talking about what do we really need in life, we've said that there's five things, five things that are essential from Genesis through Revelation, from Adam and Eve, to the second coming of Jesus. And the fifth one is your why.

So if you remember with me, we've said, here's what's essential and here's where we've been in this series: the grace of God, the Spirit of God, the word of God, the people of God, and the mission of God. These are the five essential things that you need in your life.

The question is this, are you building your life around them? And I've told you in this series, it's kind of a really simple series. It's a lot of teaching. I'm just kind of putting it out there for you. And you get a choice on what you're going to do with it. And it's brought us all the way to this point. And this is the why of your life, the mission of God.

Now, you may have not yet grabbed it, you may not yet want it, but let's be real clear, as followers of Jesus, this is our why. And notice it doesn't say the mission of the world. This is not about your personal happiness, your personal pleasure, your personal fame, your personal success. This is not the why of me, myself and I. This is the mission of God. The mission of God, being fruitful and multiplying, being blessed to be a blessing, bringing His kingdom and

bringing His will to this earth, seeking and saving the lost, making disciples, releasing the kingdom, destroying the works of the devil, and living our lives as hope carriers.

The mission of God is essential to your life. And all you have to do is go back to creation. I mean it's so interesting to me when God made Adam and Eve in His image and His likeness, do you know the first thing that He said to them was their why? Check this out, I love this verse. First thing God says to Adam and Eve, He gives them their purpose, their vision, their cause, their why, and it's the mission of God. He says, hey guys, "Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and subdue it [using all its vast resources in the service of God and man]." Very first thing God tells Adam and Eve is their purpose, their why. And he made in His image and His likeness. And He created and empowered them to destroy the works of the devil outside of the Garden of Eden simply by obeying Him.

Break it down. Be fruitful, live a life of productive beauty, bringing things to the fullness of their potential; multiply, reproduce the life of God in you into the world around you, fill the earth or your area of influence, or the Garden of Eden and beyond, with the knowledge and the glory of the goodness of God; subdue it, bring order to chaos, bring hope to despair, bring light to darkness; and use your resources to accomplish my purposes in the lives of men. You want to talk about why worth having. You want to talk about a purpose. You want to talk about significance that God made us in His image and His likeness, to be a part of His mission on this earth, that He empowered us to rule and reign with Him, to be a part of His work.

I mean a few weeks ago, I took my little girl, my 11-year-old and brought her to work with me, to the office. And she got all dressed up, and she was so excited. She put her clothes on and got her work clothes again.

She got her backpack. She was all ready. She couldn't wait, she got in the truck. And as we're driving to the office, we're sitting their enlightened. She's like so happy, and she's bobbing around. She just keeps, I'm so excited. I'm so -- I'm so excited. I said, what are you so excited about? She said, I'm so excited to go to work with you today, Daddy. And I sat there and I thought, if we really understood what God was inviting us to, we would be that kind of excited. We could be that kind of excited when we would start to realize that He has invited us into His work, not because He needs us, but because He wants us. And He wants to empower us with the mission of God, the greatest why in the universe. And it's always been the people of God walking out the mission of God. Adam and Eve were supposed to be fruitful and multiply. Noah built the ark. Abraham was blessed to be a blessing. Moses freed the Israelites, brought them into the Promised Land.

The Israelites conquered the Promised Land, brought the kingdom. David expanded the kingdom. Peter fed the sheep. Paul preached the gospel. The 1st Century church turned the world upside down. The people of God were created for the mission of God, to be a part of what God is doing. And this time in this place, and when you build our life around the mission

of God, you know what it does? It reminds you that everything is possible. It reminds you that God is at work. It keeps you focused on the clarity of the kingdom to bring you out of the chaos of this world. It offers you such a better life. And yet, like Adam and Eve, our problem is this, that we're more interested in what we want, than what we need. Like this wasn't enough of them and everything fell apart. And it's usually not enough for us. And so instead of being fruitful, we often live a barren life, dry and weary.

Instead of multiplying, we often spend our lives dividing from everyone and everything. Instead of filling the earth or the areas of our life with the knowledge of the glory and goodness of God, we fill our life with the things of this world. Instead of subduing things, we often bring chaos to things. And instead of using our resources to accomplish God's purposes in the lives of men, we use both God and men to get a bunch of resources for ourselves. And here's what I want you to understand. When you lose your why, you lose your way. But when you find your why, you find your way. So my question for you, have you lost your why? Have you lost the reality of the purpose, and the vision, and the cause that God has created you for to be a part of the essential mission of God? I mean just think of Jesus for a second. When Jesus came to this earth, so many of us just think that Jesus came to die so we could go to heaven someday.

But he came to do so much more than that. Jesus came to show us what it was like to be human. He came to show what it was like to live as a beloved son in His Father's kingdom, releasing, extending and advancing that kingdom everywhere he went. Like check out this next verse. I love this, it says, "How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth," remember Jesus is 100% God, but he's 100% man. And he left behind his divine power when he was born as a baby in a manger. So he did everything on this earth as a man in right relationship with God, filled with the Holy Spirit. That's you, that's me, in right relationship with God because of the grace of Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit, living as beloved sons and daughters in our Father's kingdom, and how with the Holy Spirit and with power and how he went around doing good, the mission of God and healing all those who are under the power of the devil because God was with him.

In other words, Jesus spent his life on the mission of God. Healing the sick and raising the dead, and casting out demons, and opened blind eyes, and serving, and loving, and giving, and being compassionate to the world around him. And he invites us to do the same. In fact, I love this in John, here's what Jesus says at the end of his life as he's going to the cross, he says, "For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world." He knew his why. He had a vision, and a purpose, and cause for his life, and he never forgot it. That's why Jesus never gave up. That's why he could deal with difficulties and persecution, and rejection, and relational problems, and obstacles. Because when you know your cause you can get through anything. So can I ask you a question, do you know the cause for which you were born? Do you know the cause for which you have come into this world?

Have you lost your why? Because if you've lost your why, you've lost your way. Your cause is the mission of God. In fact the first time Jesus comes and calls Peter to come and follow him as one of his disciples. He says what to Peter what he says to us. And it's really simple, Matthew 4:19, here's what Jesus says, he just says, hey Peter, come and follow me and I'll make you a fisher of men. Hey Peter, hey you, come and follow me and I'll make you a fisher of men. Really interesting how the grace of God leads you to the mission of God. The tops and bottoms of our essentials, the grace of God, come follow me. Peter didn't deserve to be around Jesus. Peter didn't do anything to be called to be one of Jesus' disciples. No, no. It was the grace of God that called Peter to come and follow. I mean Jesus says, if you've come and follow me, here's what's going to happen. We're going to go on a mission together.

And right out of the gate, I'm telling you this journey is about you and me going on mission together. And this is what we forget. And the reason I think so many of us struggle in our relationship with God is because we never engage in the mission. And we forget that it's in the midst of mission where relationship is most formed. That's why you see guys that go to war together, they become a band of brothers. Why? Because when you know your mission and you're on mission together, this relationship develops, that's impossible to break. I think a lot of us, we think Jesus says, come follow me so you can have a better life, so you can have a good church experience, so your kids can be raised in a good home, so I can bless you. No. Come follow me because there's a mission that matters. And I'm inviting you to be a part of it. Come on, when was the last time you fished for men? You have to understand that the mission of God empowers you to live a significant life.

But the mission of this world confines you to a really small life. Like see if you can catch this with me for a second. You can take an 80-year-old, an 80-year-old widow who is following God, who spends her days praying, seeking God, getting in a circle with other women, serving those that she can, giving how she can, lives a far more significant life than the superstar athlete who's making tens of millions of dollars a year, who is on every magazine cover known in every house, on every TV station, but is living for himself. She is living a far more significant life. And you might say, no, no, man, this is -- this is significance. Really? Says who?

Says the kingdom of darkness. And so maybe there's some repenting that needs to go on in our mind of what is actually significant because guess what, she's giving her life to the everlasting kingdom. And he is giving his life to try to become a king in a kingdom that will be gone tomorrow. So what is really significant then? It's the mission of God, being a part of bringing the everlasting, righteousness, peace, and joy of our Father to this world. I mean catch this verses with me. Look at what Jesus just says, let me just walk you through a couple and just read them to you. These are all Jesus' words, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses." "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it."

"As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." "Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Okay. What do you do with those verses? What do you do with that? Like those aren't just like fluffy things that Jesus throws out there. Those aren't things that he's like, hey, if you get some time, hey if it would be convenient, hey, if you're feeling up to it today, no, no. These are commands, they're declarations, they're expectations of him saying, hey, I came on mission into your life, and now I've brought you into my kingdom. And I'm sending you back out on mission. Like I'm sending you, I'm telling you to make disciples. I'm telling you to give up your life for the gospel. Like I'm telling you to be my witness.

Like what do you do with these verses? That's like a legit and real question. I know some of you, you're like, I don't like this week very much. I know. Because we lose sight of this. And we forget that this is the journey that we're on. Like hear me, not doing the wrong thing is not the same as doing the right thing. And I think we get so lost, well, I'm not doing all these bad things. Right. But we're not doing the things he's asking us to do, like be a part of the essential mission of God. And so let me just ask it to you like this, like do you look at your life through mission or do you look at the mission through your life? Do you look at your life through the mission? Like do you realize, everything about your life is now the mission of God and your life needs to fit into the mission? Or do you look through your life at the mission of God and just say, man, I don't got time for that?

I don't got really interested. It doesn't really fit nicely into what I'm already doing. Okay. But how about your family? Do you look at your family through the mission of God or do you look at the mission of God through your family? And so like, hey, you know what, if our family has some extra bonus time, yeah, we could be a part of the mission of God. Or is it like, you know what, we're on mission. And this is my family, and we are going to make sure that everything our family is about is the mission of God. How about your finances? How about your time? How about your energy? Do you look at those things through the mission of God and say, the mission of God is priority and they need to fit within that? Or do you look at all those things and say, hey, if everything is well and easy, then I might have a little bit of extra for the mission of God? Come on, how about church? Do you look at church through the mission of God or do you look at the mission of God through church? And what I mean by that is it all about you having a convenient, nice, comfortable experience?

Or is it like, man, we are on mission as the people of God called Valley Creek Church, a movement of hope for the city and beyond, hope carriers. So we are on mission together. I'm looking at what we do and we are through this mission that God has put us on.

How about one more? Are you looking at COVID through the mission of God or are you looking at the mission of God through COVID? And what I mean by that is, is it all about COVID or is it all about the mission of God and, wow, what a unique opportunity and moment

in time God has given us. Come on, we don't exist for ourselves. We're here for the lost, the lonely and the broken. People are dying and going to hell, and God has empowered us to be on His mission to be a part of His work in this time, in this place, in this city, in this region, where are at. And it's time for us to rise up. Like this is an amazing moment for the church to step outside of ourselves.

Like we should be the only ones in the world that's not all stressed out about COVID because we see it as opportunity to be a part of the mission that we're already on. Like I know I'm pushing on you. Let me push you a little bit more, like the world is on fire, guys. And we're complaining about having to wear masks or that people aren't wearing masks. The world is on fire and we're complaining that we can't go on vacation. The world is on fire and we're all upset because sports are cancelled. The world is on fire and we're upset because school is a little bit challenging this year. Like come on, are you catching me? The world is on fire and God is saying, hey, people of God, rise up into the mission of God because this is your time, this is your moment. And I pray that we get wide hot as a church around the mission of God because it is essential. It's essential for their good, for His glory, and for your health.

You see, one of the most important ways to keep hope alive in your heart is to just give it away to somebody else. If you want to live a life that's full of hope, give hope away. In fact, this is the reason I think so many followers of Jesus in this six-month run are so depressed, are so stressed out, are so defeated, and given up, and apathetic, because we're not on mission. We're not giving hope to anybody else, so then we don't have any for ourselves. Like one of the best things you can do for somebody that's depressed, that's anxious, that's apathetic is give them a purpose. Give them a cause. Give them a vision because all of a sudden, they have something beyond themselves, something bigger than themselves. And as you start giving hope away, it's amazing how you find it for yourself. Like check out some of these verses, "He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed."

You give hope away to other people, God promises that that hope comes back and refreshes you. Could it be that we're not refreshed because we're not refreshing any others? Or how about the next one? It says, "Give, and it will be given to you." Give away, and you'd be amazed at what God gives back to you. Or how about the next one? It says, "A man reaps what he sows." Sow hope into the world around you on mission, and you'll have hope to reap. The problem is right now, we're all looking for some hope to reap, but if you haven't gone out and sown any, there's not much there to reap. Come on, when you give hope away, you know what you're doing? You're taking hope from the invisible and the spiritual, you're making it visible and physical, and your eyes see it, and it starts building your own faith. "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." It's within reach, and we reach up into the invisible and the spiritual, and we grab, even when we don't feel it for ourselves, and we give it to somebody else, in the mission of God, in some way, shape or form, it becomes visible and physical, and it starts to build our own faith.

I mean this is the story of Jesus with the woman at the well. Jesus is weary, he's exhausted, he's tired, he gets to this well. And his disciples go in town to get some food. And while they're in town getting some food, he has this interaction with this woman. He gives her springs of living water, hope, he ministers to her on the mission of God and it recharges him. And a while later the disciples come back with the food, Jesus is all energized, he's all looking good, and they're like, what happened? Did somebody come and feed Jesus? And look what, Jesus looks and he says, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about." My nourishment comes from finishing His work. In other words, Jesus says, hey, as I've refreshed her, it's actually refreshed me. As I've gone on mission into her life, it's actually brought life back to me.

Can I just tell you something? There is a food that so many followers of Jesus know nothing about because there is a nourishment that comes when we get involved in his work, his mission. So it's essential not just for them, it's essential for us. If you're weary, if you're tired, if you're overwhelmed, if you're apathetic, one of the greatest things that you can is get involved in the mission of God for someone else with no strings attached because it will nourish you. And I know some of you, you've sitting and you're thinking, okay, mission of God, like this is a -- like great practically, like that's massive. Like what does that mean? Practically, it's really simple. It just means this, have you invited anybody to church during the COVID season? While church has been online, and all kinds of people have had access to it, have you invited anybody? Have you been regularly inviting people using your social media and calling people?

Like that's just this, mission of God, have you invited people to tune in? And here's what I want to say. Do you believe that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life? Do you believe that heaven and hell are real places? Then why wouldn't you invite anyone to hope in this season? Like stop. I'm going to make probably what's uncomfortable even more uncomfortable. Why would you not invite someone if you believe heaven and hell are real and Jesus is the only way? Why would you not just be a part of the mission of God? Or how about finances? God gives us finances and he wants us to use those as the mission of God to tithe, to trust Him, and then to use what we have to bring His mission into the world around us. Have you been using your finances that way even though it's a tough economic season?

Or how about serving? Have you just served anyone outside of your family with no strings attached just because it's part of the mission of God? How about make disciples? Look, I don't what that means. It just means that whatever you have discovered about Jesus, you pass on to someone else. If you've got revelation on forgiveness, on freedom, on identity, on generosity, it just means you're sharing that with someone else. Or how about being a hope carrier? Just where you go every day, I know masks and gloves and COVID and distance and all that, you can still be a hope carrier in every space you go. That's the mission of God, that you look at your life through His mission because right out of the gate of when He created you and when He redeems you, He tells you, come and be fruitful and multiply. He says, come follow me, I

will make you fishers of men. The purpose of God, the cause of God, the vision of God, the mission of God, it is our life.

It's not an afterthought, it's our life. And it cost Jesus everything to go on mission into your life. It's going to cost you something to go on mission into their life. So maybe we do need to be stirred up a little bit, to be a little bit inconvenienced, to be a little bit uncomfortable, to show up to something we don't necessarily want to be at, to go on the day that we don't really feel like, to take that moment to text somebody to be a part of something, even though we're afraid of what they're going to think about me. Like come on, come on, the mission of God is not about what God is doing through you, it's about what God is doing in you. And like we always say, identity determines behavior. Who you are determines what you do. So if you want to know who you really believe you are, just look at your behaviors.

Because beloved sons will spend their life releasing their Father's kingdom. Spiritual orphans will spend their life trying to become a kingdom in this world. Are you releasing the Father's kingdom or are you trying to make your home? Have you lost your why? Because if you've lost your why you've lost your way. But if you find your why, you find your way. And you can get off the hamster wheel of the world. You don't have to do what everybody else is doing. You don't have to like say what they say is essential is essential. Like hear me, this is a moment where God is literally ringing a bell, bam, bam, bam, saying, please, hear me, what they say is essential is not what I say is essential. And this is your moment to rebuild your life differently.

Come on, there are five essential things: the grace of God, the Spirit of God, the word of God, the people of God, and the mission of God. When God made Adam and He put him in the garden, He gave them all of these. He didn't have to go get them, he received them. He lived in the grace of God, he freely lived with the Spirit of God, he freely heard the word of God, he was given the people of God, and he knew exactly what the mission of God was all about. The problem is Adam didn't want what he needed, he wanted what he wanted. And he gave up what was essential for what was not essential. And he sinned and he brought death and darkness and destruction into this world. He rejected the grace of God, he lost access to the spirit of God, he didn't listen to the word of God, he became separated from the people of God, and he no longer was a part of the mission of God. But then Jesus came. Because we're all born like that. With all these essentials broken in our lives because of what Adam has done, but then Jesus came.

Jesus is the grace of God that not only forgives you, but completely transforms you and makes you a new creation that you may live and flourish in His grace. Jesus gave you the Spirit of God and freely poured him out upon your life, baptizes you in him so you can walk in his power and his character. Jesus is the word of God, he is the truth that sets us free in this world. He gave you the people of God by assembling you into his body or the family of God and he has empowered you once again with the mission of God because He loves you, believes in you and trusts you. These are the essentials. And they've literally been handed to you by Jesus. And



at some point in time, you're going to have to activate your own faith to say, okay, I'm done going the world's way. I think it's time to start moving in God's way. Let me close it with this, the words of Jesus.

"Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down, the streams rose and the winds blew and beat against that house. And it fell with a great crash."

I think if we're honest, we have built a lot more of our lives on the non-essential sand of this world than we care to admit. I think in God's goodness and grace in this last, He's basically stopped the world for us to say, hey, come on, we need a better foundation.

We need to build our life on the rock, the grace of God, Spirit of God, the word of God, the people of God, and the mission of God. Let's build it on the essentials because no matter what comes, you'll stand strong and firm and flourish in this life because of the goodness and the grace of God. It's time to get off the hamster wheel. It's time to build our lives on what God says is essential. And what's hard for me sometimes is when we walk through a few weeks of this kind of stuff and we get to this point, I so desperately want you to just grab it because I know if you don't -- you hear the words, but if you don't put them into practice -- come on, come on, you can do this.

You can take a step, you can move forward, you can have the life that God has for you. It's not going to look like everybody else. I'm telling you that right out of the gate. But God has something great for you. And it's all about choosing to say what He says is essential is now essential in my life from this point forward.

So will you close your eyes with me? Come on, what's God want to say to you today? Over these past few moments, as we've been talking and maybe even throughout this whole series, like what is the Holy Spirit saying to you? What's he stirring up, what's he challenging? What's he pushing on? What's he inviting you to? Remember, that's his goodness and his grace. That's him saying, come on, I'm drawing you to a better life.

It's time to grab a hold of the essentials of God in Jesus' name. And it's time to choose to say, man, I need to be a part of the mission of God. I got to take a step. Today is the day to just take one step towards the mission of God. Like invite somebody, send the kid's service to somebody that you know that got kids that needs hope. Serve somebody this week that you know needs to be served outside your family. Take a step in generosity and give to God and his -- come on, this is a week to take a next step in mission to say, I'm a part of something bigger than myself. The reason life lived for yourself doesn't work is because that's not what

you were created for. That's why no matter how many times you try to do your life your way, it doesn't work because hardwired into your DNA is the mission of God that's been redeemed for us in Jesus' name. And it's time to rise up into that truth.

So Lord, I pray, Jesus, that you would show us the mission that you went on to rescue us, that we would then rise up to that and go on that mission with you to bring your kingdom and your will and your grace and glory and goodness to this lost and broken and dying world. Thank you Jesus for hope, that in you no matter how dark it is around us, we have hope. And we choose to refresh others with it, knowing that in the process it will refresh ourselves as we give it away. We love you Jesus. Thank you for leading and guiding us. In your name we pray, amen.