

Well hey, everybody, and welcome in to Valley Creek! Before we get started, we just want to welcome in all of our campuses all together at the same time. So, let's welcome in everybody. Come on. I'm Karrie, and I get to serve as the Student Director at our Denton Campus. And I am so excited to be here with all of you today. See, God has profoundly used this church and our family and you to change my life forever. And so, I am so excited to get to be here with you today. I'm excited for a lot of reasons. One of the main ones is because last week we kicked off our brand new series for this summer called 60 Days of Overcoming. Yeah. And what we said that we were going to do is we're just going to talk about a character from the Bible each and every week. An issue that they overcame and how they did it. And we said that we actually got the idea for this series from this one verse. This is like our anchor Scripture for the entire series this summer, James 5:17. It says Elijah was a person just like us. Who was Elijah? Well, we talked a little bit about him last week. Basically, Elijah is known as the greatest prophet in the entire Bible. And so, if you're sitting here thinking like greatest prophet in the whole Bible and me doesn't quite compute, that's a fair thought. I thought that too, except there's just this one catch and that is this verse. God says, "He is just like you and you are just like him." Elijah was an overcomer, and so are you. And so, today, I'm really excited to get to tell all about the next character that we are going to talk about today, and that is Ruth. Yeah. So, some of you know who she is, and some of you might not know who she is, and that's totally okay. Actually, good news, by the end of this month in literally just a couple of weeks, we will have a read about her in the Valley Creek Reading Plan. So, stay tuned for that one. It's going to be good. But basically, Ruth, you learn about her in the Old Testament. And honestly, you can kind of pretty easily skip over her story when just thumbing through all the pages in your Bible because her book is only four chapters long. It's a total of just 85 verses. That is less than the Sermon on the Mount, you all. It's short. Ruth is, by all accounts, a fairly minor character in the Bible, but she lived a very significant life. And so, today, I just want to tell you just a part, just a little bit of Ruth's story. So, if you can picture this one with me.

So, a long time ago, there was a woman named Naomi. And Naomi moved to a foreign land with her two sons, and these sons each end up marrying women from this foreign land. Their names were Ruth and Orpah. Not to be confused with Oprah, okay? So, Ruth and Orpah, man, they're married, but then, man, it says that Naomi's sons, Ruth and Orpah's husbands, they both die. And heartbroken and with no future in this foreign land, the three women decide to travel back to Naomi's homeland of Bethlehem. And the story tells us that literally, as they're traveling down the road, Naomi stops the girls and she tells Ruth and Orpah not to come with her. She says, "Just go back to your own land. Actually, just go back to your families. Just kind of start over, pretend this didn't happen. Just go do what's best for you." And so, the two girls are given a choice. Number one, go back to each of their own parents. Kind of count this marriage a wash. "Just go find a new husband, have a family, and just do what is best for you, and don't worry about me." Or number two, they could stay with Naomi. They could move to a land that they've never been to before, and they could take on an almost impossible set of circumstances. There were two roads. For them, there were literally physically two different roads. It says they were walking down the road. But my question is this. Have you ever been

there? Have you ever had two options in front of you? Number one, the option of take care of yourself or number two, the option of take care of somebody else. The option of spirit or flesh of self or sacrifice. Really, the options were selfishness or servanthood. And Ruth and Naomi, life didn't turn out the way either woman thought it was going to be. And so, they each had a choice now based on what their life was, not on the way that they thought their life should have turned out like, and that is a choice every single one of us is faced with every single day. Selfishness or servanthood. Selfishness just means being concerned with your own good. That's all it means. Selfishness, being concerned with your own good. And servanthood, it means being concerned with the good of others and acting on their behalf. Servanthood, being concerned with the good of others and acting on their behalf. And so, the story tells us that at first pass, when Naomi tells the girls to go, both girls say no. They say, "We're not going to leave you. We're going to stay with you. It's us, we're all going together." But then, at second pass, when Naomi tells them again to go on without her, Orpah does. She eventually leaves, but not Ruth. No, Ruth, the Scripture tells us, Ruth clings to Naomi, and then she says this to her right here. "Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried." And to be honest with you, this blows me away. This blows me away because right here in this very moment, Ruth overcomes one of the things that we all struggle with as humans. Ruth overcomes selfishness. She overcomes selfishness by choosing to be a servant. And when I think about it, I realized it is not that easy to just say, "Oh, I'm not going to be selfish today," and then go out and live a life of not being selfish. Because, you all, if it was that easy, we would all do it, wouldn't we? That's what we would do, but it's not that easy. It's not that easy to just tell myself to do it because that is just head knowledge. Nothing inside of me has actually changed.

And so, I read this verse and I'm like, "Oh, no, this is words on a page." But truly, what Ruth was actually saying when she said, "Where you go I will go," what she was actually saying is, I will lay down my preferences, my opinion, my future, and my agenda. When she said, "Where you stay I will stay," that means I am with you heart and soul. She said, "Your people will be my people," that means what is important to you will now be the most important to me. And your God my God means submitting and surrendering to the Lordship of Jesus. That is what Ruth was saying. And that's actually even more impressive when we read the actual story of Ruth and you realize everything that Ruth was giving up. See, Ruth gave up her family and her friends, everyone she ever knew, her home, her country. That means her language, her foods, her norms, her religion. You all, when she said, "Your God my God," she meant that one literally. She converted. But arguably, the biggest thing that Ruth gave up was her future. Her future. See, instead of choosing a secure future for herself, she chose instead to serve Naomi and choose to live a life with her, with her aging mother-in-law. In that moment, she chose to forego any sense of selfishness and she chose instead to serve. And so, if you're sitting here thinking right now, okay, Ruth, this incredible selfless woman and me doesn't, like you said, these people are going to be just like us. Doesn't sound like me, that's a fair thought. I had the exact same thought, except we read our key Scripture. People are just like us. Ruth is just like

us. So now we have to ask ourselves the question, "Why?" Why was Ruth able to actually overcome selfishness? Why was Ruth able to actually say this and then go actually live it out? Why was she able to overcome selfishness? Well, Ruth is actually an Old Testament prophetic picture of Jesus. Of Jesus, truly. If you look at this verse, this is what Ruth said to Naomi, but is this not the life that Jesus lived? Truly, is this not, basically, the words that Jesus said to the Father? Jesus said, "I only go where I see the Father going. I only do what I see the Father doing. I only say what I hear the Father is saying." And then, He said, "And I will die for them. I will die for their people, and I will be buried," and then He was. And then, He had a resurrection so that you and I could have a resurrection. Until the old me is dead and gone, we never will have a resurrection. But look at also what Jesus says. He says, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it." This is who Jesus was. That is what Jesus did. He is that. He denied Himself. He went where the Father told Him to go. He chose you as His people. He picked up His cross. He was willing to die and in the process, He not only found life, but Jesus released life to all of us. Jesus was the suffering servant. And we are made in His image and His likeness, and so we are created to overcome selfishness and become a servant. And while Ruth is a prophetic picture of Jesus, of a life in the spirit, of one road, Orpah, that other sister, she is a picture of life in the flesh, of that second road, that road of just do whatever you need to do. Because I don't know, that's a long time ago, so I didn't know her, but I have to think that, like Orpah, because if we really read the context, remember that first pass when Naomi tells the girls to leave? Both girls say no. Orpah also said no. Orpah said, "No, I'm going to stay with you. I'm going to be with you." But then, she changes her mind. Why? Well, I would offer that actually all of our first instinct is to serve because that is the created design in our soul. God actually made us to be servants, and so no matter how far repressed it actually is, your first instinct is to serve. That was her first instinct, so why did she flip? I would say it's probably whenever we remember everything that we're giving up, that is when we change our mind. That is when selfishness really invades. And so, man, again, I don't know, I didn't know her, but if she was anything like me, I have to think that Orpah was probably saying something to herself like, "This isn't selfish, right? It's just logical. Naomi's telling me to go, right? She's even telling me to leave. She's telling me to look out for myself. And if I don't go create my future, who else is going to do? I have to do it. I'm in control of everything, and I have to do this, and I have to do that, and I just have to be in control." You see, before we can do anything, overcome selfishness, live a life in the spirit, serve anybody, I think we first have to be willing to acknowledge that maybe, just maybe, there might be a little bit more Orpah in us than we'd like to admit. And the thing is, is that we live in a society where that's totally normal. Your life falls apart, you do you. Nobody else is going to do it, so you have to go take care of it, man. But the irony is, is that we were never created to ever feel those kinds of feelings, to experience those kinds of thoughts, to experience the isolation that selfishness will always inevitably bring. And honestly, safe, it's selfish. And the truth is, is that you are created to overcome selfishness. You are created to live a life in the spirit, but it doesn't just happen by trying harder. It happens when we realize that Jesus and the life that He lived, that's actually the life that we have been created to live. You are created to

overcome selfishness and live a life as a servant. So, the question then becomes how? How do we actually do it? I just told you, we can't do it by trying harder. So, how do we actually do it? Well, to figure out how to live a life of being a servant, we take a look at the life of Jesus. How He did it will tell us how we do it. And like I said at the very beginning, I'm a student director. Student directors, when we teach, we love to give lists, we love to give handles, we love to make it as easy as possible to follow Jesus. So, for you today, I created a little list. So, how to overcome selfishness.

Number one, choose God as your God. Choose God as your God. See, in the same way that Ruth had to choose God, Jesus had to choose that the Father was His God. And I know this one may sound a little bit obvious, and you're probably sitting here like, "Okay, yeah, Karrie, obviously God's my God. I'm sitting here on a Sunday morning. I got up, I'm a Christian. I'm here." But I think if we're honest with ourselves, oftentimes we can choose a lot of other things to be that "God place" in our heart. So oftentimes, we end up choosing our jobs, our feelings, our emotions, ourselves. And here's the thing about all of those things, all of those gods, those gods demand to be served. And when we serve those things, we are enslaved to them. Our whole life is devoted to those things. So, for example, if you choose your job as your God, you will eventually become overworked, burnt out and disappointed. That will be your nature. Or if you choose your feelings or your emotions as your God, you will eventually become disillusioned to the reality around you and the truth of what is actually going on. That will be your nature. And hear me, those things, your job and your feelings, your emotions, those are not bad things. You're just created to steward those things, not serve them. Why? Because those things, even though they're not bad things, those things don't have love for you. Those things don't have a goodwill toward you. But God, God only has love for you. His only will toward you is good. When you choose God as your God, you will look for opportunities to serve others and honor Him, and you won't be able to help it because when goodwill flows into you, you can't help but have goodwill flow out of you. You will end up serving Him and forsaking everybody else, but it's one or the other. We can't have both, and we see it because of what it says right here in Matthew. It says, "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other." No one can serve two masters. But serving is ultimately how we overcome selfishness. It is of what we have been created to do. So, the question really becomes what God are you going to serve? To overcome selfishness, you have to choose the servant God to be your God. And so, can I ask you, have you chosen Jesus as your God? And if not, what's holding you back?

The second way you overcome selfishness is when you choose His people as your people. In the same way that Ruth had to choose Naomi, Jesus had to choose God's people. He had to be in community, and that's the same choice we all face every single day. Choose His people to be your people because you'll never learn to be a servant until you get into a servant-hearted community. Because what really happens in community, it tells us right here in Hebrews. It says, "Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one

another." That is what happens when you choose His people as your people. You are encouraged, you are shaped, you are molded. Things get brought up and you out to the surface that you never could have worked out on your own. And hear me, I am saying servant-hearted community. I'm talking about the kind of community that Jesus had to go and build, the community that He died and He rose again for, His church, His people, that community. Because, you all, not every community that you find yourself in actually helps you to become more of a servant. But when I am deeply involved and deeply rooted into a servant-hearted community, that is when life change happens, that is when I overcome selfish. Let's look at this verse in Galatians. You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. Free of what? Selfishness. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. This, this is our calling. This is our mandate. This is how you overcome self. And like I said, student director, I love handles, I love lists, so I have actually a couple of just suggestions. If you really want to overcome selfishness and choose His people as your people, I have a couple of ideas. Okay, you ready? You want to overcome selfishness? Come join the serve team. I'm biased obviously, but come join the serve team or get in the circle. Circle's where life change happens. Or come lead a team. Or I'm, like I said, very biased, but man, come help us raise up the next generation of kingdom leaders. Come see what God is doing in the next generation. Or if all of those feel just a little bit just too big right now, I say right now because that's your next step eventually, don't worry. But right now, if that feels a little bit too big, can I just invite you this summer, this summer, can I invite you to spend 15 extra minutes in the building that you are in right now? 15 extra minutes either sitting here in the worship center that you're in or out in the atrium. Just 15 extra minutes to let yourself be seen, be known, and be loved on by the people of God. Let His people be your people. Basically, what I'm saying is if you really want to not be selfish, come get around unselfish people. If you really want to be a servant, come be around servants. If you really want to overcome selfishness, choose these people to be your people. So, can I ask you, have you chosen these people to be your people? And if not, why?

And then, the third way you overcome selfishness is when you choose to die to yourself. Choose to die to yourself. This one very well might be the hardest one to do, but it is the way of the cross. Jesus died to His self. And so, look at what He says right here in Mark. He says, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many." And I know for so many of us, we would love if this verse were to stop right about here. And it just read, "Jesus came to serve." Serve what? Me and what I want and what I think I need and what I deserve, but there's more to this verse that says the word "and." And He came to give His life. He came to die, and I know, I know that's the part that we struggle with. That's the part, because even if I can't actually wrap my head around the fact that yes, "okay, I am a servant, that's what I'm created to do, but now you want me to do what? You want to die to myself?" That's where we pause, but that is what Jesus did. And when He did, when He died, when He gave His life, He demonstrated the greatest act of servanthood in all of human history because it's just like we read at the very start, the only way to find life is to give it away. So, let's look at this verse one more time. "Whoever wants to be my disciples

must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow me. Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it." Jesus says that life is found on the road of servanthood. If I lose my life, I will find it. But if I try and save it, if I take the road of self, if I take Orpah's road, I lose my life. And we all have a choice, the choice of our own good or the good of others, of self or sacrifice, flesh or spirit, selfishness or servanthood. If I really want to overcome selfishness, I have to choose to die to myself. And so, can I ask you, have you chosen to die to yourself? And if not, what is holding you back?

See, these three choices, these three things, choose God as your God, choose His people as your people, choose to die to yourself, these are actual choices that your will can make. These things, this is not just head knowledge, this is alignment and agreement. This is not try harder, behave better, do more, strive better, all the different things. This is actual choice. You can actually do these things, but I know, I know it's not that easy. I know this about myself because actually a couple months ago, about six months ago at the start of the year, our entire staff all came together for something that we call the Dream Retreat. And the Dream Retreat, is a really fun time. It's when every single staff member from every single campus comes together in person for just a couple of days. And it's really cool, we get to worship and pray and intercede and dream and do heart work. And by heart work, I mean we have a couple different sessions, and some were really fun; some are convicting. We colored at one of the sessions this year. That was a really good time. But you never knew what was coming next. And there was this one session where, after a really – it had been such a fun day that when I walked in after a break, we saw these giant stacks of wood in the room. And again, I had such a good time. For reference, it was three-foot-long 2x4s. Tons of them, all throughout the room. And I saw it and I was like, "Alright, woodshop's not my calling, but I'm a team player, so let's get it. All right, cool." So, that's what I was thinking. So, imagine my surprise when we sit down and the session starts, and the leader of that session comes up and he starts reading up that verse in the book of Matthew. You know the one that says, "Why worry about a speck in your brother's eye when you have a log of wood in your own?" Okay. So, I sat down, I was like, "All right, it's going a little bit different than I thought, but that's okay. This has been fun so far, so I'm in." So, we sit there, and actually the invitation was to spend just a little bit of time with the Holy Spirit, just me and the Holy Spirit. Each one of us on our own and just ask the Holy Spirit what are the logs in my eye. What are the blind spots in my life? What are the things that I don't see that I need the Holy Spirit to reveal to me? Things that are harming both myself and the people around me? So, I spent some time and I made this list, and I tell you, I don't really like the list very much. I was making it, and I was like, "All right, this was pretty humbling. I'm ready for this session to be done. Let's move on to the next one. I'll work on this, I promise." Turns out that was just part one, because the leader came back up and then we were invited to, each one of us, one by one, come up and grab a three-foot-long 2x4. Oh, and grab a Sharpie.

So, I go and get the board, I get the Sharpie, I sit down. The next part of that session was to spend a couple more minutes with the Holy Spirit and, out of the list that I made of blind spots in my life, pick one. Pick one blind spot that this year I was going to get rid of, that the Holy

Spirit inside of me was going to help me get rid of. The whole thing was to illustrate that when we have logs in our eyes, when we have blind spots in our life, if it's in our eye, every time you look around, you're hurting the people around you. And so, you need to get rid of it. And so, I sat there for a little while, and just as I had thought I had settled on my word, and I was like, "Okay, I'll write this one down in front of everybody. Sure, okay. I'll write this word down," is when the leader actually came back up, and I was like, "Oh, I missed it, man. That's okay, I'll do this one at home. That's all good. I'll catch up later." No, turns out the leader actually came back up and he was like, "Hey, I just feel like I need to encourage the room to be really, really honest – to actually call things for what they are. So, an example I just feel like I just am supposed to say is if one of you was about to write the words 'gets frustrated easily,' go ahead and just call it what it is and write 'anger problem' on your board." The Holy Spirit just has impeccable timing because as I was about to write my word, it's when the leader came back up. And you see, my word was "lackadaisical." It's a pretty word that doesn't really mean too much, honestly. It basically means could be careless sometimes or kind of uninterested a little bit. I don't know, it's just this big word, it's what came to my mind. But as the leader came up and did that, I realized that that actually was not my word. That is a sugar-coated word. It was me calling the log in my eye a speck when, actually, the word "lackadaisical" for me, it was a pretty word that didn't really mean too much. It didn't really hold too much consequence to me, so it couldn't actually convict me to change. That's when I realized, as I sat with the Holy Spirit for a couple more minutes, that my word was not lackadaisical. My word is selfishness. And this is a bit of a humbling one to say out loud. It's humbling for a lot of different reasons. Honestly, one of the main reasons is because I thought I was so different than the rest of my generation, honestly. See, I'm Gen Z, and honestly, there's a lot of pride that I take from that. My generation is full of kind and creative and brave and empathetic people, but my generation also really, really struggles with apathy, with poor mental health, and really, what I would say mostly is this selfish, me-focused mentality. But in my mind, in my mind I'm not that. In my reality, in my head, in my heart, I'm not those things, but then the Lord, in His kindness, He revealed to me that I am much more of that than I ever realized.

And as I realize over the last six months, as I have been actively working to get rid of this log in my eye and I have things that are put in place into my life to whittle this down to a speck and eventually have no place in my eye, I realized that, man, there are a lot of areas in my life where I have just completely let myself be selfish. Number one, I'm the baby of my family. I'm the youngest one and there are aspects about the way I have always lived my life that have been catered to being taken care of, not being responsible to or for anybody else. Or I've lived alone for the last five years of my life and I've loved it, but I've loved it because I didn't answer to a spouse, to parents, to roommates, to friends or family. I could do whatever I wanted whenever I wanted it, whatever I wanted to see. What I did is I unintentionally, without knowing, I created this life where I decided what I did, where I went, who I talked to, what food I ate, where I traveled, how I spent my money. Literally every single thing was up to me. And that was and still is very convicting to me because I want to be somebody that overcomes selfishness. I want to be somebody that always chooses the road of servanthood. That is why Ruth speaks to me.

That's why I chose to talk about her today because she shows me that it is possible to overcome selfishness, and Jesus shows me that I not only can, but I have been created to. See, what I realize is that over the last couple of years, I was living with this really, really broken belief that if I served enough in one area of my life, then I could be as selfish as I wanted to in every other area. It's actually crazy to say out loud, but genuinely, I believed that because I'm on staff at a church and serving is kind of my job, that because I did that so well than any other area I could, I was owed a little bit of selfishness, that's what I deserve. But Jesus in His kindness showed me that that is actually not the case. Man, that is convicting to me because I am a servant. I will crucify the selfishness in my life because Jesus did it first. He shows me that it is possible. And so, that's kind of where I'm at right now. I would love to be able to stand here today and say, "This log is actually completely gone, that I'm all better and people describe me as the most selfless person in the world." And to be honest with you, I really, really want people to be able to say that about me one day, but it's not where I'm at on my journey with selfishness just yet, just yet. But I have this 2x4 sitting on my desk in a shared office space in full view of my entire team so that at any moment, at any time, the people in my life, when they see selfishness evident, they can call me on it because it has no place in my life, it has no place in my heart. I am a servant, that's how I was created to live and that is how Jesus created you to live too. And so, not to completely scar everybody from ever working here, it's a really great place.

That was just the first part of the session, believe it or not. It was a long day, first part of the session. Part two was actually this time, we all sat at our tables again with our team and this time instead of a log, there was a stone. Each one of us had a stone, and this time I was the only person that didn't get to write on mine. See, everybody else on my team, they all wrote a word about me that God gave them for me, a word that is true about me. And so now, I have this stone that is full of these incredible true prophetic words that are written on that and that is what I get to focus on more. So, even though my log it is still very real, my stone, and the truth that God says about me, that is even more real, and that is what I get to focus on. And so, my question is, is what about you? I would guess that maybe, just maybe, you might have a little bit of selfishness in your life too. Some areas where you have chosen yourself over others. Some places where you see a verse like Ruth's and you read it like, "Where I want to go I'll go, where I want to stay I'll stay. The people I want to be around will be the people I'll be around. And I will be my own God, therefore I refuse to die to anyone or anything, much less to myself." And that's not on you, that's just who we are in our flesh. That's who we are without Jesus. But with Jesus, in Jesus, you are not your log. You are what God says about you. You are your stone. And so, man, can I just say over you, can I just declare over you that in Jesus, you are a servant. In Jesus, you are kind, and you are brave, and you are servant-hearted, and you are gracious, and you are full of faith, and you are a worshiper, and you are co-heirs with Christ, but even still you lay your crown down at His feet every single time because you are a servant. That is who God has created you to be. And so, would you walk in that identity?



And so, really, my only question is, is I have a couple. Have you chosen God as your God? But I mean really chosen Him? I mean like saying, "Jesus, you are my one thing, and I will leave everything else behind." Have you chosen His people as your people? But I mean really chosen your people? I mean have you asked yourself the question, does at least one person in this family at Valley Creek, do they know me and every part of me, the deepest parts, the good and the bad? And have you chosen to die to yourself? But I mean really die to yourself? I mean laying down everything and saying, "Jesus, I will follow You and I will forsake every opinion and preference and agenda that I had before." Have you chosen Jesus? Because He's chosen you. Jesus overcame selfishness so that you and I could forever be servants. When we choose servanthood, our divine design, we actually find life. And we have proof of it as we finish out the story of Ruth. So, fast forward, they made it to Bethlehem. And as soon as Ruth is settled down in her new land following her new God with Naomi, she ends up meeting her future husband. They get married, they have a son. That son has a son, who ends up being none other than King David, the man after God's own heart. Ruth is one of only two women in the Bible that have books named after them, and Ruth is one of only five women specifically named in the lineage of Jesus. Ruth chose servanthood, and in servanthood she found life. Because that's the thing, whether we see it on this side of heaven or not, servanthood always ends in abundant life. And so, this summer, would we not all just believe, but would we truly walk out in the truth that in Jesus name we can overcome selfishness and we can be a servant? So, would you close your eyes with me?

Jesus, thank You for the cross. Thank You for the life that You lived here on this earth. Thank You for the fact that You came. You were a servant first and You actually died so that we could forever be servants. And so, Father, would You help us to choose You as our God, to leave everything else behind and follow You wholeheartedly? Would You help us to choose Your people? God, would You give us the bravery, the courage to be deeply seen and known this summer as we take next steps in finding our people? And Jesus, would You help us to die to ourselves? Thank You for the fact that we don't have to do it first because You already did. So, would You remind us how much You love us in every single one of those next steps of obedience? We love You, Jesus. We pray this in Your name. Amen.