

"What God Is Teaching Me"

March 16, 2025 | Caleb Chapple, Karrie Johnston, and Eric Sommerhauser

It has been an amazing season here at Valley Creek Church. We just wrapped up a series called Missional Move: Create the Future. where we got to take a look at some of our vision, some of where God's leading us in this next season. And so, man, I love my church family. I love where we're going. I love how it's going. But most importantly, I love how it's going in me. And so, today, we wanted to take some time and just tell you a story of what God's doing in our lives in this season. Because you see, God has been moving and we love sharing stories. Because at Valley Creek, we're a movement, a hope for the city and beyond. And movements run on stories.

And so, we want to practice sharing stories because we want to be like the church that we read about in the book of Acts. The church that says, "As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard. As for us, we cannot help speaking because God has been moving and there is so much to share." And so, here's what today is going to look like. Today is going to look a little different because myself and two other communicators are going to take about 10 minutes each and just tell you a story of what God's teaching us in this season. And what God's teaching me in this season is that I don't have to do everything on my own. Now, I'll be the first to admit, I like to do things on my own. I like to be independent. I like to make my own decisions because I feel like I know what's best for my life. Anyone else relate to me? I was always the one growing up who would do the entire group project and put everyone else's name on it. I was the guy who everyone wanted to be partners with because they knew I would do all the work. If you want it done right, you have to do it yourself. And that was always my motto and it worked out great for me. I trusted myself to do everything well so I did everything myself. But like most things in life, the pride comes before the fall.

And so, recently, I got married. That's great. And here at the church, I actually got a role change. And so, I went from leading me to leading a team, which is super fun. Essentially, what that means is I have this many areas in my life where I can make my own decision now. And now what used to take me 30 seconds to do, like decide what to eat for dinner, now it takes at least 30 minutes to do. So, here I am, I'm supposed to be advancing God's kingdom, but we can't even decide what we're going to eat for dinner. Sometimes it's like doing life together with other believers is not the most efficient way to live. But what God's teaching me is that sometimes the most efficient isn't always the most kingdom. See, check this out. Right from the beginning of creation, God told us we're not supposed to do everything on our own. See, from the very beginning, God said, the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone." It is not good for the man to be alone. Right from the beginning of creation, as soon as God created Adam, right after He just gave him his purpose in life, be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, go and create. But He says, "You can't do it on your own." See, the first thing God ever said was not good in the Bible was that man was alone. See, we were never created to be alone. This isn't a marriage verse. This is a humanity verse. See, even God himself is not independent. God, the creator of the universe, the author of life, the one that could literally be independent, chooses to exist in relationship, the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit. See, so we who are created in the image and likeness of God are created to be in

relationship, not to live independently, but to live interdependently. See, it's our God-created mandate. Check this out. Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor. If either of them falls down, one can help the other up, but pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Two are better than one. We were never meant to follow Jesus alone. That's why it says two are better than one. It's our God-created mandate. And it says they'll have a good return for their labor. Man, we are the most fruitful when we're doing what we've been created to do. And so, fruitfulness, the good return for our labor that we desire, man, it's not found in independence. It's found in community. Not doing everything on our own. It even goes on to say, pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. That independence that I used to wear as a badge of honor is actually something worth pity. Pity anyone who has no one to help them up. Man, we weren't created to do life on our own. And see, I always thought that verse was a bit of an exaggeration until it happened to me.

And see, one day, it was August, back to school season. I got the awesome opportunity to get to be the one to bless our teachers and administrators with some gifts. And so, I got to go do deliveries. It was awesome. But what we do here at the church is we always send people out in pairs. Jesus sent His disciples out in pairs, so we send each other out in pairs when we do deliveries and things like that. And so, me being me, I thought I was going to do it on my own. It was too much work to try to coordinate schedules with someone else. And so, I was just going to go when I had free time. The boxes weren't that heavy. I could lift it all myself. I knew how to drive the van. And so, I loaded up the van. It's really hot. I was sweating. I started making the deliveries. It was going great. I learned how to parallel park a cargo van. I came around to the last stop, the last school, so parked out in front of the school. And I walked around back, I had to go all the way into the van to get that last box. And then, I heard a gust of wind. It was like a whoosh and thump. I turned around. I tried to reach for the door and it turns out we had the child lock on. I guess we're all children of God. I went for it, and so I went to go grab my phone, but there's this giant metal cage keeping me from the front seat. So, it's a cargo van. They actually have these giant metal bars that keep all the cargo from falling on you. Very convenient. And so, there's my phone. I can't reach it. All I have are the keys that are now worthless in this situation. And now I'm Mr. Independent, stuck in the Hope on the Move van. And 100-degree heat in the middle of Texas. And how I had to get out is I had to literally bang on the windows until a student walked by and opened the random van door, parked out front of the school. And so, really this verse you read, pity anyone who locks themselves in a van and has no one to help them out. And so, maybe you've been there before. Maybe you haven't. I hope you haven't. But we all have situations where we thought we knew what we were doing, but it turns out we were completely wrong. Because the truth is we are always better together. And the decision that I thought was going to save me more time and be more efficient wound me up locked in the back of a van.

Two are better than one. It's our God-given design. The question just becomes, do we actually believe that? Do I actually believe it is true? And what I've realized is any time I don't believe that's true and I want to do everything on my own, it usually comes down to a trust issue or a

pride issue. Every time that I feel the need to do everything on my own, it's usually a trust issue or it's a pride issue. A trust issue, there's so many times where I feel like I have to do everything on my own because really, I just don't trust the people in my life to do things with me or for me. Come on, anyone know someone like that? That's like super controlling, that doesn't trust anyone with an area of their life? Like the super planners? The people who have an itinerary on their vacation? Like the calendar queens? DIY people? Like backseat drivers? Clean freaks? Come on, everyone has an area in their life where man, they don't trust other people. But it's funny because it's so true. Lack of trust in others is actually an indicator of an area where we're probably not trusting God. Because it's actually really hard to trust a God we can't see when we don't first trust the people we can see. Or it's hard to love a God we can't see when we don't first love the people we can see. See, the way we treat other people is actually an indicator of what we believe about God. And so, can I ask you, what's that area in your life where you feel like you have to do everything on your own? What's that one thing that is so hard to trust other people with? Because maybe that's just an area where you're not believing that God is good. God is good to you. See, trust in the Lord with all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. Maybe one of the primary ways that God teaches us to trust Him is through other people. That two are better than one. Maybe the good return for our labor that we desire in life is only possible with other people. See, two are better than one. So, maybe it's a trust issue. Or maybe it's a pride issue. Could it be that we want to do everything on our own because we want all the recognition and we want all the credit when things go right? When I do everything on my own, I'm the expert. I look good. I feel valued. I get the reward. I get all the credit. But the truth is we were never meant to build our own kingdom. We're never meant to build our own brand or our own self-image. We were always meant to build God's kingdom, to reflect His image and His likeness to the world around us. Two are better than one. See, how good and pleasant is it when God's people dwell together in unity? Or one puts a thousand to flight. Two puts ten thousand to flight. "Where two or more are gathered, there I am with them." The Bible is so clear. God's kingdom doesn't advance on our own. It only advances when God's people come together. And so, the question is, would I rather spend my life building up my kingdom, building up my pride, my self-image? Would I rather acknowledge that two are better than one? To do things with others and work on advancing God's kingdom together?

And so, come on, two are better than one. It's our God-created mandate. It's how we've been created to live. We were created to trust deeply. We weren't created for pride. And so, what God's teaching me in this season is that I can't do everything on my own.

Man, I love Valley Creek and I love this family. And so, today, I am really excited to get to share with you that in this season, God is teaching me that there is a blessing in obedience. More specifically, He is teaching me again that there is a blessing in obedience. I'm still even surprised to hear that, to really try and believe it. But I don't know why, because of what it says right here in this verse. In Luke 11, it says, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." So, obedience, everyone's favorite topic today. But that is actually what God is

teaching me. He's taught it to me before and then He's done it again and again and again and again, specifically right now in my life, that we are blessed when we obey. And see, I grew up in church. And so, this verse isn't anything like really super new to me, but it's the mindset that it's new now. See, when I was growing up, I read this verse more like, okay, well, if I want to get anything good, I just have to do whatever He says. Fine, I got that. But because that is a pretty sad, pretty broken way to actually try and understand this verse. Man, when I would obey God, not really, and I didn't see all of the blessings that I thought He should be giving me in my life, I actually decided that it wasn't really going to be worth it for me to obey. But because God is good, and He is very good to me. When I was in my early 20s, my life forever changed when I started to truly, genuinely follow Jesus for myself. And I started to really learn what obedience is for. See, obedience is not about getting blessed, which I know sounds like an oxymoron considering the first sentence out of my mouth this morning, but it's true. Man, obedience is not about getting blessed. Obedience is about us experiencing more of God. Obedience, it is about us experiencing more of God. We are blessed when we get to experience Him. And that is actually what obedience does. It brings us closer to our Father. And man, my best example of what I'm trying to say is this. When I was a kid, I used to ride dirt bikes with my dad. That's a thing. I'm sure that with students, they still don't really quite believe me when I tell them that. But that's fair if you know me now. But it's a thing that I really did. And I did that with my dad because it's something that he loves to do and I just love being with my dad. And so, there were a couple of things that he had me do before I could go and hang out with him in this specific way. Very, very fair things. Things like, number one, learn where the brakes were on the bike. That was a thing that I had to learn. There were things like, man, I had to make sure that there was always enough gas in the bike so that you don't break down in the middle of a trail in the middle of Sam Houston National Forest. That's a thing that can happen to good people, okay? Man, there were things that he had me do. Things like, literally, just wear my helmet. Things like wear all of the protective gear, make sure everything fits right. And here's the thing, man. We wouldn't say that my dad asking me to obey all of those things, we would never say that was mean. Actually, we would say the opposite. We would say that he was being a good dad. He was doing those things for my good. And that's the thing, is that because I obeyed him, I was blessed. I was blessed with physical safety. And then, I was actually blessed even more with the thing that I really wanted, with the thing that I really needed, which was quality time with my dad. And I think a lot of times, we can hear the word obedience and we can think like, oh, my gosh. God just wants another thing from me. But actually, man, God is not served by human hands as if He needs anything. And so, man, just like my dad, when we were out there riding, God just wants to be with us. God just wants to spend quality time with us. And what I'm learning is that obedience is the quickest way that we get to do that.

And here's the thing, when we disobey, God doesn't just leave us. He doesn't leave us all alone when we delay in our obedience. He's still there. He's still right there with us. But in the same way, like my dad never left me out there alone in the woods. He would never do that. And say for some reason, I didn't want to obey one of the things that he asked me to do. Like I wouldn't put on my helmet or something for a ride. I would never do that. But say that was the

hill that I was willing to die on and I wouldn't obey. Man, my dad would never leave me. He wouldn't be like, "All right, I'm packing up all my stuff, hit the road, you stay here in the woods." He's my dad, he would never do that. And then, he would sit, he would wait there with me patiently. The thing that would be costing me a lot is just myself. I would be costing myself a fun, new, exciting adventure with my dad. See, man, there's a facet of God's blessing that we can only experience when we are walking in obedience. When we obey, it actually brings us closer to Him. It allows us to go deeper with Him. And being with Him, that is the ultimate blessing. That is the biggest blessing. And that is something that's actually taken me a while to not just learn, but then to truly believe because man, it's easy to obey when it's easy, right? But it's pretty hard to obey when it's hard.

See, five years ago, I moved to Gainesville, Texas. Shout out Gainesville Campus. And I did that all because I heard God ask, "Do you want to come be with me here?" See, I had never dreamed of moving to a small town. That wasn't what I had thought I was going to have for myself. But man, because I obeyed the invitation that God gave me, man, He blessed my life in ways that I never thought possible. During my time there, man, He blessed me to get to witness miracles that I didn't know existed. He blessed me to, man, experience friendship deeper and further than I ever had before. Man, He blessed me to actually heal me, mind and body and soul. But man, even more than that, He blessed me with himself. Man, inside of me, there was a dependency that was created on Him that wasn't there before, that was cultivated and that is sustaining me today. And so, man, that is something that I was learning then and that's actually something that I'm learning all over again today. See, last month, I actually transitioned to a role at a new campus. Shout out Denton Campus. And just, man, once again, I heard God ask the question, "Do you want to come be with me here?" See, this transition requires me to not just move my campus but actually move and pack up my entire home, too. And let me just say, if you ever think that you are just ready to drop absolutely everything in your life and obey when God says obey, think about how much stuff you own. Just think about it. And then, think about the amount of times you will be going up and down the stairs in your home with all of those things. But man, I said yes. And so, because of that I've really just been thinking a lot lately of just all of the ways that God has grown me, the ways that Jesus has made me and for me to become more like himself in the last couple of years. There's this one hard truth that I'm really coming to terms with lately, and that is five years ago when I moved there in the first place, man, just to be really transparent, I moved there because God said so and I was like, All right. Well, tell you what, I read this verse, He'll give me something surely. He'll do something for me. I wonder what actually He will do for me. If I go and I obey and I do this thing that He said, surely He's going to give me lots of good stuff. Everyone thinks that it's this really noble thing so it's going to be really good. Maybe I will, man, find financial freedom. Maybe I will be healed. Maybe I will get married. Maybe all of my hopes and dreams and everything that I want in my life will come true. I wonder what He'll do for me. It's a tough one to admit out loud now but I can say that because now after a couple of years, after a year of spiritual practices and the disciplines that have been put into my life, after five years of being seen and known and loved and rooted and planted in this church body, in this church family, in

your family, man, I'm really, really proud to be able to say that now I'm obeying this time because I'm learning that truly just being with God is actually the only thing that I really need. That being with Him, man, that is the place where I find the biggest blessing. That is the only thing I truly need. And don't count it out. Man, the little steps can sometimes feel like really big steps. Those steps of obedience, they're not wasted. Don't get me wrong, God is going to bless your life. For example, man, if you obey and you value the word of God, you will be blessed by being able to more clearly hear His voice throughout your day. You obey and you tithe, man, you will be blessed and you will live with more freedom in your heart and your life than you ever thought possible. You obey and you serve others, man, you will become a better dad, mom, husband, wife, brother, sister, student, you name it. And man, I hope that you catch it. I'm wanting all of those things, those things that God can do for you, those things of God, those are not bad things.

I just want to share with you that I'm learning right now that even in all of those blessings, the ultimate blessing is God himself. And this is not new news. I know you know this. This is not just my story. This is not just your leader's story. Man, we see this all over Scripture of people obeying God practically and then God blessing them with himself. Like for example, man, when Moses obeyed God and actually led the Israelites out of Egypt, man, we then get to hear that Moses actually got to speak to God face to face. God blessed him with himself. Man, when David obeyed God and fought Goliath, he becomes known as a man after God's own heart. God blessed him with himself. When Jesus obeyed God and He went to the cross, He now sits at the right hand of the Father. God blessed Him with himself. And so, man, in this season, I am learning. God is teaching me that there is a blessing in obedience and the blessing is God himself.

What God is teaching me in this season, the Lord's teaching me to go to bed. You may have expected something more spiritual, more profound and more mature, but that is actually what God is teaching me. See, I'm a dad with three kids that are five and younger. And being a dad changes your relationship with sleep. But it's not primarily the tired, the changing diapers or the getting up in the middle of the night, it's really as I started to watch my kids and the way that they actually sleep and the way that they start their mornings. See, I don't know what your routine is with your family, but for my wife and I, my kids when they wake up, they're right into our room and I have never seen my kids hit the snooze button. They are always full of energy, full of life, ready to go. And they have experienced something with sleep that I feel like I am missing in my own life. They've experienced what's talked about in things like Proverbs where it says, when you lie down, you will not be afraid. When you lie down, your sleep will be sweet.

Can I just ask, how did you sleep last night? Because I don't think many of us would say, "My sleep was sweet." I would be more guilty of saying things like, I didn't get enough sleep. I barely slept. I think on the best days, I might say, "I slept okay." But to have a reality and a lifestyle where I could actually say, "My sleep is sweet," then I felt like the Lord was inviting me. Because I watched my kids and I was like, "Okay, so what are my kids doing that's different

than what I'm doing?" Well, my kids have two parents who love them, who tell them, "You have to go to bed. You got to go to bed. I know you want to watch that show, I know you might want to eat that candy, but you just need to go to bed." See, what happened to you and me? What happened to me as I started to get older? Because once I was a kid and I got to sleep just like them and I realized and I thought about my life and I was like, "Okay, I've been training my whole life since I was a kid." I've been training as a young boy to start playing video games instead of going to bed. I was trained as a young adult or a young teenager to start watching movies, hitting blockbusters and actually watching more movies before going to bed. I was trained as a young adult to scroll instead of go to bed. I was trained as a young professional to grab another cup of coffee or another energy drink to keep me going throughout the day so that I didn't just go to bed. See, I've been formed and conformed to a certain relationship with sleep. And so, I felt like the Lord was inviting me, because what happens over time when you start to train in something is it starts to shape two things really clearly. When you start to train and form and rearrange your life around something, it starts to shape your identity and it starts to shape your priorities.

See, I found that it was easy with sleep to start making identity declaring statements, like I'm just not a morning person or I'm just a night owl, and you realize that those are literally identity statements. It becomes an identity of who you are. It's declaring out loud with your words, "I don't sleep. I don't sleep." But then, what does the Word of God actually have to say about our identity? Well, He grants sleep to those He loves. Did you know that's in the Bible? I was floored when I saw this in the Word of God, and you're like, "Well, this is actually an identity statement." So, you realize one of the most foundational parts about who your identity is, more than anything you declare over yourself is if you put your faith in Jesus, you are one whom He loves. That's why we may get tired of hearing it but we'll never get tired of saying that you are a beloved son, a beloved daughter and whom the Father is well pleased because it's the most foundational part of your identity that you are one He loves. And so, did you know that this promise is in the Bible? That as one whom the Lord loves, He says, "I actually want to grant you sleep." Is that a promise that you've ever held onto? This is a promise, "As much as I will never leave you, I will never forsake you." This is as much a promise of God, "As far as the East is from the West, so far have I removed your transgressions from you." It is a promise that the Lord says He grants sleep to those He loves. And so, it shapes our identity but also it starts to shape our priorities. Because some of us, it's not just that we're declaring identity statements. For me, sometimes it was just literally sleep has gone down, tick-tick-tick-tick, on the priority list of what's actually really most important to me. It's like I just don't need sleep that much. It's not that important. I have other things I'd like to do with my time. But here's the thing. If you look at page one of Genesis, man, God himself, what does it say? For six days He works. He works hard and He creates and He builds and He creates things out of nothing. And then, on the seventh day, what does it say? It says that God rested. It's like the Lord's teaching us that the very one who didn't need to prioritize sleep the most is actually the one who desired it the most. He didn't need to sleep. He didn't need to rest. In fact, if you go through all the six days, it says at the end of it, there was evening and morning the first day. There was evening and

morning the second day. The only day that doesn't end is the seventh day. It's the day where God says He rested. And it's like that's the day He wanted to enjoy the most. And so, the reality is, it's a priority for me because it was a priority to Jesus. It was a priority to God himself. And it was a part of the created order of things. So, as God's been teaching me this, I've had to wrestle with it because as a disciple of Jesus, I have to evaluate if my life is actually aligned with how God has already created creation.

And so, for me, really two practical things that I've been doing, I'm just practicing. I'm just practicing. This season is number one, I am not drinking coffee or any caffeine after 9am. Now, that alone might just be the most terrifying statement of this whole thing. And I'm not saying you need to do that. But what I've learned is I'm just practicing. I'm a disciple of Jesus who's learning to align their life with how God's designed things. And I've learned that when I drink caffeine after 9 a.m., I toss and turn in my sleep. I don't actually end up getting a great night's sleep. The second thing though that I'm doing is I'm actually putting my phone to bed the same way I put my kids to bed. Because again, that is such a distractor for me. And so, one of the things for me is I've literally bought a little old school alarm clock. We've got the actual setup with the plug in for my phone to charge it outside of my bedroom. So, when my kids are down and the dishes are done and everything's settled in at night, I'm just actually going to plug my phone in. So, I'm not even tempted to go into the bedroom with that distraction. And here's the thing, you don't have to do either of those things, but this is maybe one of those moments where it's like, isn't it worth taking an inventory of what you do every single night? This is every single night of our lives. Isn't it worth to think about how I actually go to bed? See, this is an invitation for all of us. And we know this famous verse, Matthew 11, where these are the words of Jesus, and He says, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart. You will find rest for your souls." Here's the first question is just, at the end of every single night, who or what are you coming to? Every single night. Because it's clear that Jesus is saying, "I'm available." "I'm an available option of your nightly routine. "You can come to me." And then, here's what I love about this verse. We've heard it so many times, but I've never noticed. How do you know you're actually learning from Jesus? What's a good indicator in your life that you've arranged yourself in such a way that you actually are learning from Jesus? What's a marker of that? Well, He's saying it right in this verse. Rest. The marker stone of someone that's actually learning from the teacher, learning from Jesus is actually a lifestyle of rest. And if you're always tired, then maybe it's because you're not really learning from Jesus. Maybe we've been learning from some other things, from the world, from our history, from the ways that we've done things. And if we're not learning from Jesus, maybe it's because we just don't have a rhythm of actually saying, "Every night, I want to come to you, Jesus. I want to come to you. I want to be with you."

See, I think if I could just speak to your heart for a second, what I think the Lord would say is, you are a mighty son and a beautiful daughter. You are a great employee. You are a great boss. You are talented. You are smart. You are fun and you are funny. You are fun to be with. You're

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someone I want to be around. I enjoy being with you. You have so much to offer and so much to receive. But you're so tired. But you're so tired. And that's the thing that's holding you back, and Jesus is saying, maybe He's saying it to me, maybe He's saying it to some of us in this room right now, "Just go to bed." That's really all you need to hear is just go to bed. So, in this season, God is teaching me to go to bed.

But here's my last question for you. So, you got to hear all three of us talk about things that the Lord is teaching us and doing in us in this season. And my question for you is what is the Lord teaching you? See, we're disciples, we're students, we're learners, we're followers, we're one who are becoming like the one that we follow. And so, Jesus is constantly teaching us something. Maybe He's teaching you that you don't actually have to go it alone. Maybe He's teaching you right now that there's that step of obedience that you haven't taken yet, but God's saying, "I want to give you more of myself if you take that step." Or maybe He's saying, "Let's look at our nightly routine. Maybe it's time for you to just go to bed." Or maybe it's none of those things and it's something completely different. The point is, here's what I know. Just like Caleb said at the very beginning, man, as for us, we can't help but talk about that which we have seen and heard. God is doing a work in you. Last verse, He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. Here's what that tells me. Right now in your life, Jesus is doing a good work. Jesus is doing a good work in your life.

The question is, are you aware of it? Are you aware of the good work that Jesus is doing in you right now? So, why don't you do this with me? Why don't you close your eyes and let's just start with a simple question that we ask all the time but it feels so important right now. What does the Holy Spirit want to speak to you? Maybe it's time for you to actually take that step of obedience. Maybe the Holy Spirit wants to remind you that you are so wonderfully made, but you're tired. Maybe the Holy Spirit is speaking to you that you do not have to go it alone. Maybe the Lord is just telling you, "I am with you and I am for you and we're building a great life together."

So, Holy Spirit, would you come and teach us how to become disciples of you, how to practice our faith and how to arrange ourselves around you as our teacher that wants to teach us great things. In Jesus' name, amen.