

YOU HAVE BEEN TRAINED FOR THIS – SEPTEMBER 21, 2025

A COLLECTION OF TALKS – ONLINE EXPERIENCE

TAPE STARTS – [00:00:00]

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: So, welcome to Valley Creek. We worship the name of Jesus. And my name is Jason. I get to serve as the campus pastor here. And as we gather together as the people of God, I'm so glad you have gathered with us today. We love to worship and we love to pray. So, we just want to give a little bit of time for you to pray individually, and we're going to take a few minutes. And we are just going to pray the way that Jesus did using the words that Jesus used. He used these words in the Lord's Prayer. So, we want to give you a moment, so just pray to yourself and actually pray out these words with the focus on Jesus, lifting him up, lifting up the name of Jesus in the way that he prayed. So, right now, that's what we're going to do. We're going to pray the prayer that Jesus prayed.

[music 00:20:48:2 to 00:28:52:5]

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Jesus, we seek your face. Jesus, because of you, your father became our father in heaven. The superior reality that's not way far out there, but that is right here, closer than the air that we breathe. Your Kingdom come and your will be done in our lives, and in our families, in our church, in our city, in our nation, and in our world. Give us today our daily bread, God, give us exactly what we need, exactly when we need it. Not what we want, but what we need. And forgive us our sins. Today, we confess and repent of our sin, and our wickedness, and our rebellion in the black spots in our hearts.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And we release forgiveness to those who have heard us. We release the bitterness, and the resentment, and the pain, and the anger. Freely, we have received forgiveness, freely we give. And lead us not into temptation, but into green pastures and still waters, restore our souls. And we trust you to be the one to protect us. For you are the one who is truly in control of all things. Today we seek your face. Why don't you go ahead and grab your seat?

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: We're here to seek the face of Jesus, to lift up the name of Jesus, to worship, to pray, to turn our attention to God's word. And we know there is a lot going on in the world. There is always a lot going on in the world. And there might be a lot going on in your life because there is probably often a lot going on in your life. And so, I don't know how you came in here today. I don't know what's going on in here or in here. I don't know what kind of storm rages, what kind of anger, pain, brokenness, fear, heaviness, whatever may be going on in your life, but can I just take a moment to just minister to you?

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: You see, as Jesus was heading to the Cross. He looked at his disciples and he said in this world, "You will have trouble, but take heart, for I have overcome the world. Peace, I leave with you. My peace, I give to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." So, in the name of Jesus, may you receive His peace. May the Prince of Peace guard your heart and your mind. May His presence be your peace. See, the Scripture tells us that we haven't received a spirit of fear but a spirit of power, love, and sound mind. And so, in the name of Jesus, I bind the spirit of fear off of your life. We rebuke the spirit of fear off of your life, the spirit that wants to steal, kill, and destroy. The spirit that wants to control.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: The spirit that wants to strangle you, we bind it in Jesus' name. And instead, we release the spirit of power, and love, and a sound mind in Jesus' name. The Psalmist tells us that we put our hope in his word. That His Word is that which we hold on to and cling to. That is our anchor. And so, today we turn down the voice of the media. We turn down the voice of social media. We turn down the voice of the accuser, and the condemnation, and the shame. And we turn up the voice of God, the word of God that will return and will accomplish the purpose for which God has sent it. The word of God, which is living and active, sharper than any double-edged sword. The word of God that's a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path. The word of God that is spirit and truth. That is what we grab a hold of, that is the anchor. But we're told to above all else guard our heart.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: May you guard your heart in Christ Jesus. May you be also, so very careful what you look at and listen to. Because the condition of your heart determines the reality of your life. Whatever is in here flows out of here. And so, maybe some things have gotten in recently, or maybe some things have been exposed that have always been in there. I just say in Jesus' name may springs of living water wash your heart clean. May the spring of living water bubble up to cleanse, and restore, and heal, and purify your heart. And we've been told do not let any unwholesome talk come out of our mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their need, that it may benefit those who listen. You have been given a tongue, and it is very powerful. And God didn't give it to you to criticize, to condemn, to cancel, to tear down, to accuse, to come against.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: No, he gave you a tongue to bless, to build, and to create the future. And so, may you use your tongue for the purpose for which it was created. You see, if you have been a part of this church, you have been trained for this. I want you to listen to me very carefully. If you've been a part of this church, you have been trained for this. You've been training for this. You have been trained for such a time as this, for this moment. You say, What is this moment? Whatever is going on in your life, you have been trained for this. Why? Because you've been trained to face your giants and take authority over the giants within you. And you've been trained. And you've been training to be a disciple of Jesus, a learner, a student, a follower, becoming like him. Considering your ways, and counting the cost, and denying yourself, and picking up your Cross.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: You've been trained and you've been training to live a different way, doing the things that Jesus did, so you could do the things that Jesus did. Doing what Jesus did behind the scenes. So, you can do what Jesus did on the spot. Taking on the ways of Jesus, so you could do the works of Jesus. Embracing the habits of Jesus, so you can release the power of Jesus. You've been trained for this. You've been trained to be a person who confesses, and repents, and prays, and seeks God. You've been trained to be a hope carrier, a disciple of Jesus living on mission to change their world. You've been trained to go into the spaces and places of life that have no hope and show up as the person of hope. And hope leads. You come as salt, life, and light, and leaven. And you make all things rise in the name of Jesus. You radiate hope. You have been trained to hear God's Voice and follow by faith. You've been trained to know who you are, who God is, and what you were created to do.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: You've been trained to look at all the things that are happening in the world and say, God, what are You trying to do in me? You haven't just been going to church. You've been training. And you've been trained for such a time as this. So, can I lift up your head and invite you to take a breath of the spirit of the Living God and remind yourself that his divine power has given you everything you need for life and godliness. So, may you walk out your faith with hope and love because that's what you've been training for. And if you're new and you haven't been around here, and you showed up, guess what. We're going to point you to the name of Jesus. Because there is no other name under heaven by which men might be saved. The name of Jesus is a strong tower, and the righteous run into it. The more clearly we see Jesus, the more clearly we see everything else.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: In the face of Jesus is the knowledge of God, and we need the Knowledge of God in our lives. So, we must look at Jesus, the way, the truth, the life, the resurrection in the life, the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, the bread of life, the living water. We're going to talk to you and point you to and show you Jesus because he is the one thing, the only thing, the main thing. In fact, when Peter gets out of the boat, and he's walking on water because he's looking at Jesus. And he's not just walking on water, he's walking on a storm. But the moment he takes his eyes off Jesus and looks at the wind, and the waves, he begins to sink. There are a lot of wind and waves in your life. When you look at them, you sink. And in a world with a bunch of sinking people, everyone wants to reach up and grab a hold of your ankle and pull you down too. So, in the name of Jesus, may you lift your head and look to his face that you may walk not just on the waters of life but the storms of life.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Because he is good and he is good to you. And so, may you receive that peace in Jesus' name. May you be grateful for it and hopeful because of it. And may you walk out your faith with hope and love in Jesus's name. So, once again, I say to you, welcome to Valley Creek. Hope is here. Everyone is welcome. Jesus changes everything. We're a Jesus-focused, spirit-filled, life-giving church. That's who we've always been. That's who we'll always be. That's who we are. We're Jesus-focused. We talk about Jesus. We look at Jesus. We lift up the name of Jesus. There is no other name but the name of Jesus.

He's the one thing, the main thing, the only thing, the everything. We look to Jesus because in the face of Jesus is the knowledge of God, and the more clearly we see him, the more clearly we see everything else.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: We're spirit-filled, which means, we don't want to walk in our flesh. We want to walk in the character and the power of Jesus, and we're life-giving. We receive the life of God, and we release it into this world around us. That's what you're training to become. That's who we are training you to be. That's what we've always been training. That's what we'll always be training, toward Jesus-focused, spirit-filled, life-giving. What a time to be alive in God's Kingdom! Because he is good and he is good to you, and he has a great calling on your life. And so, he is calling you unto him. And so, I'm glad you're here. And I'm glad to be a part of a people that are focused on Jesus and only Jesus. See, we've been in this thing called a Collection of Talks on Movement, Mission, and Maturity. We're talking about moving with Jesus, being on mission with Jesus, maturing in Jesus. And if you've been here this year in many ways, this Collection of Talks is like the sister to our missional move, create the future series that we did in the spring.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: A missional move when we take a next step, so that somebody else can take theirs when we move missionally. And we talked about creating a future that doesn't exist over the next five years. And in many ways, that series was a vision. It was a dream. It was something we could do together that we could never do on our own. Well, in many ways, this Collection of Talks are the intangible realities that are required to create that future. The things we're talking about in this Collection of Talks are the culture, the beliefs, the attitude, the spirit, the DNA, the heart that we must take a hold of if we're actually going to create a future that doesn't exist. But you see, right from the beginning of Jesus's ministry, right when he started, it says from that time on Jesus began to preach, repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near or at hand. Do you understand that Jesus only had one message?

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: From that time on, he preached one message, Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. We think he had lots of messages. He had one, one. Repent, change your mind, change your direction. The Kingdom of God, the rule and reign of God, the availability of the Kingdom of God, the with God life, another kind of life being born from above, life that is truly life. It's near, it's available, it is at hand. And that's the only message that Jesus preached. And that's why it's the only message that we preach. From that time on, when did that time end? It didn't. He's still preaching, Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. And as he was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Peter and Andrew, two men. He saw them, he saw who they were. He saw who they could become. And he says, "Come and follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." At once, they left their nets and followed him. You must understand that to repent and enter the Kingdom of God, there is always something that gets left behind.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: There is always something that gets left behind because you've changed your mind, you've changed your direction. And over the last few weeks, we've been talking about this Verse, "Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men." So, here's my question for you. What does that verse mean to you? What does that verse mean to you, because the same invitation that Jesus gave Peter and Andrew is the same invitation? He extends to you and me. So, it's probably pretty important that we actually wrestle through and ask ourselves, what does that actually mean? Like, what is he saying? Is he saying, "Come to church and you'll have a life of peace and prosperity?" Is he saying, "Just believe in me and there'll be no more storms in your life?" Is he saying, "Just come hang out with me, and you and I will go on a personal journey, and it'll just be the two of us?" No? He says, "Come follow me. Come, live a life of movement, and I will make you fishers of men, and we'll go on a great mission together."

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: He says, "Come follow me, and I will make you." We follow. He makes, and his ability to make is always greater than our willingness to follow. And so, Jesus invites you to a life of movement. Movement is the evidence of life, and Jesus only makes things that are in motion. This is why he doesn't say, "Sit here and I'll make you." He says, "No, follow me, like you got to move. I got to put the clay on the potter's wheel, and as it starts spinning, now I can form it, and shape it, and mold it." So, he invites you to a life of movement, but he invites you to a life of mission. Right from the beginning, when he calls you, he doesn't pull any punches. He makes it very clear, if you're going to follow me, you're going to fish for men, you're going to go on mission. Why? Because to follow me is to get in the lives of other people, because that's where I'm going. And if you're going to be a disciple of me, you're going to follow me, and I'm going into the lives of lost, lonely, and broken people. So, to follow me is to be on mission. So, God makes things that are in motion, and he only makes things that are missional.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And if these guys were farmers, Jesus would've said to them, "Come follow me, I'll make you growers of men." If they were builders, he would've said Follow me, "I'll make you builders of men." If they were teachers, he'd say, "I'll make you teachers of men." If they were doctors, he'd say, "I'll make you healers of men". The point is, he's saying, "Come with me on a life of mission." He invites us to this missional reality because he only makes things that are missional. See, God doesn't make things that are arbitrary, trivial, useless, pointless. No, he only makes things that are beautiful, glorious, and good that have a profound purpose to them. That's why it says the Heavens declare the Glory of God, the skies proclaim the work of his hands, day after day, they pour forth Speech. Night after night, they display Knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. All of creation is missional, declares the beauty and the glory and the majesty of God. When He made man in his image and his likeness, he says, "Be fruitful and multiply."

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And right from the beginning, humanity is there as an image bearer, a representative, showing other realities, the Goodness and the Glory of God. When He makes marriage, He takes two and makes them one, which is now missional so they can be fruitful and multiply, but also to reveal the Unity of God in the midst of diversity. When he

makes the church, the Body of Christ, we become the hands and feet of Jesus on this earth. God only makes things that are missional, beautiful, glorious, and purposeful, which means, in Jesus's name, you are beautiful, and glorious, and purposeful. And God wants to do something great in you as he does something great through you. We think it's all about what he wants to do through us. No, that is his access to do something great inside of us to form and shape and mold and rub off all of the rough spots, and the selfishness and the worldliness and the things of our flesh that need to die so that we can be free to live.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: You see, one day, Jesus and his disciples were walking down the road. This is Mark, Chapter 10. They're 10 chapters into a 16-chapter journey. So, they've been with Jesus for a little while. They're His disciples, they're learning, they're following, they're becoming. They think they've got Jesus figured out. But Jesus was still so much different, so much more different than they even thought He could be. And as they're walking down the road, there is a blind man on the side of the road, and his name is Bartimaeus. And as he realizes that it's Jesus who walks by. He starts calling out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And the disciples very quickly rebuke him, "Shhh, be quiet, be quiet, man. We're busy, we're doing big things, important things, we're on a journey with Jesus, shhh." And the more the disciples quiet him, the louder he gets, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." And it's not that Jesus didn't hear him.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: It's that Jesus was trying to see whether or not his disciples had yet picked up his heart. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy, shhh, be quiet man, I told you. We're on a journey with Jesus. Leave us be." And Jesus finally stops, turns around, and he looks at his disciples. And He says, "Call him. This is amazing." Jesus doesn't say, "Hey Bartimaeus, what do you -- no, you call him to me. You call him to me. See, the disciples thought this was an interruption from the journey of discipleship, and Jesus was showing them, no, this is discipleship. They thought calling the blind man was an interruption to their journey with Jesus. Jesus is saying, "No, this is the journey with me." You call him to me, and he waited. And so, they went and they said, up. Now they're all excited and happy. Up, on your feet. He's calling. He's calling you.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And it says, the man threw aside his beggar's cloak, which was his identity that he would use to take care of himself, begging for coins. And he stands up on his feet, and they bring him to Jesus. And Jesus says, "What do you want me to do for you? He says, "I want to see." Jesus gives him sight, and it says immediately he praised God and started following Jesus on the road of life. I tell you that story because that is the story of mission. We get on this road, on this journey with Jesus. And we can be 10 chapters into a 16-chapter journey. We can be on this road for a long time thinking we've got it all figured out, thinking we're mature, but we somehow still think the journey is about us, my needs, my wants, my desires, what's important to me, what's on my heart. And Jesus is walking us by, people on the side of road who have been sidelined by sin that is stolen, killed, and destroyed, and they're calling out. And Jesus is waiting to see whether or not we've picked up his heart for the world.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Because that was the point of following him from the beginning. I follow, and he makes me a fisher of men. And He turns around and he stops and he says, "You call him to me, you, call her to me, you call that one, Bartimaeus." That's the one I love, that's the one I see, that's the one I care about, but I'm not calling him. I'm asking you to call him, you call him to me. And we get to invite people to throw off the brokenness of this world. To stand up, meet Jesus, get on the road of life. And ultimately, follow him that he might make them to become fishers of men as well. See what we see about Jesus in that story is, he has the spirit of invitation. The spirit of invitation. Jesus invited and included everyone. He made space for everyone in his kingdom. That's why he says, "In my father's house, there are many rooms, and I'm going to prepare a place for you, Bartimaeus."

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: For you, and this is why we watch as he goes through the gospels and he calls people, everyone from Zacchaeus, the tax collector and the woman at the well, and the woman caught in adultery, and he calls Peter in his shakiness, and John and James in their anger, and he calls Matthew in his greedy tax collecting. And he calls Simon the zealot, who wants to overthrow the government. I mean, it's like Jesus called anyone and everyone who would listen unto Himself. So, to follow Jesus is to live with the spirit of invitation, is to live with the spirit of inclusion, to be a disciple, a missional people, a missional church, a missional culture, is to live with the spirit of invitation because that's what Jesus did for us. I have even called you by your name. I have named you, though you have not known me. You know what that says. That says when you were the blind man or the blind woman on the side of the road calling out in the world, and church and religion rebuked you and said be quiet, Jesus stopped, to call you by name.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: He called you by name when you were blind, and you couldn't see, and you say, well, how? Yes, he told so, you call him to me, you call her to me. That's why someone else probably invited you. Someone else probably brought you. Someone else probably built a beautiful church for you to be a part of. Someone else lived a life that was so inspiring that the light turned on in your darkness and showed you the way of Jesus. Why? Because he calls us unto himself through other people. He called you when you were an enemy. When you were hostile, when you were against God, when you wanted nothing, when you thought the best of life was being a blind beggar on the side of the road. He stopped and called you by name to heal you and get you on the road of life because he lives with the spirit of invitation, because everyone is welcome in his kingdom. That's why it says you are worthy to take the scroll and open it. Seals for you are slain. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, and have redeemed us to God by your blood out of every tribe, tongue, people, and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And we shall reign on the Earth. What a Verse! It says, "In God's Kingdom, there is every tribe, every tongue, every people, every nation." You know what that means. That everyone's invited. People that don't look like you, don't talk like you, don't think like you, don't live like you, don't get excited about the things you get, don't get passionate about the things that you get. Yes, all those people they're all invited in the

kingdom. That's why it's such a gift to be in a multi-generational multi-ethnic, multi-national, multi-demographic church. Why? Because it shows us the reality of heaven that every tribe, every tongue, every people, and every nation are invited in, and he takes a bunch of blind beggars and makes them kings and priests. "You follow me and I'll make you. I'm not just going to heal your blindness. No, I'm going to make you a king and a priest and give you power to rule with authority in my world." This is why it says you are all sons of God through faith in Christ.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: For all of you who are baptized into Christ, have clothed yourself with Christ, and there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female. For you are all one in Christ. In other words, once we're in Jesus, what unites us is infinitely greater than that which divides us. There is nothing that divides us anymore when we're included in Christ because we become his body. So, whether you are a Jew, a Greek, a slave or free, a male or female, it really doesn't matter. You're now included in Christ, you are invited, you are included, you're on the road of life with him, on mission with his people. In Jesus's name, this is who we are. This is who we are, and we're becoming like him. A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully, say it, trained, will be like his teacher. You've trained, you've been training. This is what it means to be a disciple. I'm becoming like -- I'm actually training to do the things that Jesus did. And if he had a spirit of invitation, then I must become a person with a spirit of invitation.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: That it can't be about me and my journey anymore. It must be bigger than that. In fact, that's why it says, you know, the name of the Holy Spirit is the spirit of adoption. What does that mean? To adopt someone is to invite them into your family. Do you know you're told to practice hospitality? What does hospitality mean? It means to invite someone into your life and your home. You're told that victory is found in the counsel of many. Do you know what that means? It means I'm supposed to invite other people into the decision-making of my life, that I might find that which God desires for me to do. So, the question is, are you inviting people into your family? Are you inviting people into your home, into your life? Are you inviting people into the decisions that you make? Because we're becoming like Jesus, living with the spirit of invitation. It's why he says, "Freely you have received, freely give." Can I just say this to you? Do you know what it says? Freely you have been invited, freely invite. Freely you have been included, freely include.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Freely you have been welcomed into God's Kingdom, freely welcome other people into his Kingdom. You have a responsibility to give that which you have received. And here's what I love, whatever God touches you with, you become. Do you know this? This is profound. Whatever God touches you with in scripture, you become. He's the light of the world. When He touches you with that light, you now become the light of the world. He's the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. He touches you with that righteousness, you become the righteousness of God. He is love on display. He touches you with that love, you become a person of love. He's living hope. He touches you with that hope, you become a hope carrier. He's an Inviter. He touches you with that invitation, you

become an inviter. He is the church. He touches you with the church, you become the church. And when He touches you, you become missional.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Every Identity statement of these people on this journey with God is missional. Like, he says, "You are witnesses." What does witness mean? It means that I need to tell other people what I've seen and what I've heard. The Bible says you're a living letter. You are literally a letter that other people can read. God has written a story on your life, and he's mailed it to the people around you that they might read it to discover who he is and what he has done. You're an ambassador, a representer of the Kingdom of God. You're a minister of reconciliation, taking the broken and shattered pieces of people's lives and this world and ministering, serving them by putting them back together in Jesus's name. This is how it works. And it is so important for us as the people of God to wake up to this reality. And walk it out because God is waiting for us to do it. See, in many ways, I think God has stopped, and he's waiting. He's just saying, "Hey, you call him to me." I don't want to.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: I know. And that's also why we're going to wait here until we work that out in your heart and your life. Because this is not pass, go collect \$200 and move on with your journey. There is no journey past this. This is the journey. I've called you to follow me, and I would make you a fisher of men. This is the moment, you call him to me. You invite him to church. You invite her to your circle. You invite that student to your serve team. You invite that person into your life. You invite that person into the Kingdom of God. You call him to me. See, that's how God touches lost, lonely, and broken people. We think he sends a lightning bolt from heaven or just shows up in a mystery vision. He can do those things, and he does, but the primary way God touches people in this world who are on the sideline of life, blind in their darkness, is through the physical hands of the Body of Christ.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Of His people. Look at this. It says, "As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. Follow me, he told him. And Matthew got up and followed him, left something behind. Because you always have to leave something behind. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, Matthew threw a party for Jesus. Many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. See, Matthew was friends with the sinners and the tax collectors. So, when Jesus invited Matthew, Matthew's, first thing that he did was throw a party to invite all of them to come meet Jesus, who changed his life, or how about finding Philip? He said to him, "Follow Me." So, Philip, first thing he does is found Nathanael and told him we have found the one Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph. "Nazareth? Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked. "Come and you will see," said Philip. Jesus found Philip.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: So, Philip went and found Nathanael and dealt with Nathanael's doubts with compassion, and kindness, and grace, and just said, "Just come and you will see." Or how about the woman at the well when Jesus gives her springs of living water, leaving her water jar behind, because you always have to leave something behind when you truly repent. That's how you know you've repented. Things of your past don't come with

you into your future. The woman went back to town and said to people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did." Could this be the Christ? They came out of the town and made their way toward him. She invited the town. The town came in. See, this is what God does. He touches people, knowing they will be the key to touching other people's lives. You have relationships that no one else in this church has relationships with. God has touched you, knowing you are the key to touching them. He knows, you're going to be the one walking by Bartimaeus. No one else in this church knows, sees, or walks by on their road of life, Bartimaeus, but you do. So, He has touched you.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And said when we get to Bartimaeus, I'm going to say, "You call him to me." Now here's the challenge. If you do this for a while and you go on the journey, eventually, you'll extend lots of invitations that aren't accepted. If you're 10 chapters into a 16-chapter journey, I promise you, you've invited lots of people that didn't come. You've planted lots of seeds that didn't grow, and we can get really discouraged and really defeated, but Jesus straight up says many get invited, only if you make it. In other words, everybody is invited, but not everybody is interested. A lot of seeds are planted, but not everything grows. And here's what can happen over time. As you invite people who don't accept the invitation, you can start questioning, "Does the gospel even work? Does the gospel even work?" And we let their rejection of God determine our response to him. But the question is not, does the gospel work in their life? The question is, has the gospel worked in your life? Because if it's worked in my life, it doesn't matter if they accept or reject the invitation.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: No, I'm following him. He is making me. Obedience is being a fisher of men. So, he says, invite. I'm responsible to invite. I am not responsible who makes it. In fact, it's Peter at the end of his life. Do you remember this? Jesus comes to restore Peter, and he says, "Peter, they have his little talk." He says, "Hey, later in your life, you're going to have to go places you don't want to go and do some things you don't want to do. And a rope's going to be tied around you, and people are going to drag you to a place that you don't want to go." And when Jesus is telling him all that, Peter looks at John standing off in the distance. He says, "Well, what about him, Lord? What do you have to say about him?" Jesus says, "What is that to you? You follow me. I just tell you something today. What is it to you, what anyone else does in this moment of time? What is it to you, what anyone else does in this moment of time?"

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: This is the moment where Jesus says, "What is that to you? You follow me. Don't worry about everybody else. Just you. And if you come with me and do what I ask you to do, you'll be amazed at the journey. We'll go on." See, here's what's amazing to me. Jesus says, "Come follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." This is really important. He doesn't say catchers of men. That's profound. You know what that means? It means you can fish, but you don't ever catch. You say, well, that's, no. You fish. You go out. You find the best spots, and you go out early and you stay late, and you throw every lure you got. But you can only bring the fish to the boat. Only Jesus can catch it, net it, scoop it, save it, transform it, and bring it home. My job is to fish. It is not to catch because I cannot catch.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Only he can catch. And when I get that, I can extend invitations to Bartimaeus. And if he doesn't take it, I'm okay because I know I fish, but only he catches. In fact, this is why we say that mission is using all of my life, all of my life, time, energy, money, words, actions, power, authority, social media, my business, my home, my stuff, all of my life to help people discover and experience. Discover, they don't know they're in the dark like blind Bartimaeus. They literally cannot see and experience. I'm trying to help them taste and see that God is good through my life. That's the best lure I got, the availability of the Kingdom of God through the person and the work of Jesus. We've said that's the gospel. That the Kingdom of God, the rule and reign of God, the -- with God life, another kind of life, life from above, is available through the person and the work of Jesus. This is mission. This is mission.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: We can use our life to help people discover and experience, but we can't help people get saved and be transformed. Only Jesus can do that, and we're not supposed to use all of our life to demand people to conform to external behaviors. That's religion. Religion uses all of its life to demand people to conform to an external reality, a form of godliness, but no power. That's not what we do. We fish, we invite, and we let Jesus do it. Only he can do. And you have to ask yourself the question, which people am I supposed to invite? Am I supposed to invite everybody all the time? That would be a little overwhelming, wouldn't it? Do you want to come? Do you want to come? Do you want to come? Stop. Which people do you invite? The ones that Jesus tells you to. Do you understand that Jesus walked by a lot of sick people and didn't heal them? Do you understand that he walked by lots of people and didn't invite them?

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Do you understand that Jesus went to the Pool of Bethesda, where there was a whole bunch of sick people? And out of all those sick people there, he picked one man and said, "Do you want to get well?" You say, How on earth did he do? Because Jesus only did what he saw the Father doing? I tell you the truth. The son can do nothing by himself. He can do only what he sees the father doing because whatever the father is doing, the son does also. In other words, Jesus only does what the Father's doing, says what the Father's saying, goes where the Father is going. This is why Jesus did things that the crowd didn't like. Do you understand how demanding the crowd was on Jesus? They demanded him, "Come here." They demanded him, "Go there." They demanded him, "Say this." They demanded him, "Don't say that." They demanded him, "Do this." They demanded him, "Don't do that." They demanded him, "Talk about this." They demanded him, "Don't talk about that." They had all these demands on Jesus. But Jesus was not led by the demands of the crowd. He was led by the commands of his father. He wasn't led by the needs of the crowd.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: He was led by the love and the voice of his father. So, he only did what he saw the father doing. So, he saw the father healing Bartimaeus. And therefore, said, "You call him to me." See, Jesus knows. He knows what's going on. He sees. He gets the perspective that we don't have. So how do you know? You don't have to be

overwhelmed. You listen for when he stops and says, "You call him to me. You call her to me." Why didn't you call that one? Because he didn't tell me to. I'm really focused on the one he called me to. So, we have to be very careful to question people's motives and character and heart, because how do you know they're not doing what the father is telling them to do? How do you know that in life? The Psalmist says, "Search me, Oh God, and know my heart." Test my anxious thoughts and see if there's any offensive way in me. It doesn't say, "Hey, God, I've tested them, and I found a lot of stuff in there. So, I'm going to set it straight."

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: How do you know they're not doing what the father asked them to do? And a great question you have to ask yourself is, "Did you ever pay attention to the kind of people Jesus actually reached?" This is interesting. Who did Jesus actually reach? In a normal day? In a crisis day? In a good day? In a hard day? Who are the people that he actually reached? He didn't. If you read the gospels, he doesn't reach a lot of wealthy, affluent, successful, pretty popular, influential people. If you just read the gospels, that's not who he reaches. He reaches the misfits, the least of these, the outcasts, the down and outs. What Paul would call the scum of the Earth. Say why? It's because when he's teaching the Sermon on the Mount, he says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: In other words, happy, joyful are those who know they are broken in here, for it's really easy for them to come into the Kingdom of God. But this verse has an opposite reality to it. Challenged are the wealthy in this world, for they have to be very intentional about entering the Kingdom of Heaven. This is why Jesus says, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom?" Doesn't say impossible. It says hard. Why? Because to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, you can't bring anything or anyone with you. It's a narrow gate. It's a small door, which means I have to humble myself, come low, leave everything behind, and enter in if I want to experience this ever-widening life that he has for me. So, when I'm poor in spirit, when I'm broken, when I have a lot of things going on, guess what?

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: It's pretty easy to leave everything behind because I don't like it anyway, and enter into the ever-widening life. But when I'm rich in things, rich in money, rich in time, rich in health, rich in beauty, rich in relationships, rich in family, rich in wisdom, rich in opinions and preferences and pride, guess what I've got all this stuff. So, now, I'm not so interested in setting it down. I want to bring it with me. But I have to set it down and go through, and then God can decide whether or not he gives it back to me. See, you know this is true because whatever you're rich in, that is a place where you're probably not very aware of God in your daily life. Whatever you're wealthy in, that's probably not the place where you're desperate for God. But the moment you become poor in something, poor in your marriage, it's falling apart, Jesus! Poor in your soul because of what's happening in the world, Jesus! Poor in your health because you got a bad diagnosis, Jesus!

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: But isn't it amazing how when your body was healthy, you didn't think twice about him? Why? Because I'm rich, I'm wealthy, I have an abundance. So, I

don't need him. I rely on myself. So, whatever you're rich in, that's the thing you have to be very mindful of to make sure you lay down. And if you're rich in money, this is why God invites you to tithe, because it's the only way to lay it down to enter through the Kingdom that he can give it back to you. If you're rich in time, this is why you need to get on a serve team, so you give up control of your schedule because you're wealthy in it. So, how do you humble yourself to go through in that area? If you're rich in relationships or family, you have to invite other people into your life to lay down the us for no more so that you can enter into the fullness of what He has. If you're rich in wisdom, you need to put yourself in postures where you humble yourself and receive from others. If you're rich in opinions and preferences and pride and worldliness.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: See, I think we are so rich in opinions and preferences and pride and worldliness. That's why we can't get in the Kingdom. It's right there. It's at hand. It's available. I just can't bring all that stuff with me. It's like, no, Jesus, I'll come with you, but I'm bringing this opinion, this preference, and this pride, and this thing of the world. And he says, "Yes, I know, but you can't make it through the door. You can't make it through the door with all that." But are you reaching? That's the place you have to acknowledge that that's the barrier for you living in the fullness of God's Kingdom. This is why Jesus tells a parable. He says the Kingdom of Heaven is like a master who throws a great party. And when the party was ready, he sent his servant to go tell people, Come. And he goes to the first guy and says the party is ready. God says, "I ain't coming. I just bought a field." Goes to the next guy, says the party's ready. He says, "I ain't coming. I just got some oxen." Goes to the third guy. He says, "I ain't coming. I just got married." He goes back home, tells the master. Master is mad.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: He says, "Then fine, then go into the streets, in the alleys and get the poor, the blind, the lame, the broken, and they come to the party." The first guy was rich in opportunity. The second guy was rich in stuff. The third guy was rich in relationships, and they weren't willing to lay it down to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. How hard it is when we're wealthy in the things of this life to truly submit and surrender to the Lordship of Jesus. You see, a question that we have to ask, this is so important, is we say we want to reach people. What does it mean to reach people? To find them. You want to reach people? Yes, we do. We want to seek and save the lost. They're lost. Yes. Does that mean they're terrible people going to hell? No, it means they're lost. They don't know where they are, where they're going, where they came from, how they got there. They don't know what's good, true, or right. They're lost. So, we want to reach them. What does it mean to reach them? Does to reach somebody mean they go to church?

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Does to reach somebody mean they post a Bible verse on their social media accounts? Does to reach somebody mean they vote the way you want them to vote? Does to reach somebody mean they have received the forgiveness of their sins, they go back to their life as it was, and believe they're going to go to heaven? What does it mean to reach somebody? This is really important because we use this term, "All the time." To reach somebody means they have become a disciple of Jesus. It means they've submitted and

surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus. They're working out their salvation with fear and trembling. They're choosing radical obedience and personal holiness, and they've decided I've counted the cost, I've considered my ways, and Jesus knows what is good and true and right. To reach somebody means they're receiving active his grace, experiencing active his presence, and releasing active His Kingdom, that the Kingdom is available through the person and the work of Jesus, and they've entered in and he has restored their identity, reconciled their relationships, and redeemed their purpose. That's what it means to reach somebody. And we want to reach more people.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Every empty seat at every campus is a seat we want to see somebody experience this, but we also want to reach more of the people that are sitting here. Yes, I want to reach lost people that don't know Jesus. You know what else? I want to reach more of your soul. Because there are places in your life that are not yet submitted and surrendered to the Kingdom of God. There are places in my life that need to be reached because they're in rebellion to God's Kingdom. So, the question is, are you receiving his grace, experiencing his presence, and releasing his Kingdom, like, have you been reached? See, I think sometimes we disappear for a while, and we come back. And in those moments, it's God's goodness calling us back and say, Hey, there's so much more. Don't let me give you sight and then go back to the world. Let me give you sight and come with me into the green pastures and the still waters.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: In fact, this is why Jesus defining what it means to reach somebody. He says, "Therefore, go and make disciples." See it? Move and mission. Go and make disciples. Well, we can't catch them. What can we do? We can have people know it is good and true and is right, and wrestle through their life and decide that Jesus is worth following. And then we baptize them, immerse them in the love of the Father, grace of the Son, power of the Spirit, and then teach them to obey. Obedience is evidence of being reached. This is the difference between cultural Christianity and Jesus. Cultural Christianity is identify, post, declare, whatever. Jesus says that evidence of being his disciple is obedience. Walking, working it out, and obeying all the way till now, I'm on mission with other people.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And notice, he says, "I am with you." Because when you follow him, that's where we're going to go into the lives of other lost, lonely, and broken people. And so, are you working out your salvation with fear and trembling? Are you living radical holiness? Don't worry about anybody else. Are you experiencing personal? Have you -- are you being immersed, baptizing them? Notice, it doesn't say baptized as if it's over. Baptizing them, plural. You know what I'm trying to do today? I'm trying to immerse you in the Love of the Father, the Grace of the Son, and the Power of the Spirit. You're like, well, I got baptized when I was a kid in the water. Fine. Now I'm trying to this moment, immerse you in the Father's Love, the Grace of the Son, and the Power of the Spirit, hoping that you now say, you know what, I need to get on the road of life. I got to get off this sideline. See, here's what I love about Jesus. What he does is he lowers the barriers and raises the standard at the same time. This is Jesus.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: He lowers the barriers. Whomsoever will, may come, lost, lonely, and broken, leper, blind, mute, sick, whatever. And at the same time, he raises the standards and says, "This is what it means to be alive. This is what it means to be human. This is what it means to be a disciple and a Christian, and walk with God, and what I have created you for." So, he lowers the barriers and raises the standards at the same time. And the problem what we often do is when we lower the barrier, we lower the standard. We say anyone can come and you can stay like it. Or, we try to raise the standard, we raise the barrier. You can only get in if you look like this. Jesus does this. Whomsoever will, may come. He is the wide open door. But he also says this is what it means to be alive. And he is the grace that empowers you to walk the narrow road. And so, you might come in today, and it might be everything you took just to get here. Great. The door is wide. Whomsoever will, may come.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And as we walk with Jesus, he starts leading us towards what we were actually created for. So, you might be at a place where you're like, man, just all I can do is the weekend. You're not yet ready for a circle, or maybe you're in a circle. You're not ready for a serve team, or maybe you're a serve team. You're not ready to be a leader, or you're like, I can come to a movement night, but not student leadership. Or I can come to a young adult gathering, but not VC College. That's fine. We're all on this journey. But Jesus lowers the barrier and raises the standard at the same time. And that's what we try to do as a church. Everyone is welcome and wanted by the grace of God. But also, by the grace of God, we're not going to lower who you were actually created to be. We're going to preach Jesus and him crucified, which leads to an ever increasing, ever-growing, ever transforming life. This is what we do with our leaders. Do you realize every leader in this church, every leader that is committed to be a leader in this church commits to tithe? That alone should blow you away. Every leader that you see in circles, teams, anything. They give 10% of everything God gives them back to the Mission of God.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: That's how our mission that, they give it back to the Mission of God. They agree to lead in that role for one year. No questions asked. No matter what's going on, they've made a commitment. They agree to walk out our vision and our values so that they can say, follow me as I follow Jesus. Not perfect, but a life worth following. And then they memorize scripture every semester. Ready for me to teach you his Law? No, I'm not. That's what every leader in this church is memorizing right now. That's what every leader in this church memorized last semester. That's what every leader in this church memorized the semester before that. What is that? That is, whomsoever will, may come, but this is a life you are created for. And you don't want leaders that talk like the world. You want leaders that have the word of God inside of them because the mouth speaks out of the overflow of the heart. You want to know what's inside you? Listen to your words.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Whatever comes out of your mouth is what's inside you. Jesus says, "This is what I want inside of me. This is what I want inside of you. This is what I want inside of our children." You say, I can't memorize. Nobody's telling you you have to memorize,

chill. I'm just saying, Jesus, by his grace, will take you to a place you never thought you could go if you walk with him. And it's his kindness that gets you there. It's not his shame. It's not anger. It's not demanding. It's not controlling. It's kindness. I believe some of you walked in here today, and you're not even sure why you're here. You just -- but it's God's kindness bringing you here today. And someone was walking down the road of life, and they saw you. And Jesus said, "Call him to me. Call her to me." And maybe you saw a website, or a social media post, or a building. And you've been thinking for the last two years, I should pop into that building. And today's the day. Why? Because someone else built this building. And in that moment, God said, "Call you unto me." When someone else said, see, it's like it's God's kindness that is at work.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: It's God's kindness that is moving behind the scenes. It's God's kindness that's drawing you unto himself. And so, we as the people of God must live out this missional reality because there is so much more. There is so much more. Listen, let me try to pull this whole thing together for a second. The American Military exists in a sense to protect and serve the country. It's a very clear mission. They're there to protect and serve the country. And within that military, there are really unique elite units that do really unique missional things; Delta Force, Navy SEALs, and Green Berets, and Special Tactics Squadron. And there's all these unique forces that do amazing things. Well, could you imagine if after a year of being a Navy SEAL? A Navy SEAL is like, I just don't like my commanding officer anymore. I'm going to go be a part of Delta Force.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And can you imagine after a year of being in Delta Force, the Delta Force guy is like, you know what? I just don't like the barracks, these facilities. They're not for me. I'm going to go be a part of the Special Tactics Squadron. And imagine a guy in the STS, and he's like, you know what? All my kids' friends live at the Navy SEAL base. So, I'm not going to be STS anymore. I'm going to go be Navy SEALs. If they were focused on their preferences, they wouldn't be able to live on mission. At some point in time, the mission became more important than their preferences. So, it didn't matter what their preferences or opinions were. What matters is they have a very unique mission within the overarching mission. And if they lose sight of their unique mission and the overarching mission, nobody's going to be protected and nobody's going to be served. Okay. That is a great picture of the church of Jesus. We are on a very specific mission. And this mission matters. And the more you get worked up about the things in the world, the more you realize how important this mission actually is. And one of the greatest barriers that exists between the people of God and the Mission of God is that we make it about our preferences.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Hear me, your preferences are never more important than the mission. We become blind-barred man. As we get healed, we get on the road. And as soon as we get on the road, we think it's about us. My opinions, my rights, my desires, my things. Jesus is like, "No, you call him to me. Listen to me." Church is not a place you go. It's the people you belong to. You don't go to Valley Creek. You're like, that's semantics. That's church guy doing church things. It's not. It's theology, mindset, and attitude. I don't go here. I'm a part of this people. I belong to a people. I don't come here to be entertained.

No, no, I'm on a mission. I don't come here to consume. I'm here to contribute. I don't have rights in the church. I have responsibilities. Why? Because there is a mission that's greater than me. And the moment I opened my eyes and got off the sidelines and onto the road, he told me exactly where we were going, to fish for other men.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And at some point in time, we have to stop doing this thing. The weakness of the American church is we go from place to place and thing to thing because we don't care about the mission. Oh, no, no, no. Just how effective is a Navy SEAL if every three months to three years, he changes forces? You're like, he's still? He's not. He's not on mission. Can you imagine if blind Bartimaeus gets healed, gets on the road, starts following Jesus? And was like, Jesus, you're going a little fast. Can you slow down? This is like a lot. And Jesus, why are You always talking about the Kingdom? Can't you talk about something else? And Jesus, why are all these people like joining us? Like I thought it was just going to be you. And this is a lot. And Jesus, like, why are you bringing the mute guy and the deaf guy and that woman with the thing, like, I don't really, I don't relate to them. If it wasn't so true, it wouldn't be funny. I don't relate - that's okay, Bartimaeus.

[01:25:57:4]

PASTOR JOHN STICKL: I've called you on road of life. And I know, you didn't totally understand what it was all about. And you might be 10 chapters in one chapter and 5 chapters in 15 chapters into a 16-chapter Journey. But you are the blind man on the side of the road, or you aren't the blind man on the side of the road. And today, or a long time ago, Jesus stopped and told someone, "You call him to me. You call her to me." And your eyes are opened, and you're seeing. And when you're seeing Jesus, you see everything else. And you can put the world. You can sort it out. You can find peace in your soul. You can understand where you came from and where you're going and why you're here and what you're supposed to do in the midst of all of it. Why? Because I was blind. But now I see. And I was on the sideline, but now I'm in the game.

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PASTOR JOHN STICKL: And so, may your eyes be open to Jesus. And may your eyes be opened to the road of life that is so much bigger than all the things we think it's about. I believe today, Jesus, wherever you may be, wherever I may be, is calling us unto himself. By name. In fact, will you close your eyes with me? And can you just hear His Voice say your name? He's saying your name clearly, loudly, boldly. He sees you right where you are, and he knows who you can become. So, he calls you unto himself, "Come follow me."

[01:27:58:2]

PASTOR JOHN STICKL: Leave that beggar cloak behind. You're no longer defined by the shame and the sin and the brokenness, by your religious efforts, by your striving, and your struggling. In Jesus' name, lay it down. And come follow him one step at a time. Today, I believe Jesus has come to call you by name on the road of life. May you accept that invitation and follow by faith into green pastures and still waters because he promises to restore your soul. Thank you, Jesus, that you are the name above all names. You are the tower we run into, and today, we open our blind eyes to see your beautiful light. Make us whoever we were created to be.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

[01:29:03:9]

MALE SPEAKER: That was so good. We have been trained for such a time as this, and let's live missionally this week. Let's be Jesus-focused and spirit-filled and life-giving in everything that we do. Hey, if you become ready to give, you can do that online anytime. Giving is just another way that we live missionally. It's how we partner with him to reach the lost, the hurt, and the broken. And also, right now we are in hangouts, and we would love to see you there. So, jump in with our team. Just go to valleycreek.org/hangouts on any device to join in. But as we go, go knowing that God is good, that Jesus has forgiven you. That you are loved in everything that's possible. Have a great week.

END OF TRANSCRIPT – [01:29:50]