

Alright. Hey, everybody. Welcome to Valley Creek. We're so glad you're here with us. Come on, whatever campus you're at today, Denton, Flower Mound, Gainesville, Lewisville, or online, let's just welcome each other together for a moment. We are one church that meets at multiple campuses, carrying the hope of Jesus to thousands of locations, and whether this is your first time with us, you haven't been in a while, you've left and just decided to come back, or you're here every single week. It really doesn't matter. Hope is here. Everyone is welcome. Jesus changes everything. We are a movement of hope for the city and beyond, raising up generations of hope carriers trying to help people discover who they are, who God is, what they were created for, and acting as if it were so. And so, welcome to Valley Creek. I'm glad you're here, and I'm glad to be here. It's so good to see your face. I missed you. I am reminded over these last few weeks what an amazing church we have because this church is full of amazing people just like you. You are an amazing person, and I am so grateful. You're a part of what God is doing in this space. And I hope this summer you've enjoyed God and the life that he's given you because what a great summer it was here at Valley Creek. Kids summer and student summer and mission trips and new worship songs and transformation Tuesday and 60 days of overcoming. I thought our team did an amazing job teaching the Word of God to so many young communicators that are rising up, learning how to teach God's Word and preach and teach and proclaim the good news of Jesus. And as we were going through that series, I just had this thought that I just prophetically declare over your life, regardless of how you feel, regardless of what's going on, regardless of whether or not you feel like you overcame or are even overcoming, what I declare over your life is that he who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete it in Jesus' name. He who began a good work in your child will be faithful to complete it. He who began a good work in your spouse will be faithful to complete it. He who began a good work in your parent will be faithful to complete it. He who began a good work in your marriage. He who began a good work in your business. He who began a good work in your body. He who began a good work in this church. He who began a good work in your life will be faithful to complete it in Jesus' name. Whether you see it or not, God is working behind the scenes in your life to bring all things together for good. You don't have to complete it because he is the one who will complete it. And so, for some of you, just grab ahold of that. In Jesus' name, I believe that's for you. And as our team was teaching through the 60-day series and I was following along, I just was reminded of these two things that I just want to bring to your attention as part of the culture of our church. Like, we believe in shared leadership, that we are better together, and we want to do this a long time together. If you've been around our church for any period of time, you figure out real quickly we believe we're better together, that everyone has a gift and a talent and a passion, and we're the body of Christ, and when we all become who God has made us to be, we become mature, attaining the fullness of the measure of Christ. We've never wanted to be built on the gifts of the few, rather we've wanted to be built on the lives and the sacrifices of the many. One can put a thousand to flight. Two can put 10,000 to flight. So, we believe in shared leadership, multiple voices and leaders, and all kinds of spaces, and we also want to do this a long time together. We've never wanted to be a firecracker that lights and blows up in the sky and everybody oohs and aahs it for a few moments. We want to be a long-burning flame that withstands the test of time. And

we don't want to be a church for a generation. We want to be a church for generations, and so we play the long game and we make a lot of decisions based on that and longevity is created by humility and holiness. In fact, only humility and holiness can create the longevity of doing things a long time together. And so, we make a lot of decisions based on that. And one of those decisions is, every summer I take a few weeks with my family, and we just kind of back out for a little bit and take a breath and rest and seek the Lord, and I pray for you, and we kind of get perspective and clarity and vision on what God has in store for us because we want to do this a long time together. And the last thing I wrote in my journal before I came back into the office two weeks ago was it's a gift to have a community where you are known, loved, and valued. It's a gift to have a community where you are known, loved, and valued. That's how I feel here, and that's how I hope you feel here. And even if you don't, this is a place where we want to know you. We want to know you so we can love you because you can only be loved to the level you're known. And then when you're loved, you realize how valuable you actually are and how important you are to what God is doing in this place that this is a family and you are a part of it.

And so, I'm incredibly grateful. I'm moved by how God is moving. So many people are experiencing genuine transformation and spiritual formation, becoming more and more like Jesus, and it's just a great time to be a part of our church. Like, we are six months into Missional Move: Create the Future. Do you remember that? You're like, "Oh yeah, the biggest thing we've ever done." In March, we said that we felt like God was inviting us to take a next step so somebody else can take theirs to create a future that didn't currently exist to do five things in the next five years remember this start a prayer center, a sacred space where people can meet with God start a training center, VC college, and Valley Creek leadership experience to raise up a generation of leaders then we said we want to start an Argyle campus, start a university campus on UNT's campus, and then the seven continents strategy find a great person doing great things, a leader of a movement of hope on the seven continents and partner with them to build a long-term relationship. And we said that it would take all of us to do that. And there were three things I asked you to do. One is, just say, "This is my church," because you can't create a future you're not committed to. Two, give above and beyond what you've been giving, a two-year commitment above and beyond what you already give because God has given you resources not to pay for the past but to create the future. And then, three, take a next step over the next five years every year so we become the kind of people that can actually steward the future we're creating. And I don't know if you were here this summer and you heard the update that we have our training center building one mile from the Flower Mound campus, VC college. It's going to be amazing. We've closed on that. Plans are almost done getting ready to be submitted to the town for approval so we can get going on construction. More than seven million dollars has already been given towards the 25 that we need to actually do this, and I have about three or four things right here that in the next few weeks or months of progress I'm going to be able to share with you, and you're going to love it. And so, God is moving, and so keep walking out that journey. Or remember, creating the future is messy. It's okay. We're painting. We're building. We're trying. You do this, it didn't

work, we do it again. We hold on to this, but then we realize we got to let it go to move into the few. It's messy, but it's a beautiful mess because we're creating a future that doesn't exist with God. And if you remember, and some of you are new, what I told you is that the greatest way to create the future for yourself is by creating the future for others. Remember that. You said that if you sow, you'll reap, and it will be given to you. Whoever loses their life will find it. So, as we're creating the future for others, make sure you're paying attention to the future that God is creating for you. See, this is a really big season for our church, a really important season for our church, which means it's a really big season for me and a really important season for me. Why? Because the church is not a building or an organization, the church is a people. So, if it's big for us, it means it's big for you. If it's important for us, it means it's important for you. Colleen and I have learned over the years that when it's big here, it means it's big for us. When it's important here, when it's weighty here, when there's a gravity here, it means that's true for us because this is not a building or an organization or a brand. This is a people and a family. And when God says this is an important season, it means it's an important season for us. So, Colleen and I have been spending a lot of time talking about our future and the future we want to create and things we're doing with God. This is a big, big year for Colleen and I. Ready for this? What we realized is that this year, our daughter turned 16, and our son turns 18 and graduates from high school. This year, we will have been married 20 years. This year we will have lived in Texas and been a part of Valley Creek Church for 20 years. And this year I will have been the lead pastor for 15 years. So, it's a big year for us, and we're kind of realizing that, and we're looking into this future that God's creating. And so, we just kind of have this little mantra that we came up with this summer. I share it with you not because you have to have it but just because it's something that we're working on in our life. We've come up with this mantra together that in the course of this next year we just want to be present, choose joy, say yes, deny the flesh, and lavish love. Really silly, really simple, probably only makes sense to me and Colleen, but we just want to be present because it's an important season of our life. We just want to be wherever we are, and then we want to choose joy regardless of what's happening. I want the joy of the Lord to be my strength, and then I want to say yes because I'm not that busy and it's not that important. I can say yes to when my daughter says, "Let's go play some ping pong." Deny the flesh, get over myself, and then lavish love. Say it. Express it. Give it. Do it. Release it into the atmosphere. So, I share that with you to ask you this simple question. Do you have a mantra, a handle, a vision, a guideline, something that you're grabbing ahold of as you're creating the future for others because God is creating a great future for you? And so, I am grateful to be back. I am grateful for you, and I am excited about where we're going.

And so, we're going to start a new series today. Are you ready for this? Ready? But it's not a series. It's a collection of talks. We're going to start a new series, not series, called A Collection of Talks on Movement, Mission, and Maturity. You say, "What does that mean?" That means for as long as I feel like the Lord wants us to do it. We're going to talk about movement, mission, and maturity. And where normally the things I try to give you are very sequential and build on each other, we're just going to talk about movement, mission, and maturity. And I literally am

calling it A Collection of Talks, because I'm doing everything I can to try to break out of the rhythm in the routines that we get in. The last thing that I want for you or for me or for us is to just go into this fall in our routine, in our rhythm. Another series, another weekend, another message, another challenge, another invitation, another worship set. I got football and practice and school and work and travel and hobbies and vacations. I know, I know, I know, I know. So, what if just before we even jump into this fall, what if we just actually stop to actually prepare our heart for what God wants to do? See, the first talk in the collection of talks is just simply this. We've got to prepare for the talks that God wants to have with us. We can't make God move but, we can certainly prepare for when he does. We can't make God move, but we can prepare in such a way that invites him to come. And so, before we even get started, we just got to prepare. I mean, do you remember the story of the parable of the soils that Jesus tells? Probably one of the most important parables he tells. It says, "The kingdom of heaven is like a farmer who goes out and sows his seed. And as he's sowing the seed, some fell on hard soil and got snatched away. Some fell on rocky soil, and it quickly grew up, but because there were rocks in the soil, it withered and died. Some seed fell on the thorns and the thistles, and the thing grew up, but it got choked out, and so it never became fruitful. And then some seed fell on the good soil and produced a 30, 60, or 100-fold return." Why does one seed grow and another doesn't? Same seed, same environment, same atmosphere, same farmer, and same farming strategy. What's the difference? The only difference is one soil was prepared for that seed, and the other soils weren't. It was the soil or the heart that's prepared for the word of God to be sown into it that becomes fruitful. This has made a lot of sense to me in this season. Because in this last season, my son and I have been experimenting with food plots for deer. Now, what really good hunters do, which I'm on my way. I'm not there. I'm on my way. They build these food plots, and they plan all the stuff to draw the deer in. And so, we kind of tried with it and we played and we tilled up the soil and we scattered the seed and we covered it over and we came back a few weeks later, and a bunch of stuff grew. We were, like, so excited. We're like, "Oh my gosh. We have figured it out." And then, we came back a few weeks later, and everything was dead, and weeds were all over the place. And I remember being so discouraged, but I realized my problem was not the seed or how I had scattered it. The problem was I never actually prepared the soil the way the soil needed to be prepared. And I think that is the great difference between people in this room, the ones that grow and the ones that don't, is the condition of the soil in which the seed is sown. Same atmosphere, same environment, same farmer, same strategy. Why does one person grow and another doesn't? Some plants, some water, and God makes it grow.

God wants it to grow, but we have to plant and water. In other words, we have to cultivate the soil of our heart. Think of a seed contained within that seed as a self-initiating, self-sustaining, self-generating life force. All it needs is a soil that is prepared, and it will take off, and it will begin to grow. And I think the problem is we don't prepare our soil and then seed after seed after seed after seed after seed collections of seeds, but nothing grows because we didn't prepare the soil. In fact, if you think about it even like this, this is even what God did before he sent Jesus into this world. Before the Father sowed Jesus, Jesus was the Word of

God, right? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." So, Jesus is the Word of God. And before the Father sowed the soil, the seed of Jesus was in this earth. Do you know what He did? He prepared the soil for generation after generation after generation. He sent prophets to the people to try to prepare the soil all the way till John the Baptist, the last one, and it says, "Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God." John the Baptist came to prepare the soil, fill in the valleys, knock down the mountains, straighten things out, smooth them out, and get rid of the weeds and the hard stuff and the rocks so that Jesus, the Word of God, could be sown into this earth and produce a 30, 60, or 100-fold return. And I believe that is what God wants to do in your life this fall. The only question is, "Will we prepare the soil?" Like, what do you want this fall, and how's the condition of your soil? Like, when you think of these next four months between now and December, like, what is it that you want? And what's the condition of your soil that God's trying to work in? See, what I want is I just want more Jesus in this place. I want to see him and know him and experience him and meet with him. I want him to be free to do that which he wants to do. I want him to be the one thing, the main thing, the only thing in this place. That's what I want. And so, I want to prepare my soil so that he can be planted into my life and grow and change me from the inside out. We can't make God move, but we can prepare for when he does. We can't make God come, but we can live our lives in such a way that attracting to him. And so, before we run into this fall, what if we just prepare our soil for what God wants to do because I genuinely believe that the Lord wants to do great things among you? Prepare yourself. Get ready because God wants to do great. Do you believe God wants to do something great in your life this fall? Then let's prepare ourselves for that great thing that he wants to do. So, are you with me on all this? You're like, "He's back. Yes. Yes." So, ready? I have five thoughts for you. Now you know this is from the Lord because I don't do that. That's not how I don't like points and things. I just like collection of talks things. So, if you're going to actually prepare your heart for what God wants to do. Ready? Can you walk with me on this? This would be like that, you know, the neighbor farmer who has killer food plots, and he, like, comes and he, like, laughs at me, and he just, "Let's talk." About how to prepare the soil, that's why, let's talk. Ready? We didn't like that, but that's okay. First thing, commit to gather. If you're going to prepare your heart for what God wants to do, you have to commit together. Ready for this? If you want to be a part of what God is doing among us, you actually have to be among us. I'll see you next week. If you want God to do in you what he's doing in us, you actually have to be around us. Like, your soil actually has to be presented for the sower to sow into it. So, if you want what God's doing among us, and he's moving, you got to be among us, which means you got to commit together. Do you know what the word commit means? The word commit means to decide to do something before I don't feel like doing it. That's all it means. I don't have to commit to easy things. I don't have to commit to eating chocolate. I don't have to commit to sleeping in. I don't have to commit to scrolling on my phone. I don't have to commit to eating healthy, waking up earlier, and powering the thing down. I have to decide to do something before I don't feel like doing that thing. Listen, no one at their wedding actually has to make a commitment. Why at the wedding you're like, "Yeah, I

love you babe, whatever. In sickness and in health, all the things. This is going to be great." No. In that moment, I'm deciding to do something before I don't feel like doing it, two months, two years, or 20 years down the road. Does that make sense? So, what if before the fall starts, you just commit to gather? Not as an obligation, or you're not getting any points with God, but I just want to be around God. What if you just decided before it's cold, before it's a rainy Sunday morning, before you're busy, before you have a lot of homework, before you've been traveling, before you're just tired? Ready for this? Before the Cowboys are nine and oh, and it's a noon game. I mean, we can dream, can't we? What if we just decided before I don't feel like doing it I'm going to do it because I want my soil to be positioned for the sower to sow into it.

Remember when the resurrected Jesus comes to the disciples. It says, "When the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus is just resurrected. They didn't even know it yet. Jesus came and stood among them and he said, he spoke, 'Peace be with you.' After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. And with that, he breathed on them, and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.'" Can I just tell you something? When disciples are together, Jesus comes, and he speaks, and he shows us himself, and he fills us with joy, and when we see him, he breathes on us and fills us with his spirit. That's what's happening. You're not getting bonus points. There's no religion. If you've been a part of our church, you know we don't even really care. I don't care. God is here. That's why I'm here. And if I want to become like him and grow, then I need to arrange my life in such a way that I am where he tells me I will find him. But while all that was happening, Thomas was not with them when Jesus came. So, the other disciples told him, "We've seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it." Can I just tell you something? When you stop gathering with the people of God, you start becoming offended with the people of God. You start becoming a skeptic. You start becoming critical. You start complaining. The other disciples, there's no skepticism, there's no complaining, there's no offense. Why? Because Jesus is here and speaking to us. But if I don't gather, I question the move of God in this place, and then I start nitpicking all the things, and then when I show up, I have hard soil, so nothing happens, and I walk out and say, "See, he's not real." So, you've got to be among us if you want to experience what God is doing among us. Or how about the story of the pouring out of the spirit in Acts chapter 2? "When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. And they saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them, and all of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them. I don't know about you, but I long for wind from heaven, tongues of fire, filling of the Holy Spirit, and the move of God among us, and it all comes because they committed to gather before they didn't feel like doing it. So, come, Holy Spirit, among those of us that do gather. And this isn't an obligation. You don't have to do it. It's an invitation. "For where two or three come together, there am I." Listen, if you want to shoot a big buck, you got to go where big bucks are. You want to get a great pair of shoes, you got to go where great shoes are. You want

to marry somebody worth marrying, you got to be around where people worth marrying and hang out. You want to experience the resurrected Christ, you got to go where he says he is in the gathering of his people. So, what if you brought your soil this fall with all your heart and watched what God would do? The second thing is this. Just expect God to speak. Like, when you walked in here today, were you expecting a word from God? Did you even think about the fact that the God of the universe comes in this room to speak to you? Do you expect God to speak? I mean, I love this one. It says, "The Lord came and stood there, calling as the other times, 'Samuel! Samuel!' Samuel said, 'Speak, for your servant is listening.'" The Lord is right here standing, right here, right now speaking. Joy, Joy. Thomas, Thomas. Susan, Susan. Jody, Jody. Rivers, rivers. He's speaking. Do you expect him to speak to you? Like, what if you came this fall every week and you just like, "God's going to speak to me. I don't know about what." Maybe a word of identity, maybe a prophetic word, maybe a word of knowledge, maybe some revelation, maybe an encouragement, maybe some destiny, maybe some insight, maybe a breakthrough, maybe a word of freedom, and maybe he's going to speak in the message, but maybe he's going to speak into worship, maybe he's going to speak through someone else in two minutes of kindness, maybe he's going to speak to me in the atrium, maybe he's going to speak to me through a piece of art that is presented, maybe he's going to just speak to me through his presence and his still small voice that is in this place. Because I believe that God's word is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword, and because I believe that his word will not return void but will accomplish the purposes for which he sent it. Because I believe his word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Because I believe the words he speaks are spirit, and they are life, and they are truth. Because I believe his word is like a fire in my soul and run a hammer on the hard places of my heart. Because I believe God's word is as gentle as a whisper and as loud as the thunder, that it is as quiet as a breeze and yet as strong as a rock. I believe that God is speaking and that he's speaking to me. Because here's the deal. You don't come here to hear about politics. I know some of you think the thing you like the least about me is that I won't talk about politics from here. I don't see a lot of Jesus preaching about Rome in the gospels. I'm just saying he preaches a lot about the kingdom, so I'm just trying to preach what Jesus preached. Like, you're not here to hear about politics or current events and trying to interpret them through an obscure passage in Ezekiel. You're not here to hear us complain about how bad Babylon is. You're here to have God's voice speak to you about how much hope there is for the people of God in Babylon, but I got to expect him to speak. I got to expect there's a seed coming. And here's what we want. We want the sower to sow a peach pit. We want the seed to be like. "Joe, this is God. Yes." That's what we want. Maybe I think God speaks most often in the still small voice. That's why Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is like a man who took a mustard seed, the smallest seed in the garden, but when he planted it in his field, it became the largest plant that the birds came and lived among. In other words, God is speaking in a still small voice. And when you prepare the soil of your heart to hear it, it is the smallest thing that goes in, but it produces this massive return where a tree of life begins to grow in your soul. May you start to expect that the sower is sowing into your life specifically for where you're at, not a church series or a thing for you because he's a good shepherd leading you into green pastures. Third thing is this. Just decide to obey before he

speaks. He's going to speak, so I'm just going to decide right now. At the beginning of August, before he speaks, I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it. Regardless of what it is, I'm going to do it. You've got to, like, almost talk yourself up, and you're like, "I'm going to do it." Whatever it is, whether it doesn't make sense, whether it's foolish, whether it seems weird, whether my wife is going to like it, whether my kids will understand it, whether my parents will think it's cool, whatever. Like, if he says it, I'm going to do it. It's Jesus telling Peter to throw his net over the side of the boat. "Master, we've worked hard all night and haven't caught a thing. But because you say so, I will." Because you say so, I will. That's the heart of a disciple. That's the heart of the kingdom. That's the heart of a follower. That's the heart of a Christian. Whatever the world and church want to call Christians, Christians are not people that just say they believe in Jesus for when they die. Christians are little Christs who have submitted and surrendered to the lordship of Jesus with a heart posture with this because you say so. I don't get it. Peter's like, "I'm a fisherman, and you're a carpenter. It makes no sense, bro, but because you say so. Or how about when Jesus turned water into wine? The wine's gone, and his mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." You want a life of miracles, just do whatever he tells you. He tells them to go put water in these jars, draw the water out, and go pour it to people as if it's wine. It's foolish, would be the word. That's foolish, and yet it was incredibly wise because it's what he told them to do. So, what if your heart posture was just whatever he tells me to do about my time and about my money and about my relationships and about my sexuality and about what I believe and about where I go and about what I do I don't know what he's going to tell me. And if I'm honest, I'm scared of what he's going to tell me. And wherever you're scared of what he's going to tell you is a place where you don't trust his goodness. For some reason, we think obedience is God taking things away from us. Obedience is God leading you further down the narrow road into the wide life that he has for you. And every place where I struggle to obey is a place where I question his goodness and his love. "This is love for God, just to obey. To obey his commands, and his commands are not burdensome." They're meant to set you free. So, anything God asks you to do this fall, that seed is meant to bring life to your soul. Deciding to obey is like removing the rocks out of the soil before the seed gets sown. It's preparing it, so there's no resistance to that which is put in there, and it can grow and flourish and produce the return for which God sends us. Listen to me. The obedient heart here hears God's voice the clearest. I'll say it like this. God speaks the clearest to the obedient heart. Why? Because eventually the sower will stop sowing seeds on a heart that doesn't want to hear that which he has to say. He will wait until you have a posture to say, "I receive the seed you're sowing." So, what if you just decided to obey? Because I promise you, I don't even know what. You're like, you know, I don't even know what I'm going to say yet, man. And it's not what I say. It's what God wants to say. But what have you just decided? I just don't want to do another fall where I come in and out of this place and don't really do much with what God's saying. Because I believe he's going to speak, and I'm going to do it. I don't know. This time I'm going to do it. I didn't last time, and I don't know about the next time, but this time, this time, this time.



Confess and repent. If you really want to have a heart that receives the word of God, you've got to confess and repent because ongoing unrepentant willful sin is the greatest way to stop the move of God. Ongoing unrepentant willful sin is the greatest way to stop the move of God. Like, that's the hard soil. That's where it just gets snatched up. Why? Because there is this rebellious spirit within us refusing to do that which we know God has asked us to do. So, are there things in your life that the Holy Spirit, that the word of God, that the godly relationships in your life have convicted or challenged or exposed within you that God is just waiting for you to confess and repent? That's literally like taking a giant tractor tiller through that hard ground and stirring it all up so that it can be soft and receptive to the word of God that's to come. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we confess, if we agree, we bring it out of the darkness into the light. God's going to forgive you and put everything back right the way that it was supposed to be, and then repent. Repentance isn't just feeling bad about yourself. You may have some godly sorrow, but repentance is changing your thinking and changing your direction. In Paul, it says, "I preached that they should repent." Literally, one of the greatest words in all of human vocabulary, we think repent is condemnation and guilt and shame. Repentance is literally a lifeline to someone lost at sea. Repent and turn to God because he's right there, not far off, and prove their repentance by their deeds. Listen to me. Repentance is changing your thinking, but then it's changing your living. A repentant heart leads to active hands. Repentance is proved by action. That's what it says. Do you ever hear somebody say they're repentant but then keep doing the same thing? That's not repentance. Repentance is an action that changes. You know, I love this verse. This is, like, so much the heartbeat of our church. Some of you don't like that I don't talk about politics. Some of you don't like that we're constantly talking about moving and becoming and changing. It's the entire gospel, by the way. I'm a new creation. Old is gone. The new has come. Behold, I make all things new. Let's just stay. Repent and turn to God, and there should be an action, an activation, that takes place in your life. So, my question for you, are there things in your life that you know are already against what God has asked you to do? Are there distractions? Has your field become full of thorns and thistle? Maybe it's not even sin. It's just things that you've allowed to crowd out the word of God, the life of God, and the way of God in your life that you just need to acknowledge and take ownership of so that the field can be cleared for that which God wants to sow in your life.

And then, the last thing is just simply fast and pray. If we really want to prepare the soil of our hearts, fast and pray. What is fasting? We talked a lot about this last year. Fasting is just literally abstaining from food in order to feast on God. It's denying my flesh so I can walk in the spirit. It's choosing to say I'm choosing physical hunger to remind myself that I am created with a spiritual hunger that can only be satisfied in him. That I do not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. And when I fast, I'm denying my body and moving my heart and my soul in the direction I want it to go. I'm breaking the dependencies. I'm clearing the land. In a sense, fasting is like taking a big herbicide on the back of a tractor and going through and killing off all the weeds. All the things that shouldn't be there. It's like a giant detox for your soul so that it can be good soil ready for the word of God to be sown in it.

I love this. In Joel, it says, "Declare a holy fast. Call a sacred assembly. Summon all who live in the land to the house of the Lord and cry out to the Lord. Even now, declares the Lord, 'Return to me with all your heart with fasting and weeping and mourning.' Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and abounding in love." It says declare a holy fast. Call everybody, and say, "Let's return to the Lord." And how do we turn our heart to the Lord with fasting and prayer? And that's how we turn to the abounding love of God. So, I want to call a holy fast as we go into this fall, not this week. I'll give you a week to prepare, but the week of the 10th through the 17th, like next Sunday for a week. Would you fast and pray with me as we prepare for revival? I'm preparing for a revival. I don't know if you're preparing for school or work or sports, and all those things are good. Like, you're supposed to be a hope carrier in those spaces tend your garden with excellence. But I'm preparing for revival. And revival requires a soil that has been prepared for whatever God wants to do to come. And so, maybe you fast one day, maybe you fast lunch, or maybe you do a three-day juice fast. I don't really care, but this isn't like, "Yeah, I'm going to fast, like, two extra hours of TV or something." This isn't a technology fast. This is a food fast that is breaking the dependence of our physical body on the comforts of this world to say that I want my soul and my heart to be prepared for that which God wants to do in and among us. You don't have to do it. I'm not doing a ton of teaching on. We got all kinds of stuff. We're preparing for revival. Would you join me for all that God wants to do in the days to come? Because some of us, listen to me, some of you the fire in your soul is almost burned out. You got a few coals left. You need some logs on the fire. Some of you the window of your soul is so cloudy and dark with the soot of this world. It just needs to be cleaned off so you can see again. Some of you have become so passive and apathetic and lethargic that you just need someone to wake you up in Jesus' name for the life that God has for you, and in many ways that's what fasting does, and then it prepares the soil for the move of God to come because I can't make God move. Oh, I want to. I can't make a move though, but I can prepare for when he does. And when he does, I want to be there. And when he does, I want to be ready. And when those seeds start falling, I want my soil to be so ready that they take in any and everything that God offers so my life is a hundredfold of fruitfulness in Jesus' name. See, what do you want this fall, and what's the condition of your soil? Whatever you want is the direction that you'll go. And whatever the condition of your soil is will determine what kind of fruitfulness you'll experience. There's no pressure. There's no duty. There's no fear. There's no religion. You're good. If you're like, "My soil is hard, and I just want it to stay that way," okay. But if there's something stirring in you, then we can prepare this soil together in this space and in how we live and amongst one another so that we can experience the work of God in this place. I want more than going to church. I want more than just saying I'm a Christian. I want more than religion. I want more than even a good church and great people. I want to prepare for a move of God that I can't control that burns things and flows in ways and moves in a way that is beyond our understanding. And so, we need to make our lives attractive to God. The eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth, looking for those whose hearts are fully committed to him. Can he find that here? The Father is looking for worshipers who will worship him in spirit and in truth. Can he find that here? God is looking for men and women after his own heart who

will do whatever he asks them to do. Can he find that here? God is looking for people with a faith that will amaze him. Can he find that here? I believe he can, and I believe he can find that in you. The question is, what do you want? Because what God wants is to be found by you. What God wants this fall is to be found by you. Do you want to find him? Last thing I have for you is just simply this. He says, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Can I just ask you this? I've been thinking about this. Have you ever had a six-month window in your life where you can honestly say, for that six months, "I sought the Lord with all my heart? Is there one window in your entire life, whether you're 12, 20, or 68? Has there been one six-month window where you can look back and you can be like, "Honestly, I sought the Lord with all my heart in those six months? What if these six months were that six months? What if this was the time that you just said, "You know what, I got nothing to lose"? Like, I may as well do it, because if I don't find him, and I do it with all my heart, then maybe he's not. Maybe he's not. Maybe he's not real, maybe he's not good, maybe he's not there, maybe he doesn't care. I don't know. Wouldn't it be nice to actually answer that question, though? Because a lot of us live with this constant tension of who God is and our disappointment in him, but we can never actually answer the question. Did I ever seek God in a way that he tells me I will find him? So, I get mad at him for not seeking him the way that he tells me to seek him if I actually want to find him. So, I make poor conclusions about who he is and what he does because I never actually just did it the way he says it works. So, what if, like, what if, what if, what if, what if, one more time, what if, what if this fall you just try that, I'm just going to do it. I'm going to do it. I'm going to be here, and I'm going to engage in what God says I'm going to do, and I'm going to take the next step, and I'm going to get involved in something that I just think I'm better than and don't have time for. Because I would actually like to find him sometime in my life in a deeper way than I have before. He's right here. He's right here. Like, the resurrected Jesus is coming to this room today, and he's standing here, and he's speaking to you, and he's showing you his hands and his side, and he is removing your fear and filling you with joy and breathing a spirit into your world to say, "Hey, I love you, and I am so for you. And I want you to find me in ways like you never have before. So, will you seek me? Will you prepare your soil for me? Because you can't make me move, but you can prepare for when I do. And Valley Creek, get ready, because I want to move because I, the Lord your God, want to move among you in a new and fresh and powerful and profound way."

And so, Jesus, we choose today to till the soil of our heart that we may experience a 30, 60, 100-fold return. God help us break up the hard spots. Help us remove the rocks. Help us get rid of all of the thorns and thistles so that we will literally create a space for Your Word, Your spirit, Your people, Your grace, and Your love. God, we want to prepare for revival in Your name, so we cry out, we call, and we ask. Lord Jesus, move among us in a way that we might see heaven on earth in our time, in our place, in our homes, in marriages, in families, in jobs, and in lives. Come, Lord Jesus, come. We prepare ourselves for You to move. And even if You don't in the way we want, You are still worthy of us preparing the soil. Don't prepare to get something from God. Prepare because he is worthy of your preparation. So, Lord, we till it up. I think the Lord just wants to speak so many little things to so many different people right now.

Mustard seeds are falling on your heart. I'm not even going to speak out many of the ones I'm hearing him say to you because I just want to give you a second to just see what's the mustard seed he's dropping on your heart. In Jesus' name, may it be so. We love You, Jesus. Thank You for the gift of being in a community where we are known, loved, and valued and becoming more like You. In Your name, we pray. Amen.