

Welcome not just to Valley Creek, but welcome to God's great love that is higher and wider and deeper and longer and meeting you wherever you are in life right here, right now. The love of God has come to your chair. May you receive it. So, welcome to the love of God. Welcome to Valley Creek. We are so glad that you are here with us today. We are just simply one church that meets at multiple campuses, that carries the hope of Jesus to thousands of locations. You see, wherever you are, that's where we are because we are not a building, we are a people. And whether this is your first time with us, you haven't been in a while, you've left and decided to come back, or you're here with us all of the time, what a great time it is to be a part of Valley Creek because we are on a great journey together. You see, last week, I gave you the update of Missional Move: Create the Future. And we talked about where we are and where we're going. And what I tried to do was just give you a framework for your life so you know what to expect as we go on this journey over these next five years. And we just talked about three really simple things. We just said that you have to now walk it out by faith. That we actually have to walk, we have to move, we have to act by faith. Believing that God is exactly who He tells us to be.

You see, last week, I gave you the update of Missional Move: Create the Future. And we talked about where we are and where we're going. And what I tried to do was just give you a framework for your life so you know what to expect as we go on this journey over these next five years. And we just talked about three really simple things. We just said that you have to now walk it out by faith. That we actually have to walk, we have to move, we have to act by faith. Believing that God is exactly who He tells us to be. So, we're walking it out by faith, and then we said pass the tests because you will be tested on the journey as we move forward. Your character, your attitude, your obedience, your mindset, your relationships, your heart, your life is going to get tested. But God doesn't test you to break you. He tests you to strengthen you. And so, regardless of whether you pass the test or fail the test, what's important is how you respond to the test by confessing and repenting, bringing things out of the darkness into the light to allow the Lord to do a deep work inside of you. And then, we just said, look for Jesus along the way. Because if we get to the end of this journey, and you don't know Jesus any better, then we've missed the entire point of the journey. So, we gave you a framework for your individual life, how to walk out a Missional Move, because it's new to so many of us. And I don't know if you caught it, but I said that as we create the future, it's going to disrupt the present. Maybe you heard that statement. Maybe you didn't. We just talked about how innovation interrupts the status quo. And as we move forward and as we start creating a future that doesn't exist, the really simple, basic, raw way I can just say it to you is it's about to get messy. That's what I was trying to say. And that's why I'm not sure we all heard it, and that's okay. But it's about to get messy. Because as we create and as we innovate and we try new things and we learn and we fail and we go this way when we're supposed to go that way, and then we course correct, and all the different things, it's about to get messy. And when it gets messy, it's not all that stressful if you know what to expect. If you know, okay, over the next five years, some things around here are going to get messy, and that's okay. Here's why it's okay. Because we are a family on mission. And a family knows that to be a healthy family, sometimes

there's some things that get messy. You see, this is one of our core values. We have 10 values here at our church that are the core, the heartbeat of who we are. And even if you don't know them and even if you couldn't quote them, even if you don't have them memorized, that's okay. Everything you love about this church is directly connected to the 10 core values that we have. They're the culture. They're the heart. They're the DNA. They are who we are. And one of those core values is that we are a family on mission. We're a family. We're beloved sons and daughters, living with a great Father. And we are on mission together. We want to see God's kingdom come, and His will be done. We are a family on mission, which means we are not friends on vacation. We are not fans at a game. We're not spectators at a concert. We're not acquaintances at a conference. And we're not strangers at an event. We are a family on mission. And when you're a family on mission, it is a profound privilege. But there is also a great responsibility that goes with it. To be a family on mission, whether a small family, your personal family, or a much larger church family, spiritual family, there is an incredible privilege and an incredible responsibility that goes with it. And when you grab a hold of the privilege and the responsibility, you take ownership of it, and everything begins to change. And so, when we are on this journey that we're on as a family on mission, it's really important for us to understand where we're going and what we're doing. And last week, I gave you the framework for you as an individual. This week, I want to give us a framework for a family on mission. And like any healthy family would, when something is changing, the father would sit with the family and say, "Hey, let me tell you some things that are coming and what I expect of you and what I'm going to ask you to do so we can continue to be a healthy family." That's what a healthy family and a healthy father would do. When somebody's going back to work, or a new baby is on the way, or there's a trial that's unexpected, or a kid's going off to college, there's a season that's changing in the family. And a healthy father gathers his family, sits them down, and says, "Hey, as we go into this new season, here's what we're all going to have to do together so we can be a healthy family that's living the life that God has called us to." And so, in a sense, all I want to do today is talk to you like I would talk to my kids. Some of you, you probably have such empathy for my poor children. But I'm also trying to teach some of you dads how to be a dad. Because I would get my kids anytime a family season changes, and we would talk about what we're doing, what's expected, how we're going to do it together.

And as we go into this season, there are three things that, in a sense, the privilege and the responsibility is going to be a part of all of us as this family on mission. And it's simply a passion to reach new people, a passion to pursue new encounters, and a passion to raise up new leaders. As we go on this journey, as a family, you have a privilege and a responsibility to cultivate a passion for these three things. Remember, passion is that which I'm willing to suffer for. It's that which I'm willing to be inconvenienced or made uncomfortable. It's that which I'm willing to tolerate a mess for. That's passion. I'm willing to tolerate a mess over something I'm passionate about because I believe so much in it. And we need this fire of God inside of us if we're going to be a healthy family on mission as we create a future together that doesn't exist, of reaching new people, pursuing new encounters, raising up new leaders. And so, if you were my kids and my family, I would just literally say it to you, direct as that. I wouldn't have a

PowerPoint presentation, but it would be very clear. And they would be able to say it back to me, "Okay, Dad, you're asking us to reach new people, to pursue new encounters, and to raise up new leaders." Yes, that's what I'm asking you to do for us to be a healthy family. And if you look at this, the interesting thing about this is it's amazing how our passion for these three things comes and goes as we journey. There's moments when you're super passionate about reaching people and other moments where you don't even think about people. Sometimes you're super passionate about more of God, and other times you don't even realize that you're not aware of God. Sometimes you're super passionate about seeing somebody and be kind, and other times you're actually irritated by it. And that's okay. But we are moving into a season where we have to cultivate this flame, this passion, this desire for this. And if you look at the book of Acts, this literally could be a summary statement of the entire book of Acts. The book of Acts was all about reaching new people, pursuing new encounters with God, and raising up new leaders. And the book of Acts was a perfect example of a movement of hope for the city and beyond. And if that could summarize a movement of hope for the city and beyond, then those things are going to be pretty important for us. And so, for the next few minutes, I just want to walk you through these things as both a privilege and a responsibility as we create a future that doesn't exist because our family season is changing. Work for you?

You see, the first one is just that we have to have a passion to reach new people. You look at the book of Acts, the Holy Spirit is poured out, and all of a sudden, the gospel is preached, and people's lives are being changed. People are being saved and set free and healed, and delivered. They're coming into the kingdom of God. And the book of Acts reads like this beautiful story of more and more and different, and different kinds of people being reached. But at every turn, the interesting thing happened, and it was this. They would become complacent with the mission of God. It's like they got reached and they found their church and their people and their circle and their godly relationships and their life. And they stopped going after the mission of God and the new people that He had sent them to reach. And so, it's like at every turn, God had to shake them back up and remind them, and say, "Hey, the gospel isn't just for Jerusalem. It's also for Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth, so go." And then, He would have to remind them, "Hey, the gospel isn't just for people who look like you, talk like you, act like you, and think like you. It's also for the people who are the least deserving, the least expecting, the least interested people in your mind. So, go." "Oh, hey, the gospel isn't just for the Jews. It's also for the Gentiles." You see, in their pride, a good Jewish religious man would wake up every day and pray, and say, "God, I thank you that I am not a woman, a leper, or a Gentile." And in the journey of the book of Acts, God showed them very quickly and very clearly that there was room in the kingdom of God for every woman and every leper and every Gentile. And I think that is a great reminder of what happens to us. We find our church, we find our circle, we find our godly relationships, we find our people, and we forget that we're on mission with God. And we become grateful that we're not like them, when all the while God is saying, "Yeah, but I've put you here to go and reach them because there's room in my kingdom for them, too." You see, you have to go all the way back to Jesus at the beginning of His ministry. The very first thing Jesus does when He stands up and starts His ministry is He

just says, "The spirit of the Lord is on me, because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." Jesus makes it very clear that He has been anointed by the Spirit to be on mission for the poor, the prisoners, the blind, the oppressed, and offer them the kingdom of God. He starts by saying, "I'm here, not for an event or a conference or a gathering, but for the very mission of God."

In fact, one time when they had such a good thing going and so many people were interested, the disciples were like, "This is good, Jesus. Stay here." And He very quickly rebukes them by saying, "Hey, let us go somewhere else, to the nearby villages, so I can preach there also because that is why I have come." In other words, this isn't good enough. We must keep going for other people who need the kingdom of God in their lives. And He had one message that He preached to them. And it was from that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The message that Jesus preached was that the kingdom was here and available to anyone and everyone who wanted it. You see, what's so interesting is nowhere in the Scripture will you find Jesus preaching a message that says pray a prayer, raise your hand, go back to your life. And when you die, you'll go to heaven. I don't know where that is in the Bible. I've not been able to find it. But that is the message of good American church, is it not? Pray a prayer. Raise your hand. Go back to your life as it was. And when you die, you're good, you're going to go to heaven and have eternal life with God. Nowhere do you see Jesus preach that. Jesus preached a message of the kingdom. He preached a message of life from above. He preached a message of interactive relationship with God. Jesus wasn't preaching a message about heaven when you die. He was preaching about heaven in the here and now. He wasn't trying to offer people life after death. He was trying to offer people life in the midst of life. This is why He says, "We must be born again." And we get so confused about what that means. It just means this. When you're born, you're born physically alive, but spiritually dead. And so, just like you were born physically, you have to be born again spiritually into the kingdom of God, life from above, with a relationship with God. In fact, for Jesus, saved isn't going to heaven when you die. Saved means to save, to heal, to set free, to deliver, to make whole, comprehensive flourishing, shalom. The kingdom of God in the here and now. And if that was the message that Jesus preached, if that's what reaching new people meant to Jesus, then that must be what it means to us. This is why we don't do all that. Raise your hand, pray a prayer, go back to your life. You're good when you die. We're not trying to preach a message of life after death. We're trying to preach a message of life in the midst of life. And that's what it means to reach people.

This is why Jesus says, "You will know a tree by its fruit." I think we get so deceived in good American Christianity that we think I prayed that prayer. I did the thing. I live like the world. I literally live like I'm my own God, or the world is my God, or money is my God, or alcohol, or sex, or whatever the thing is my God. But when I die, I'm good. I would just challenge that because nowhere is that in the Scripture. Jesus says, "You'll know a tree by its fruit." A good tree bears good fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit. If I literally entered the kingdom of heaven, I

would have experienced a resurrection. My soul has changed. I've been transformed. I'm a new creation in Christ. This isn't about now being a church person, this is about life in the kingdom of God that has been made available to me in the here and now. So, when we're talking about reaching people, we're not talking about getting people numbers of salvations. You've never heard me say that. Fifteen years, you've never heard me say numbers of salvations. I'm not discounting them or saying that you didn't get saved that way or that doesn't happen. I'm just saying Jesus makes it about life in the midst of life in the kingdom in the here and now, not the then and there. That's what it means to reach people. In fact, Jesus, in the only place where eternal life is defined in the Bible, He says, "This is eternal life, that they may know you." That eternal life is about walking with God in the here and now. Life from above, interactive relationship with God, entry into His kingdom. That it becomes an ever-widening life in the days to come. That's what it means to reach people. And I don't know what your background is, or what tradition of faith you've come from, or what you have experienced in the past. I'm not denying any of that. I'm just saying when we're talking about reaching new people, we're talking about helping people enter in the kingdom of God and live as if God were here, God were real. And they just experienced the resurrection of their very spirit. In fact, I love that Jesus says to His disciples at the very end, He says, "As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." He says, "Hey, the same way that I went on mission, the same people I reached, the same message I preached, the same places I went, that's where you are to go." And that's what Jesus says to you and me, that He has sent us the same way that He was sent by the Father. Which means you are Jesus' outreach strategy. I hate to break this to some of you today.

You're like, "I just came for good church." I know, but you are Jesus' outreach strategy. That means you're our outreach strategy. And you are Jesus' plan A, and He has no plan B. You know what that means? That means that people aren't reached by signs and banners and handouts and sermons and buildings and social media. They're reached person to person and life to life because that's how the gospel moves. And I would bet 95% of us sitting in this room that know Jesus, we would be able to point back to a person that walked us into the kingdom of heaven. It's not all the other stuff, it's life to life and person to person, which means you're our outreach strategy. So, ready? Here's the question. When was the last time you invited somebody? When was the last time you told somebody your Jesus story? When was the last time that when somebody asked you how you were doing, you didn't complain or just say good? But you told them about what God was doing in your life? You're like, "They just opened the door. They asked me how I was doing. Boom, I'm stepping into that." I will tell you what God is doing in my life. When was the last time you spoke the truth and loved somebody? When was the last time you risked a relationship by asking if I could pray for you? That's what it means to reach new people.

See, remember, you're a hope carrier, and you've been put into the areas of life. You're not there in exile, you're there on mission. Some of you think your whole life is being exiled to this place you don't want to be. No, God has put you there, and you have access to people that no

one else has access to. He has sent you there to reach them. Not to get them to pray a prayer and raise their hand and go back to their life, but to understand that Jesus knows what is good and true and right, and that a kingdom is here and waiting. The great love of God is available to them. But to be a hope carrier, you actually have to be prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you and give a reason for the hope that you have. If you don't have hope, you have no answer. If I don't have hope, I can't be a hope carrier. If I haven't been reached, I can't go reach anybody else. If I'm not living in the kingdom, I have no kingdom to offer other people. This is why Paul says, "Christ's love compels us." He just says, "I'm so compelled to live on mission because of what God has done for me. I cannot tell people what I have seen and heard and experienced." And you know what that means? That means you're going to have to be willing to be rejected. You're going to have to be okay with someone saying no. You're going to have to be okay with someone at work laughing at you. You're going to have to be okay with the kids at the lunch table not getting it. You're going to have to be okay with persecution, because Peter says, "Anyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," and it will be often around you offering the kingdom of God to them. The book of Acts. They preached the kingdom, and they were beaten and rejected and stoned and run out of town. I don't think you're going to be beaten and stoned and run out of town, but you might be rejected in the relational circles that you run in. Are you okay with that? Because Jesus was to reach you. And so, as a part of this family, here's your privilege and your responsibility that I'm asking. I'm asking you that you would start inviting, including, and initiating with people. If you were my kids, this is how I would sit you down. I'd say, "Okay, here's – This season, I'm asking you to just invite people." We have got to cultivate a spirit of invitation again. We've got to invite people into everything we're doing. Invite them to church, invite them into our circle. Invite them into our serve teams. Invite them into our pods. Invite them to come and sit with us. Invite them into our homes. Invite them into our lives. We've got to cultivate the Spirit that says, "I actually am looking for people and ways and opportunities to invite you, to come and see and experience the very life of God."

And I know some of you are probably thinking, "Wait, didn't you just say we're inviting people into the kingdom? Why would I invite them to church?" Well, in the culture we live in, inviting people to church is almost the beginning point of inviting people into the kingdom. It's like tithing is the beginning of generosity. Obedience is the beginning of faith. Reading God's Word is the beginning of hearing His voice. Having the courage to just invite people to where the kingdom is at hand and present and available in their life should be something we long to do. See, this is again how I would say it to my kids. I'm just going with it. Like it or don't. Something happened after COVID and I can't put my finger on it. But after COVID, it's like the people of God in the modern church landscape became embarrassed of being a part of church. Have you noticed this? Before COVID, everybody that was in church wanted to tell you about their church, wanted to invite you to their church, was excited about their church, would put their church on social media. But then, COVID happened, and it's not COVID, I think it was the political rhetoric, the deconstruction, the persecution, the hostility towards kingdom thinking, that everybody backed up and pulled out. And I think there's this whole wave now of

people that are like, "I participate in church, but I don't identify with it." "I will listen on a Sunday, but I won't go speak on a Monday." "I'm here, but I don't own this. If this was on my social media feed and someone saw them, come on, I can't have that be on a square." I just want to tell you, I'm so proud of this place and you and what God is doing and the kingdom that's at hand. I want every person in my life that doesn't know Jesus to come and experience that, which is available in the here and the now. And so, we've got to break past being embarrassed about what Jesus said He gave His life to build. And acknowledge, it's almost like we got to stand up to that rhetoric that wants to beat you down, to say you shouldn't put we're on mission. We are a family on mission, which means we must have a culture that invites anyone and everyone and then includes them. Includes them in the conversation, in our circle, in our teams, in our rows, in our families.

It can be so easy to just us four, no more. Huddle up. We got to be like, "Hey, I see a person over there standing by themselves. Let's go get them and bring them into our team. Let's go get that person and let them sit in our student table. Let's go get that person and bring them into the group of us who have been here for 10 years." I know, the longer you're here, the more missional drift usually happens, because you find your friends and your people and your circle and your team. But they haven't yet. And then, you've got to initiate. There's got to be this sense of – If this is not your family, you don't have to do any of this. Because I don't ask my neighbor's kids to do anything. I just try to love them. But my kids, there's a lot. So, if this is your family, I want to challenge you, never come in and out of this building without initiating at least one conversation with someone. Not you being initiated. No. I don't know. Just find anyone. I am an extreme introvert, so I totally get it. I have to work myself up and pre-think. So then, get strategic. Before you get out of your car, be like, "Okay, I'm going to – Here's what I'm going to try. In the atr-, and I'm going to, and I had my. Jesus." Okay. It's whatever you need to do, but that's reaching new people. Because somebody can come to this church and be here a year, and nobody initiates anything with them, so they haven't experienced yet the kingdom that Jesus offers them. Make sense? This should be the safest place for lost, lonely, and broken people to come and explore whether or not Jesus is good and true, and right. And there is a favor on reaching new people in this season if we will step into it in Jesus' name. So, maybe you just say, "Jesus, I don't have it, but give me a passion to reach new people. Not for you, with you." Okay?

Second thing is we just have to have a passion to pursue new encounters. You just look at the book of Acts, it is literally like one unfolding encounter and experience with the presence of God. The Holy Spirit is poured out, they're filled with the Holy Spirit, and all of a sudden, everything is different. It's like this technicolor world opens up in front of them, where they're learning to walk in the Spirit and learning to live by the Spirit and learning to move in the power of God. And all the little boxes and limits and labels that they put on the presence of God, it's like chapter after chapter, He just keeps exploding it, showing them that He is so much greater than they had any idea of. In fact, the Jewish people always thought they had a full handle on the presence of God. They always thought they had fully figured out God. And

you can just see it through the ages. They get to the tabernacle, and they've got the presence of God and they think this is as good as it gets. And then, God says, "Hey, you know what? Let's build a temple." And the temple will be better than the tabernacle. But don't you know a whole bunch of people in the tabernacle were like, "We don't want the temple. We know this is God. This is what He does." And then, there was an era where God moved in the temple, and the temple was amazing. And it was better than the tabernacle. And then, He said, "It's time. And I'm going to send Jesus, and Jesus is going to be better than the temple." And there's a whole lot of people who were like, "We don't want no Jesus. We got the temple. This is what God does and this is how He does it." And then, Jesus was here. And Jesus was better than the temple. And then, Jesus tells His disciples, "It's for your good that I go." And they're like, "What?" He's like, "Because if I go, the Holy Spirit will come." And Peter is like, he rebukes the Lord, basically. He's like, "No. No." "Peter, shhh. Sit down." And then, the Holy Spirit came, and the Holy Spirit in you is better than Jesus is in front of you. But we put it now in this box. And don't you know one day, when Jesus returns, a whole bunch of us are going to be like, "Go back. We've got the Holy Spirit. We've got it all figured out exactly the way that it's supposed to be." It's like there is more. There's more of God. There's new encounters to pursue, but you have to be willing to suffer through some mess, some inconvenience, some uncomfortability. In fact, Jesus says to the disciples before He goes to the cross, "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. But when the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth, what is genuine and authentic and real. And He will not speak on His own, He will speak only what He hears, and He will tell you what is yet to come." Jesus says, "There is so much more than you can even fathom. But the Spirit that's going to come inside of you is going to lead you to new experiences and encounters with me that you never thought possible." There is more of God for you than you even know.

Just look at some of these verses. "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for you, but He has revealed it to us by His Spirit." You haven't seen, heard, or even begun to thought what God actually has for you, but His Spirit is leading you to new encounters with God. Or how about this? When Paul says, "I pray that you may have power to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God." He says, "Hey, I want you to know this love that surpasses knowledge." How do you know something that surpasses knowledge? It's an experience. It's an encounter. That you would be filled to the measure of the fullness of God. Do you feel like you're full of the fullness of God? Because I think there's more of God available than to wash out some John in here.

So, that means there's more of God available. Or how about this? Without faith, it's impossible to please God because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. What if the reward for acting as if God were so, faith, is that He just gives us more of Himself? That's the reward of faith. It's not He then did this, and this mountain moved, and I got this, and my life then became like this. No, the reward of faith is He gives me more of Himself, because I acted as if He were so. And then, He could entrust



me with more of who He is and how He moves and break the limits and the labels and the boundaries and the borders and the boxes that I spend so much of my life shoving God in. In fact, I love it when Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. And blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." Those that hunger and thirst will be filled. Those that are pure in heart will see God. Listen, you know what that says is? It's just, we want more of God. I'm hungry and thirsty for more of God. And I'm willing to get rid of the things of this world. Pure in heart, that I might see God. There is more of God available. There is more of God at hand. The presence of power and God is here, but there's more of it to come. And we can have as much of it as we want. The question is, are we hungry for it, and are we willing to be inconvenienced? Are we willing to be purified? Are we willing to let go of the things of this world so that God can show us more of Himself? In fact, I love this. It says God gives the Spirit without limit. You know what that means? It means you can have as much of God as you want. How much of God do you want? Good question to ask yourself is, am I content with the measure of God I have? Am I content with the measure of God I have? Because there's no limit to the Spirit, and He offers me more. See, we want to pursue new encounters with God. I'm just hungry for more of God. I just want to give God room to move in this place. I want His presence and His power to flow. I want us to live like He's here and He's real. I want us to live like we're under an open heaven. Because when Jesus was baptized, the heavens were open and they were never sewn back together. I want us to live like the kingdom is at hand, like it's right here. It's right here. It's right here. I want us to live like the Spirit is actually inside of us. I want us to live like we're two or three are gathered, they're Jesus's also. I'm hungry for so much more of God. And I feel like God is offering us more of Himself and our answer is, "Yes, Lord." I think He's offering us, He says, "Do you want more?" And our answer is, "Yes, Lord. Yes, Lord."

You know what that means? That means we got to let some wild things grow. You've heard me say that. You're like, "What does that mean? Let some wild things grow?" It just means we can't be so controlled and formulaic and planned and structured and ordered and led. It means we have to be some unplanned, uncontrolled, unstructured, unexpected moves of God. We were just like it's a wild thing grow. Have you ever eaten wild fruit? Have you ever been walking in the woods or been on a trail or in someone's backyard and you see wild blackberries or raspberries, or blueberries? They are the best fruit you will ever eat in your life. They're wild. They haven't been cultivated. They're not domesticated. And you go to look for them, or they blend in. And if you go and you tell me, "Oh, my God." It's the best fruit you will ever have. But you can't live only on wild fruit. You need domestic fruit. We need to culture and plant and build and harvest and create all of this fruit to feed all the people all the time, but we also have to look around and be open to embracing the wild fruit that only God can make grow. And we can't be like an overbearing mother in that moment when the child reaches and go, "No, don't put that in your mouth." Put it, eat it, grab it. It is of the Lord for you. We need signs and wonders and prophecy and miracles and healings and dreams and visions and words of knowledge and words of wisdom. We need people to be able to move freely in the spirit of God. So, we have to go to this place where we're like, "We want some wild things to grow."

You know what that means? It's going to get messy. It's going to get messy. And you might eat one of those berries you shouldn't eat. There's a few that the mothers are right about. Give it 24 hours, you'll be okay. But I don't want to not eat the ones that are of the Lord because I'm so afraid of eating one that isn't. And I can't have my appetite only on domesticated fruit that I'd buy at Walmart. That's good American church, and it's full of pesticides and herbicides and chemicals. That's going to kill you faster than this berry. Fair? I know I just made some moms really mad, but it's okay. It's okay. See, Paul says, "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy."

Here's what I'm trying to say to some of you is you have permission to use your gifts to build this body. If you are a person who walks in the way of love and you do it according to God's order of things, how He asks the things to be done, then use your gifts. Prophecy, give a word, bring forth a healing. Let the Spirit move through your life to bring the kingdom in the here and now. We want the culture of heaven in this place, but that means we have to step out a little bit. And it might be a little bit messy, but we must be people of love. We must do it according to Scripture, but we should get excited about saying, "I want more of God flowing through my life to build and strengthen this body in Jesus' name." And for those of you that are worshipers, when He says, "I urge you, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship." Listen, you are free to worship the Lord in any way that glorifies Him, that doesn't draw attention to yourself. You want to know the boundaries in this place? That's the boundaries. Worship God in any way that glorifies Him, that doesn't draw attention to yourself. Because when you put a sacrifice on the offering, nobody's looking at the sacrifice. They're looking at the Lord. So, if you want to sing out, if you want to move into the aisles, you want to raise your hands, you want to respond to the Lord, you're free to do that. Don't draw attention to yourself. Because we don't want to quench the Spirit, and we don't want to treat prophecies with contempt, we want to go with God. And that's a little messy. So, as part of our family, the invitation, the ask and then the privilege and the responsibility is just be open to it, give it a try, and step out in faith. Just be open to it. At some point, just be like, "You know what? That's not how I grew up. Never experienced that before. In fact, I was probably taught that that was weird. But you know what, Lord? I trust you. I trust this place and I trust your spirit. So, I'm open to what you want to do." And then, I'm going to give it a try. I'm actually going to try. I don't know how to sing out a new song to you. We sang hymns, the first, second, and fourth stanza, never the third. So, what is this? Is the third stanza to sing out the new song to the Lord? That's really funny if you're older. I don't know, but you know what? I'm going to give it a try. I'm going to memorize the passage. I'm going to speak out. I'm going to do the thing I don't know. And then, I'm going to step out in faith. You know what that means? I'm just going to be sure of what I hope for, certain of what I do not see. And as I step out and do it, or I receive or I respond, I have to be okay acknowledging that the wisdom of God is the foolishness of man. Which might mean my friends and my family might think it's a little weird. "Oh, you know dad, he's just getting weird." Or your parents to your students might be like, "I don't know that you're really into that Jesus thing right now." What a compliment. What a compliment in your life that the people

who don't really walk with God around you are so aware of how much you walk with God that they don't even know what to do with it. What a compliment. But it doesn't just happen. You actually have to do these kinds of things, and it's happening. There's a frequency that God has opened up in this season in our church right now. So, go with it.

Literally, a super successful businessman told me the other day, he said his service was over and just about it was done, he said this teenager walked up to him, that he'd never met before, and just said, "Hey, can I pray for you?" He was taken aback, and he's looking around. He's looking for the kid's parents. He's like, "Okay." And the teenager puts his hand on the man's back and prays for him. And the man said back to me, he said, "Literally, as the kid was praying," he said, "it was literally like the words of heaven that were spoken into my life. Things I needed to hear from God." Story of a man just a couple of weeks ago, after service, a woman walked up to him very graciously and politely said, "Hey, I feel like the Lord gave me a word for you during service. Would it be okay with you if I shared that with you?" That's following the way of love in the power of God. And he said, "Yeah." He said the woman shared the word with him, and he said it was like God speaking directly to him right then and there on that spot. I can tell you stories right now of people being healed, of people experiencing God, of people having dreams and visions for the first time, of new spiritual gifts being released in people's lives. But it's this, we have to be open to it. We have to give it a try. We have to step out in faith. We have to say we want more of God in this place, and we're willing for it to get a little messy. Because this should be the safest place to try seeking God in new ways. I ate the wrong berry. That's okay. That's okay. This is the place. There is a restroom right there. You're going to be good. Do it in the here and now, not out there. Because we're going to learn, we're going to learn to have the right palate for the things that are actually of the Lord and the things that are counterfeit and not of Him. Okay? And so, maybe, just maybe you say, "God, give me a passion to pursue new encounters. I want to be open to it." And if we're all open to it and we acknowledge it'll be a little messy, it's okay.

And then, the last one is that we just have to have a passion to raise up new leaders. You look at the book of Acts, it's like one big story of raising up new leaders after new leaders, after new leaders. Maybe the best example is in Acts Chapter 6. They've grown to about 5,000 people. There's so many needs and they couldn't meet all the needs. And so, the 12 gathered all the disciples together and said, "It wouldn't be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables." There's people that had to be served, and these 12 leaders couldn't do it all. So, they say, "Choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of spirit and wisdom. And we will turn this responsibility over to them." Then the Word of God spread, and the number of disciples multiplied greatly. First time in Scripture that says that the disciples multiplied. It was like an explosive moment. Why? Because they raised up new leaders. They chose people from among them. They didn't put an ad online to say, "We need leaders to lead us." You don't want to be in that. You don't want to be in that church culture. We're asking if there's anyone out there. Does anyone want to be my dad? Anyone want to be my mom? Anyone want to be my big brother? Anyone want to be my big sister to help me figure

out how to do life? How sad. How sad. That's the orphan spirit at work. No, men and women from among us who have spirit and wisdom already in their life and are willing to – they're able to respond to what God wants to do. And then, it takes off.

Jesus's whole thing with the disciples, do you understand, the whole three years was never about the crowd. We get so enamored by feeding the 5,000. The point of feeding the 5,000 was not to feed 5,000 people. It was to teach the disciples what they were capable of doing. The whole run, you're like, "But He ministered." I know. And those were the labs that He used to teach these men how to be leaders in the kingdom of God. In Luke 9, He sends the 12 out. Heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons. It's a disaster. They can't cast out a baby demon. They want to call fire down from heaven and smoke a whole village. They're arguing of which of them is the greatest and will have the best seat of honor in heaven. And then, they rebuke a guy who actually, in the name of Jesus, is doing the very things He asked them to do. Disaster. I would have shut the whole thing down. Since you're all fired, I'm starting over. Father, take me now. Luke 10, He doubles down and sends 72 out. Why? Because leaders were His plan A and there was no plan B. And at the end of Luke 10, they come back rejoicing, full of the spirit of God. This is why Jesus says, "Make disciples, not converts." Not converts. Not raise your hand, pray a prayer, go back to your life. People, disciples who live in the kingdom of God in the here and now. This is why the Scripture tells us the things you have heard, the things you know, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. There's a calling to raise up leaders. And there's a calling on this church to raise up leaders. There always has been. There always will be. God has put it on us. Like it or not, it's in the very DNA of who we are as a people, which means we believe in the redemptive potential of humanity. You say, What does that mean? That means that we believe every person was created to be a kingdom leader. You say, "Oh, I'm not. I'm not a leader." Oh, yes, you are. You are a leader. You may not be qualified for every leadership position, but boy, you are created to lead in this world. You say, "No, I'm not." You're filled with the spirit of living God. The Bible says you're the head and not the tail. You've been given the keys to the kingdom. You're included in Christ. You have the power and authority of Jesus. He's given you authority and power to trample on snakes and scorpions. He's called you His ambassador. He has filled your mouth with His Word. So, help me understand again why it is that you're not a leader in this world? Now, you may not be qualified for every leadership position. I am not qualified to be a worship leader. I would trade my life. For years, I've said to Ben, "Oh, I wish I could be Ben. I wish I could." I want to be like Ben when I grow up, but I can't. I'm not qualified for that. Listen, I'm not qualified to be a student leader. You know why? Because my wife tells me all the time. She's like, "If you led the student ministry, it would be a disaster." And I'm always like, "What are you talking about?" She's like, "Yeah." She's like, "You would have three kids." She's like, "Three kids." And I'm like, "Yeah, but those three kids, they'd be reading books. They'd be memorizing most of the Bible. And we'd be praying together all the time." And she's like, "Exactly. Disaster. Not qualified for it." So, you're a leader, but you're not qualified for every position. Look at this. "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned. Reign means to have the highest level of influence. Through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant

provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign, highest level of influence, in life through the one man, Jesus Christ." When you were an Adam and you were a sinner, death was your leader. It reigned. Highest level of influence. But now as you've received God's provision of grace and the gift of righteousness, you reign in life, which means you're a leader because Jesus is your Lord. So, you're actually a leader. And we believe wholeheartedly in this, that we just define a leader as a disciple of Jesus who takes responsibility to create kingdom culture and make disciples while accomplishing a specific task. A disciple of Jesus, student, learner, follower, one who's becoming like Jesus, who takes responsibility, response-ability, who is able to respond to the calling on their life, to whom much is given, much is required to create kingdom culture. The kingdom within me can become the kingdom around me. To make disciples, to help other people discover that Jesus is good, true and right and knows what he's talking about while accomplishing a specific task. There is something specific in this garden that I am tending. This isn't just true for circle leaders and student leaders and kids leaders and worship leaders. This is true of a dad. This is a great definition for a mom. This is a great definition for a business owner and a supervisor and a manager and a captain of a team and the person who runs the group text thread of a bunch of students that are friends. This is a definition of what it means to be a leader in the kingdom. The task just changes from assignment to assignment. And I'm not empowered for your task, and you're not empowered for my task. But by golly, in Jesus' name, we're all leaders. And we don't want just leaders who run around and do stuff. We want leaders of substance who we can say about them, "Remember your leaders who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." Leaders who have a word worth sharing, a life worth following and a faith worth imitating. That's what a leader is. You with me on this?

So, here's the ask. Here's the privilege and the responsibility. Humble yourself, lean in and speak life. If you were my kids, this is what I would say. Humble yourself. It's really easy to think that you're better than the leader that's leading you. But God spoke through a donkey. So, I think He can speak through a leader who is trying to grow. So, humble yourself. What does that mean? That means God often brings you what you want and what you need in a package you don't like. And He only serves springs of living water through broken vessels. So, you have two choices. Drink or be thirsty. But there is no perfect vessel that will ever pour you a glass of living water. They're only broken vessels. Broken people that are growing and learning and trying to become like Jesus. Jesus goes back to His own hometown and they reject. He could not do any miracles. The greatest leader that ever lived goes to His own hometown and they say, "That's the carpenter. That's Joseph's. What is He? We know more than Him." So, their pride kept them from receiving that which God wants to do. So, as we develop leaders, humble yourself and then lean in. The loudest this room should ever be is when a new communicator is communicating. And they're struggling and they're trying and you know, and you're like, "Who is this dude or who is this girl?" You're like, "Who is this guy? Who is this girl? I can tell this is new, so I'm going to be loud and I'm going to be rowdy. I'm going to be engaged. I'm going to actually lean in. I'm not going to check out and be like, 'I hope they preach shorter than John does because I'm –'" the loudest this room should ever be in worship

is when somebody new is leading a song and they're timid and they're a little hesitant and they're trying because it takes a lot to step up and sing before people who don't always want to worship Jesus. But those should be the moments that we're in it. The loudest the huddle should ever be is when a new leader is leading us all. The best the circle should ever be is a first time new circle leader who doesn't have – they're trying and that's when we should all engage. The best Movement Night should be when a new leader is speaking and we're all rowdy. That's when there should just be this, like we're leaning in. This is a family raising a child. Because why? Because we all go to our own kid's soccer games and when they're an idiot, we cheer for them. But for some reason, we come to our family on mission and we become offended when a new person is growing. And so then, speak life, celebrate, encourage, not just them, but rebuke anyone who ever complains to you about us developing leaders. Never let your kids get in a car after a Movement Night and say, "How was it?" And they're like, "I don't know. There's a new guy who wasn't very good." Isn't it cool, Billy, that we're a part of a church that's raising up a generation of leaders? And that's what's happening in your life, too. Never get in a car with your family after service and then be like, "I don't know. That one girl, she didn't know how to lead that song." Hey, isn't it cool that somebody is learning how to use their gifts for the Lord and we get to help them do that? Flip it, flip it. And here's the win. I can say that wholeheartedly, this isn't a rebuke or a correction. This is what we do. This is just me saying, "We have to keep doing this." This is a developmental culture. See, we are not a church for a weekend. We're a church for generations. This is what this means. I don't care on any individual given weekend what the full totality of it is. I care about what we're doing for generations. What does that mean? That means I have a new leader that stumbled. I have a new person that struggled. I have a new person that's doing this and the camera work was all over the place. You're like, "Oh, yeah, I noticed that week." Yeah, I don't care about that weekend. I care about being a church for generations, which means it's got to get messy for us to develop the leaders who will lead it for generations. If you're a consumer, you don't care about generations. You care about your hour. You don't even care about today and the hours that happen. You care about your 45 minutes. Oh, come on. You got to go with me on that because you don't even care about the hour because you weren't even here for the hours. You cared about your 45 minutes. Just bunch. This should be the safest place for people to learn how to be who God has created and called them to be. Because that's walking with God in the kingdom over a long time. So, here's what I'm telling you. So, I'm done. You know what I'm telling you? I'm telling you, it's about to get messy. Because when you reach new people, they're messy. When you pursue new encounters with God, it's messy. When you develop new leaders, they're messy. It's about to get messy.

Last verse. “Where there are no oxen, the stalls are clean, but from the strength of the ox comes an abundant harvest.” You know what that means? If there's no ox in your stall, it's clean. It's ordered. It's structured. It smells nice. There's no flies. There's no rats. Everything is good. Nothing's broken. You throw some oxen in that stall, it's messy. It's dirty. There's flies. There's a smell. There's things that are broken that have to be fixed. And if you have no oxen, you have no harvest. But when I have oxen and I'm willing to deal with the mess, I can experience a

mighty move of God. In some ways, the greatest test for some of you, of your Missional Move journey, you're like, "I was good with 'this is my church.' I was good with giving sacrificially. I was good with taking the next step for five years." This whole getting messy thing for some of us, that will be the hardest thing because you're like, "We have it. We have good church." I know, but we've never tried to do good church. We've tried to do kingdom come. In kingdom come, there's a lot of oxen who make a lot of mess, but create a great harvest in Jesus' name. So now, you know how to walk this journey out as an individual. Now, as a family, we know what we need to do differently in this season. And now, you know what your privilege and responsibility is. And I don't expect anybody to memorize all this or remember all this. All I'm trying to do is give you reference points and way points so that, as it starts happening, you're not surprised, you're not confused. You can actually lean in and be like, "That's cool. I had one little baby raspberry. It was amazing. Oh, my gosh, this is what he was talking about. I want more." And then, you'll come for the next month and you won't be able to find another one. Are you willing to stay hungry enough to keep looking? You're excited when your lost person comes in and you want everybody to be like, "Hey, guys, this is the day. Include and initiate. This is the day. My person is here." And then, the next week when somebody else's person is here and yours is not, you're like, "Are we done yet?" But then, it's a reference point, right? You're excited when your kid looks like an idiot on the soccer field. Just go with me. Some of you are like, "Why'd you say it?" Oh, you know what I'm saying? He's just going like this – "Oh, look, a flower." Be excited when it's our family's kid trying, trying. It's so good to be a part of a church that actually wants to go somewhere and not just do church. So, may we get messy. May we follow God. We're a family on mission and we have great days ahead.

So, Jesus, thank You for where we're going. Thank You for what You're doing. We accept the mess. We accept the mess that is required to get from where we are to the future that doesn't exist. And we know in that mess, You are right there with a smile on Your face because lost people are being found. We're experiencing You in new ways. And new leaders are rising up so that the church of God can multiply in Jesus' name. May it be so of us, family on mission. In Your name we pray, Amen.