

Alright. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek, and welcome to summer at Valley Creek. Yes. It is 60 days of summer, and I want you to know that hope is here and hope is on the move. You are here, and you are on the move, and your life is on the move, and your family is on the move because when you are part of a church for a long period of time, when that church moves forward, your life moves forward. When you are part of the kingdom for a long season of time, when the kingdom is forcibly advancing, your life is advancing into each and every season. And so, it is summer. Holy moly, we are here. Life comes at us fast, and there's so many things that are going to be so good about this summer. We want to invite you to connect with us in all kinds of ways. Circle, kids' summer, students' summer, young adults. We're going to have a reading plan. We got Tuesday night of prayer. We got Transformation Tuesday. We got our kids and student leadership applications that are currently open right now. We just had an amazing kids' worship album. Here you go. Ready? Pro tip, pro tip for the summer. When you are in the car and you are driving somewhere, that thing is on repeat all summer long because it's so good. It's so good. And it's going to be such a great summer here at Valley Creek. We just finished an amazing series called Living Loved. We are learning to live as the beloved sons and daughters of a good Father in heaven. May Valley Creek be known as the church that, like the banner over us, is love. We know and rely on the love of the Father. Last weekend, we watched a whole bunch of people get baptized. 145 people in the waters of baptism. We're cheering on each and every one of you. The Spirit is moving in profound ways. He is literally touching kind of one person at a time, moving home to home, heart to heart, person to person, which is incredible. So, we know you got some summer plans and some vacations and some fun and some camps. Here's what I want to encourage you with. We want church to always be a place that you can come and experience the rest and the refreshment of Jesus. We want church to be a place that's a harbour of hope for you and your family, so all summer long as you go to the different places. Don't go without Jesus. Take Jesus with you and lean into church when you're here. Lean into the family of God. Don't lean out. Lean forward into Jesus. Don't lean out and believe that Jesus has something amazing for you this summer, which is why I'm so excited to announce to you that today we start a brand-new series called 60 Days of Overcoming, because in Jesus' name, you are an overcomer.

Alright. Listen, every year for the past few years, we've done 60 Days of Something. Something that the Lord has invited us to in the months of June and July, something specific that he wants to speak to our church family. And I'm so excited about this summer because this summer is 60 Days of Overcoming, and you will overcome in the name of Jesus. You see, if you've been alive or you know somebody who is alive, then you know someone who's had to face something and overcome it. Because life gives us obstacles and hardships and trials and obstacles, we have to break through in the name of Jesus and hardships that we have to endure in the name of Jesus and these tests that we will pass in the name of Jesus. There's only one problem. Everybody wants to be an overcomer, but nobody wants to actually have to face the thing that they have to face in order to overcome. Can I just get to the mountaintop but not actually have to climb the mountain? Can I possibly get that 26.2 sticker for the back of my car? Maybe not run the marathon. I like the whole retirement thing, maybe minus decades of working full time.

Everybody wants to be an overcomer. We don't want to have to actually face the thing to overcome. Here's another way to say it. We love the testimony. We just don't like the test. We basically just like theimony. But in Jesus' name, you are here to pass every single test to win, to have victory, to overcome in the name of Jesus. So right off the bat, I declare over you and your family this summer, you will see a breakthrough. You will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. You're going to have places in your life that you've been struggling with for years that you're going to see just victory in because of what Jesus is going to do during this series. 60 days of overcoming. All right. So how are we going to get there then? Well, there's a great verse in Revelation that says they overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony. They overcame him. Who's him? Satan, his schemes, his deceit, his lies that he, like, puts into our life. And one of the greatest lies of which is you'll never break through. You'll never overcome. You'll never see a victory. That's not true. They overcame. Who's they? They is us. Us is they. Why? Because Revelation, that's the last book in the Bible. Some of it's already happened. A lot of it has not already happened. And we, the people of God who are winning with Jesus and part of His kingdom, we overcame. They is us. Us is they. By the blood of the lamb, the finished work of Jesus, and the word of their testimony. Testimony. See, it's a story that's written in our life, a testimony too. A testimony means to be a witness to. And the story that Jesus is writing in our life means that we will break through tests and trials and hardships and everything else that we have to endure. But trials are critical and tests are crucial because they actually shape us. You might think to yourself, well, can't we just, like, skip to the end? Can't we just get all the way through it? Can I get through it as fast as we can? No, trials are critical because they help form us. See, this is a graphic that we really feel strongly about. This is how people are spiritually formed in their life. So, with the Holy Spirit in the center of my life, I'm formed by things like Godly relationships and God's Word and time with the Lord and spiritual practices. And so, my life is going to take some time. It's going to involve some spiritual practices, some people, and God's word speaking to me. And this is the one we don't like to think about. Trials. And trials are critical because if you think about being formed and the pressure that life wants to put on you sometimes, if you didn't have one of these sides of this, like spiritual pentagon, then what would happen is you would like all squeeze, just kind of squeeze out of you. And nothing that God was trying to do in you would stick. And nothing would stay, and there wouldn't be any long-term spiritual formation, and that's part of why. People can go so many years in their life and seemingly never actually change. Get another year older, just not another year freer. You get further along in it. And because you didn't ever actually face the trials head-on and overcome them in the name of Jesus. The formation that comes with trials never actually took place.

James has a verse that says, "Consider it pure joy, brothers and sisters, when you face trials of many kinds." Boo. Pure joy. Because those trials are going to create in you a perseverance. And the perseverance of your faith is going to create this finished work. You're going to become mature, not lacking anything in the name of Jesus. It's just really hard for us to believe that. So, here's a question for you. When was the last time that you thanked God for your trials? Like, when was the last time that you thanked God for the things that you've been

facing, the trials in your life, that difficult boss? Thank you, God, for being misunderstood by my extended family. Thank you, God, for being overlooked in my friend group. You see, gratitude is a kryptonite to any and every feeling of this, like entitlement, despair, and fear of the future that we face. We have an opportunity to just say, "Okay, thank you, God, for my trials," which just is not fun to say. Thank You, God, for my trials because they're shaping me and they're forming me, and I will overcome by the blood of the lamb and by the word of my testimony. In Jesus' name, you are an overcomer.

So, in order to have a testimony, you must be a witness. And there's lots and lots and lots of great witnesses that have a testimony of the goodness of God. So, since we stand surrounded by all those who've gone before us, an enormous cloud of witnesses, let us drop every extra weight, every sin that clings to us and slackens our pace, and let us run with endurance the long race set before us. We stand with a whole cloud of witnesses, people that actually said, like, "I have overcome, and you can too." And so, in this series, we're going to take a look at the different witnesses from Scripture, those characters in the Bible, which, by the way, are real people because the Bible is like reality and fact, not fantasy and fiction. So, the real people that actually overcame, and they now stand as a witness and say, like, "Okay, you can do this church. We did it. We made it through, and you can also." A great cloud of witnesses. We're going to look at each one and let them build our faith. Let them encourage us each week of this series. Here's the problem. We want to join them and be part of this great cloud of witnesses, but we can't actually be a witness to the thing that I don't ever want to look at, acknowledge, walk through, or believe actually exists in my life. And so, I can't be a witness if I'm only ever talking about other people's stories. Another way to say that is the secondhand Jesus will never give me a firsthand faith. So, we have to actually say, "I'm going to embrace the trials, embrace what I'm going through." I'm going to walk it out, and the encouragement in this verse is to actually drop everything that tries to hold us back, everything that slows us down. Do you ever feel you're walking like super slow in life, like, "I am stuck in the mud. Another day, another dollar, another medical bill, another fight with my kids." It just feels like life is going in slow motion. I had a friend that recently completed the Boston Marathon, which is incredible. It was his fourth marathon, and he said it was his hardest one because he said that for the last six miles of the race, all he wanted to do was walk. Like, all he could think about was, like, "I just want to walk." It was the hills, the topography. It was very difficult. He had to qualify to get into it. And so, he just kept saying to himself over and over, "I'm not going to walk. I'm going to keep running because I didn't qualify for this race so I could walk the Boston Marathon. I qualified so I could run the Boston Marathon." Ready? Jesus didn't qualify for the race called your life so that you can walk or limp through it. He did it so you could run with endurance. The race is set out for you. He qualified through His death, burial, resurrection so that we can run and not grow weary and not lose hope. I think for some of us, life has been so long. It's just been so long in so many ways. That fight with your spouse for a long time. That sickness in your body for a long time. The anxiety in your thoughts, the insecurity that you have, the fears, the sin issues, the idolatry for a long time. And I think it just wears us down, man. So, after a while you just get this sense of, like, "Is it ever going to change? Is it ever

going to be different than this?" Or maybe even worse, we just begin to accept it as normal. It is not normal to live below the glory of God. It's not normal to accept things that are not from the kingdom of God as a normal part of my life because it's just not. We have to run with our race for a long time. Living below the glory of God is not a normal part of living in the kingdom. And the problem is, you'll never overcome that which you accept. If I accept it like, "Oh, it's always going to be this way. I'm always going to kind of limp through. I'm always going to struggle with it. It's always been this way, so it's going to keep being this way," you're never actually going to overcome that which you accept. So, can I just speak some courage into you out of Romans 15? I just want to speak this over each of us. "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in all the stories of Scripture, they will give us encouragement and they will provide us hope." So, I speak to you and just say, you're going to have an endurance these 60 days of overcoming. You're going to have encouragement of your present. You're going to have hope for your future. And I believe by faith that the stories are going to transform us.

Here's a question for you. Why is so much of the Bible written in narrative form? Why is it so many stories? Like a lot of what Jesus would teach would be in story form, and he would tell the story of somebody. It wasn't just descriptive and prescriptive. It was framed out in story form. Well, the reason it's written like that is because stories have power. And so, your future story has power. And Satan doesn't want your future story to be written with a huge exclamation point winning overcoming at the end because that has power. And that'll actually work, and your story will begin to transform other people's life. And eventually the story of your overcoming and your endurance will be an encouragement to other people, and they will have hope because of it. Eventually the story of what God has done in your life is going to be this enduring story of, like, "I did overcome in Jesus' name." And other people will hear it and they'll be like, "That's incredible. I can have hope for my future also." So, all summer long, there's going to be an encouragement, there's going to be a hope, there's going to be a life in the stories that are going to be spoken. And so, dear friends, don't be surprised at the fiery trials that you're going through as if something strange were happening to you. Instead, be very glad for these trials that make you partners with Christ in His suffering so that you will have the wonderful joy of seeing His glory when it is revealed to all the world. Don't be surprised at the fiery trials. I think sometimes we go through life, and we're like, "I can't believe this is happening. It's happening again." But we just heard that it's pure joy because trials will actually help us persevere. Trials help us be formed into the image and likeness of Jesus. So don't be surprised when things kind of happen like that when you're walking through the difficulties. I swear to goodness, we're like my dog. Sometimes when he goes out to the bathroom when it's raining, my dog will go out. He'll get three steps from the front door, and it's raining, and he'll be like, "What? What is all this stuff falling from the sky?" And we're the exact same way when it's like, "I can't believe this is happening." But don't be surprised because the trials will come, and God's going to do something incredible in you through those trials, and you will overcome in the name of Jesus. They make you partners with Christ in His suffering. It actually helps you align with Jesus and be like, "Okay, Jesus walked through it. I'm walking through it. Jesus is

helping me walk through it, and I'm actually, I'm aligning with Him. I'm becoming more like Him in the suffering." And the wonderful joy of seeing His glory when it's revealed in your life and then through your life is revealed to all those around you, and they look at you and they're like, "That's incredible. Look how they've overcome. Look how they've broken through. That's amazing." So, I declare over you that you are going to be partners with Christ all summer long. You are going to have a wonderful joy of seeing His glory, and it's going to be revealed to the world through the story that God is writing in your heart. You might hear that and be like, "Well, that's fine. That's Jesus. He broke through. He could do all the things. He's an overcomer. But what about the little guy? What about me? What about regular people?" Well, there's lots of regular people all through Scripture that we're going to be encouraged by, like Elijah.

Elijah was a person just like us. He prayed that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Okay, a couple things about this verse. One is that Elijah was an amazing Old Testament prophet, and he saw incredible miracles, and he did incredible things, and he was a person just like us. Sometimes it's hard to believe that. Sometimes it's hard to realize that all those people in Scripture, they walked through it just like we did, and they were overcomers. The verse says three and a half years because in the Scriptures, three and a half years is a time of trial or tribulation. So, really, what this verse is saying is that Elijah, a person just like us, prayed by faith and walked by faith and experienced a time of trial and tribulation, and he was able to walk all the way through it. Now, when we hear that verse or when we read his story, we think, "Oh, good for you, Elijah. That's incredible." But we also know that he had these amazing, miraculous, mountaintop experiences. Literally, the phrase mountaintop experience, that phrase exists because of Elijah. He literally had a mountaintop experience. He was on the top of a mountain. He won this great victory for God. A fire came down. All the enemies were defeated. And the very next day, he runs away and is scared and is hiding in a cave for his life. And he's saying things like, "I'm no better than my ancestors, and everybody's out to get me. And there's no one even left that's going to protect me, and maybe it'd just be better God if I just died and came to You." Those are the kinds of things he's saying. High of highs, low of lows. Does that sound familiar at all? Do you ever face something like that? Do you ever have a high of high, a mountaintop experience, to the lowest of lows? The people in Scripture were just like us. And oh, by the way, Jesus was also just like us. He faced everything that was common to us. And so, he's the perfect picture of what it is to be an overcomer. Overcoming all the things, the fear of man, sin, the grave, temptation, all of it, he overcame. But Elijah was a person just like us and so the next time that you read a story and you see mountaintop experience, miraculous thing, and then low of lows and you're like, "Hey Elijah, what's up with that, man? You just saw the move of God. Why are you falling apart the next day and you sit in the seat of judgment?" Just remember, there's probably a version of heaven Elijah that's currently talking to Moses and being like, "You've been seeing what's going on at Valley Creek Church? Mission move, create the future, incredible. Baptism is incredible. The move of the spirit, incredible. All the things in the next gen, incredible. But then, did you see the way that that one guy in the 9:30 service reacted in traffic? Because that car was not

getting out of his way and he's got to get himself to HTO for happy hour. You know what I'm saying? So, he was on that horn as fast as possible. Did you see the way the campus pastor felt when he saw socks in the middle of the living room for the 14th time? And he's like, seriously? And Moses is like, "What socks?" And then Elijah's like, "You put them on your feet when your feet are cold, but you don't want to wear them like with your sandals. It doesn't look good." Socks, man. Listen, they don't get down there on their own, and they will not get upstairs on their own. All right? Just to be super clear. Just to be super clear. So, I wonder sometimes if they look at us, and they're like, "Well, what about those guys?" But hindsight's always 20-20, right? And so, after the fact, we can have a lot of faith that we see in the Scriptures. We'd be like, "Hey, Elijah, where'd it go?" But do we have enough faith to believe that God will move in us in a similar way this summer? Elijah prayed by faith. It's going to take faith in order to walk all the way through 60 days of overcoming.

I believe that the biggest opportunity in front of us is to actually begin to believe that we can overcome. In order to overcome, you have to actually have the faith and believe that you can overcome. It's impossible to overcome if you don't actually believe that you will. And so, we're going to have to receive a lot of this series with the faith of the dad in Mark chapter nine, where he had a little boy that had been demon-possessed and was struggling. And his son, I mean, it was like dangerous. Like his son was getting thrown into fires, and it was just hurting him. And the dad was just like, he was just like, "I don't know what to do. Like, I'm at the end of my rope, and I'm not sure how to break through this." And Jesus looks at him, and He says, "Everything is possible for those who believe. Everything is possible for those who believe." Every single week at Valley Creek Church, we say, "God is good. Jesus have forgiven me. I'm loved." And everything is possible. Everything is possible for those who believe. So, my question for you is, do you actually believe that? That everything is possible? But not just for everybody else, also for you. And not just like some things are possible, everything is possible. And not just like maybe it'll work out, like, no, in Jesus' name, you will see breakthrough, and you will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Everything is possible. It's all on the table. The thing you've been working through for decades, the thing that's been in your family forever, Isaiah refers to these places as the places long devastated. The places long devastated will be renewed. In Jesus' name, everything's possible. The places long devastated in your life are going to actually be built up through faith and belief in the power of Jesus, and they will become beautiful cities. They will become beautiful trees in your life. What does Isaiah call it? He calls it, "You will be oaks of righteousness." These landmarks of where you struggled to overcome in the past, but in Jesus' name, because everything is possible, you now see renewal, and you have beautiful brand-new things growing up in your life. Instead of long-devastated places, you have renewed, beautiful cities of the goodness of God. Instead of places that are bare and dry and desolate in your heart, you have oaks of righteousness, and you're becoming an oak of righteousness, and you are moving forward because everything is possible. Everything is possible for those who believe. So, then the man says, "I do believe, but help me in my unbelief. I believe this is how you're going to have to receive this summer. I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief." That is so raw, that's so real, that's so good, and

this is like when they're just like us. This is how I would respond. This is just like us. Help me overcome my unbelief. Here's a question for you. When did unbelief start for this man? Six days ago. Six weeks ago. Six years ago? Like probably not just when this happened to his little boy, right? Not just when his boy was taken over by the demon and he hurt himself and threw himself in the fire. It probably was way, way earlier than that. When through life, he started to feel like a sense of, like, "This is not getting that much better. Like, I'm not winning. Life is just beating me up so hard." And I wonder when the unbelief started for this man. Here's my question for you. When did the unbelief start for you? When in the past was it like, Yeah, no, everything is not possible." I've been waiting a long time for. I've been wanting to see God move. I've been hoping beyond hope. When did unbelief really start in your heart? Would you even just do me a favor? Would you close your eyes for just a moment? And I want you to picture the thing for you. What's the one thing where you're like, "Yeah, I need to overcome that"? Could be that fear, could be that sickness, could be a sense of insecurity, could be anger, pride, idolatry, a sin area. What's that one thing? If you were going to place it right in the front of your mind, you'd be like, "That's it." And then would you even take your hands in front of you and cup them, kind of like you're scooping water out of a pool or out of an ocean? Just take your hands just like this, like cupping right in front of you. And would you just think about dropping that thing right there into your hands? Like, let it fall right into your hands. And then, just as a sign of faith, whatever that thing is, whatever the impossible-to-overcome thing in your mind, would you just move your hands forward like an inch? And as a sign of faith, believe. You can just place this at the feet of Jesus. I do believe, but help me overcome my unbelief. In Jesus' name, I believe that I can overcome. In Jesus' name, I believe that I can overcome. In Jesus' name, I believe that I can overcome. In Jesus' name, I believe that I can overcome. Come on, say it with me. In Jesus' name, I believe that I can overcome. You can. You can, and you will. And the first invitation is to overcome our unbelief. "Because in this world, you will have trouble, but take heart. I have overcome the world." Jesus says, "Take heart. I have overcome the world." If Jesus has overcome the world, let me just ask you, what can't He overcome in your world? If Jesus has overcome everything, then what possible thing, what thing can't be overcome in Jesus' name? In Jesus' name, you can overcome.

And so, here's the declaration I want to make over each one of us. "To he who overcomes, I will grant him the right to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also have overcome and sat down with My Father on His throne. To he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." For everyone who has an ear, let him hear this summer what Jesus wants to speak to Valley Creek Church. He wants to speak a fresh word, an overcoming word, a victorious word, a confidence in the goodness of God kind of word. And for all of us, once again, the Book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, is a prophetic picture of what's going to happen. When you overcome, you will sit down, you'll be at rest in your life, and you will have these ears to hear more and more and more of what God wants to speak to you and to our church. I love it. I love it. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. So, here's some prophetic words that God wants to declare. He's going to declare that you're going to overcome, you're going to sit down at rest, and God is going to speak to our church, and it's

going to be incredible. So, I have one more invitation for you. Doing so good. Here's the invitation. For every part of you that feels like, "Yeah, but am I always going to struggle? Is it always going to be like this? Am I always going to have this thing? Is this always going to be in front of me, at the forefront of my mind? Am I always going to have the difficulty? Am I always going to carry that anger? Am I always going to be insecure? Am I always going to deal with that sin? Am I always going to have that idolatry that just nags at my life, that pride that wells up inside? Is it always going to be this way?" No. In all these things, we're more than conquerors through him who loves us. For I'm convinced that neither death nor life nor angels nor demons nor the present nor future nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all the creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. No. You're more than a conqueror in Jesus. You're more than a conqueror. And so, here's an invitation for you. I would love to invite you to join me and join the rest of the Valley Creek staff and the rest of the leadership in memorizing these three verses. So, during the 60 days, we're going to memorize these three verses out of Romans. We're going to give you a chance for a screensaver and to put a QR code, and you can work through it with us. Here's why. Sometimes you just need the word of God to wash your mind and renew you and just speak to you about what's real and true. And sometimes you just need to have in your mind, like, "Am I always going to do it? No. In all these things, I'm more than a conqueror. And now that's actually like in me, and the word of God is in me. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony, the word of God transforming and changing us. So, we're going to memorize this together. That's going to be incredible. A great opportunity over these 60 days. So, I invite all of you to join me with that. But more than all of that, I invite you to believe that you can actually overcome. I want to believe, but help me overcome my unbelief. In Jesus' name, you can overcome. In Jesus' name, you can overcome. So come on, would you pray with me? Thank you, Lord, for 60 days of overcoming, for an invitation to experience more freedom and life and breakthrough. I believe in Jesus' name that I can overcome. I believe in Jesus' name that I can overcome. And I believe in Jesus' name that our church will overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimonies. And by all the testimonies of those who've gone before us, this great cloud of witnesses that are just like us, I just believe that that's going to encourage us and build us and strengthen us and that this really will be one of the great summers in the history of our church. Why? Because those places that have been long devastated are going to be renewed in the name of Jesus. You and generations of your family are going to be renewed because of the step of faith you're going to take and the unbelief that you're going to cast out and instead trade for this strong sense that God is going to help you overcome. Whatever the thing is, whatever you placed at the feet of Jesus, whatever you literally, oh, mustard seed of faith, whatever you move forward with today, you keep believing in Jesus' name that you're going to overcome by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of the testimony. It's going to be a great summer because God is so good and he's so good to you.

So, thank You, Jesus. We believe by faith. We will overcome. Everything actually is possible, and the best is yet to come. In Jesus' name, amen.