

Well, good morning and welcome again to Valley Creek. My name is Becca and I get to serve here as the Executive Pastor. What a day. What a day – across all of our campuses, across the world because we have an online campus. 141 people saying, "Jesus is Lord and I will follow." And that is so worth celebrating today. And you know what? It's coming. It's coming at the perfect time because we are right in the middle of our summer series. We are right in the middle of 60 Days of Enjoying God and the Life He's Giving You. And man, we've unpacked some amazing topics. We've talked about enjoying God for who He is. We've talked about enjoying the relationships He's given us. Last week, we even talked about enjoying God in the storms of life.

And the topic we're going to unpack today, well, I'm pretty passionate about it. So, if it's okay with you, I want to jump right in. And I want to start by telling you a story. It's a story of a family. They took a summer vacation because that's what we do. I mean, it's summer. The kids are out of school. All of the outs have come in – stressed out, burned out, worn out. We just done. We just need a little bit of refreshment. So, we take a vacation. This family went on vacation. Mom, dad, kids, grandma even came along. They decided a beach vacation would be great. So, they went to the Pineapple Bay Resort. When they got there, man, the property was great. Everything was clean. They checked in. Friendly faces. The rooms were ready. The food was good, the pools were sparkling, the beach was pristine, everything was really good, and they stayed for four days because that's all the time that they could afford. At the end of that time, they went home and the refreshment went with them.

And then they settled back into life – the rut of the routine. All of the outs came back in – stressed out, burned out, wore out. But you know what? It's okay because they had a good vacation. And about three weeks later, mom goes to the mailbox and she gets a letter and it's from the Pineapple Bay Resort and it reads, "Dear valued guest, dear valued guest, thank you for your recent visit to our resort. We hope you enjoyed your stay. We would love to see you again and invite you to join the Pineapple Bay family. To give you a sense of our family benefits, we extended a complimentary benefit package to you during your visit. And we'd love to know how you experienced them."

Well, mom's a little confused because she's looking at this list of these benefits and she's thinking I didn't do any of these things. I mean, a sunset cruise with a personal chef? And she's thinking I didn't do that. But she calls to her husband in the other room, "Hey honey, you know that vacation we took a few weeks ago?"

"Yeah."

"Did you go on a sunset cruise?"

"Nope."

"Well, you could have." Next one: all-inclusive deep sea fishing excursion. "Hey, honey. Did you go deep sea fishing?" Oh, honey comes in now.

"No, I didn't go deep sea fishing. I would have loved to have done that."

"Well, you could have done that. Did you know anything about it?"

He said, "Come to think of it, that concierge guy, he he invited me, but you know, I thought he was just going to like sell me a time share. I thought he wanted something from me, so I didn't go."

"Look at this: swimming with the dolphins. The kids would have loved that. A senior's lifestyle expert – Grandma would have loved that." And the last one hit hard – complimentary day spa package. And the two of them were just so confused because they couldn't believe that that happened. They couldn't believe they had all that and they didn't experience it. And mom says this. She said, "You know what? It was a good vacation, but it could have been so much more. It was good, but it could have been so much more."

Now, why did I tell you that story? It's not a true story, but I think there's some truths from that story that apply to the topic we're going to unpack today. See, we're going to talk about enjoying God and the life He's giving you in His Church. And I think there's a lot of people that approach Church kind of like that family approach their vacation. They go to Church because you know that's what we do when all the outs are in – stressed out, burned out, worn out. We say, you know, let's just get some refreshments. Let's go to Church. And so they go and the building is nice. It's clean. They go check their kids in. There's friendly faces and the rooms are ready. They get a good cup of coffee. They come in the Worship Center. They hear some good music and a good teach. They may even get invited to something afterwards, but you know, they're not so sure they're into that. And you know, we we got to go. We've spent an hour here already. We got to go. But it's okay. They leave and they feel good because it was a good day at Church. And that good feeling lasts for about two weeks or two days or two hours and the outs come back in. In reality, the rut of the routine becomes real again. and they say, "You know what? We need to be refreshed. We need to go to Church." And they do one of two things. They either go to Church because that's what we do or they don't. And if they don't, they say something like, "You know what? It's good, but it's just not making an impact. It's not changing my life." And the reason it's not changing their life is because they continue to come back as a dear valued guest and they never realize that it could be so much so much more.

So let me ask you, does any of that, any of that experience – do you resonate with that? Can I ask you, do you enjoy Church or do you endure it? Now, I'm going to time out before we go any further. Here's what I want you to know. I want to give you permission today. I want to give you permission today to be gut raw honest with yourself. I'm not even asking you to be honest with me. You don't owe me anything. But I'm here to tell you, I think God wants to do something in our hearts today. And if you're answering with those churchy pretense answers, you're actually blocking your heart instead of giving Him access to it. So, you have full permission. And with that permission, let me ask you again. Do you really enjoy Church? Or do you just endure it? Let me ask it this way. When you got woke up this morning, whoever woke you up, maybe it was a spouse or a kid or a roommate or an alarm clock or a dog? Whoever, however, when you got woke up this morning, is is this what you said? I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord." Did you bounce out of bed and said, "I'm so glad you just woke me up." Or did you grab the covers and pull them up and say, "I am

enjoying God and the sleep He is giving me." Because let's be real, sometimes fatigue – catching up on sleep – sometimes that could be an obstacle to enjoying Church. I don't think that's the biggest one.

I think there is one obstacle that influences and impacts so many people from really being able to enjoy Church. And I think it's that we don't know what it is. We have an inaccurate definition of Church. And when you have an inaccurate definition of Church, you will always have an insufficient experience with it. Because how can you have a sufficient experience of something that you don't even know what it is? So, let's fix that. Let's define biblically what is Church. And I'm going to start by telling you what it's not. It's not a place and a program. Because that's what confuses us is we use the word grammatically wrong. We'll say, "Hey, are you going to Church?" It's a place. Or, "Hey, are you going to go in the 9:30, the 11:15 church service?" Like it's a program – but it's neither of the two.

If you go back to the root word – the Greek word root for where we get our word Church – maybe you've heard it before? It's a word *ecclesia*. And what that word means is it's a people that have been called out – a people that are called to a common purpose. See, it's never been a place or a program. It's always been a people who are called to a purpose. The first time we see it in Scripture from Jesus – it's in Matthew chapter 16. He's talking to the disciples. He's having a pretty big conversation with them. Then He – Jesus – asked them, "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You, You're the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "You are blessed, Simon son of John, because my Father in heaven has revealed this to you. You didn't learn this from any human being. Now I say to you that you are Peter (which means 'rock'), and upon this rock, I will build my Church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it."

Come on. See, Jesus asked Pete. He says, "Who am I to you? Who am I? Who do you say I am?" And he says, it gives Him a twofold answer. You're the Messiah and You're the Son. You're the Savior and You're the Son. Son – notice familial reference – and then Jesus goes on and says, "That's great. You've got it, man." And it's so good because you didn't just take this at man's word. My father showed it to you. Father – another familial reference – and so Jesus says, "Based on that, based on your strong faith, I'm changing your identity. You're now going to be Peter – a rock, a rock, solid, sturdy, not a pebble, a rock." And He said, "It is on that rock solid faith that is where I'm going to build my people – my Church – the ones that are called out according to my purpose."

So here's the question. That is really good news. Do you see it as the good news that it actually is? Because here's the thing. It's not just good news for you. It's actually something that you can enjoy – that you can celebrate. It's actually something that you have a right to. You have a right to this. Yet to all who do receive Him, those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. So if you've placed your faith in God – if you've placed your faith in Jesus – that means that you know the Son and you have a new identity. And because of that

you have the relationship with the Father. And you are part of the children of God. And we're on purpose.

So you see to fully enjoy the Church you have to fully understand what it is. It's a family – a Son who gave us a Father and who calls us children. Do you see it as a family? Do you see us? Do you see the *ecclesia* – the people group called out under the name of Valley Creek – do you see us and engage with us as family? One step more – do you see us as your family? And you may say, I mean, I, I don't see these people as family. I mean, they're really really different from me. Really? Do you realize how different the disciples were from Jesus? And He called them family. A crowd was sitting around Him – Jesus – and they told Him, "Your mother and Your brothers are outside looking for You." "Who are My mother and brothers?" he asked. Then He looked at those seated in a circle around Him and He said, "Here are My mother and My brothers. Whoever does God's will is My brother and sister and mother." Looky there. Jesus was in a circle. Do you look at the people? Do you look at the people that are in your circle and do you look at them and think that they're your family? All of them – the one who overtalks, the one who doesn't say a word, the one who asked those questions that just pushes your buttons. Because I promise you the disciples, oh, I promise you that they push Jesus' buttons, but He still said, "They're my family."

See, just like the misunderstanding of the word Church can cause us trouble of actually enjoying the family – I even think that the word family can be an obstacle to us, too. Not because we don't understand it, because of what we've experienced with it. Have you ever stopped to think about your family of origin? Where you and how you were raised? Do you realize that they have shaped the perspective of and the reaction to the word family? When you hear it, if you were raised in a great loving family and somebody says, "Hey, come join the family." You're like, "Well, let's go all in." But if that wasn't your experience, if your family had hardship, if your family had divorce or abandonment or abuse in any way, then when somebody says the word family, it can be a trigger. And instead of leaning in, you might take two steps back. And you know what? I get that. I get that. And if that is your story, my heart hurts for you.

But I tell you what, my heart has hope for you because God will redeem our earthly families. And you know how He does it? He does it through spiritual family. He puts us in a family and says, "Let me show you how I intended family to be." And y'all, we need that because the fabric of family has basically is just being ripped apart. So, we need to know God's definition of it. And the best way to see what God's design of family is is to look how did He engage us as a good Father. Look at this. We love Him because He first loved us. God loved us first. He showed us what love is. He demonstrated it. So because of that, we know how to love. So you could say that in a God spiritful Church family, family loves first. Look at the next one. God has said, "Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you." I'm with you. I've got you. You are right here. I'm going nowhere. And so what we could say is that family, family sticks together.

Look at the next one. The Lord disciplines those He loves, as the father the son he delights in. Now look, He delights, He loves, and so He disciplines. And so if we're going to be a Church family, then we have to be okay for family to counsel and correct because it's got to come from a place of love. One more: From one man He made every nation living on the entire surface of the earth, and He fixed the limits of their territories and the periods when they would flourish. That means that He fixed – He established – the time and the place where they would live. Every woman in this room should be really excited about that that we were not in that pioneering era because those covered wagons, our hair would not flourish. I'm just telling you, but He fixes it. He puts borders around it. So what does that mean? It means that family is determined by God. So if we were to look at a family and to say based on how God fathers us, what are the traits of that family? This is what it would look like. And these are the traits of a healthy Church family. It's not all of them. Obviously, there's a lot more, but I think that's a pretty good start.

And if you had a great family of origin, you look at this and you're like, "Yeah, well, of course. I mean, of course, we're going to love each other and stick together. Of course, they're going to like coach me and correct me and help me out. And of course, I'm going to trust it because the family got determined by God." It's easier to accept. But if you had struggles in your family, and let me just say, I bet we all had str- I've had struggles in my family of origin. I bet you have, too. So, you're not alone. But if you had struggles, those struggles from your family of origin will present themselves when you start to engage with a Church family. If your family did not freely express love, then when somebody says family goes first in expressing love, you're like that feels foreign to me. And the idea that you want me to go first, that's a little frightening to me. If you had abandonment in your family – I did – then the idea of family sticking together, you might be a little cynical and say, "Sure, family sticks together until they don't." And you're waiting for the shoe to drop. The third one – if you had a critical mother or if you had a dad that no matter how hard you tried, you could just never meet his expectation, then the idea of being counseled or corrected by somebody within your church, you're like, "Forget that. I could never even satisfy him. I'm certainly not going to meet these people's expectations." The last one's really interesting. Depending on how hard your family was, it can be a way of protecting yourself. And you say, "Nobody's going to tell me who my family is. You're not going to tell me, and God's not going to tell me." And that's just a self-protective mechanism.

But listen, family is so precious. Family is so special. It was designed by God. And it's only really to be determined by God. He puts limits and it's His limits. They're for our goodness. Have you ever really realized you get to choose one – one member of your earthly family? You get to choose your spouse. Choose wisely. Think about it. You have no say in your parents, your grandparents, your aunts, your uncles, your cousins. You can choose to have a family, to start a family. Pregnant? I'm not. Uh, but I just didn't want that to get misinterpreted. You can choose to start a family, but once that baby is in there, you get no choice. Boy, girl, twins, triplets – you get to choose one – the one you are in a covenant relationship with. Well, look at your spiritual family. God gives us free will. We get to choose one – Jesus. And then He comes around and

He takes care of everything else. He fixes it. Let's look at that verse again. He fixes it. He establishes it. He defines it. Why? Because He knows that's where we're going to flourish.

And if you don't feel like you're flourishing in this church family, if you feel like it's barren, then I'm going to ask you the question, how deep are your roots here? Because think about a tree. If you've got a tree that is flourishing, its roots have to go down really deep to hit the water. You have to be planted. God tells us that Psalm 92. He says, "Those who are planted in the house will flourish." Not potted. You move a potted plant around. Those who are planted in the house are going to be the ones who will flourish. But here's what happens: He plants us and then we transplant ourselves when we feel like it. Y'all, we were created to follow the cloud. We were never created to follow our feelings, but our feelings get us in trouble all the time. This church doesn't feel like they're, you know, they're not reaching me. So, we pick up and we move. Well, this church now, they feel like the teaching's too shallow or the teaching's too deep. So, we pick up and move. Well, this church, their worship just totally doesn't feel right. So, we pick up and move. And then we say, "We're going to go to this church because that's where our kids want to go." Now, we're following the feelings of a 13-year-old and not even them, but the 13-year-old friend. And then people will say, "Well, you know, I just couldn't get connected." I know. If I had a tree in my backyard that I planted and then I dug it up and replanted it like four times in a year and a half, how would that tree grow? It wouldn't because its root ball would not be sufficient to be able to connect.

The same is true for you and me. That's why He wants us to be planted for a long time together. And when we are, that is when, that is when we get to see these benefits. These are things we get. We get to experience love first. We get to have people that stick with us when life gets hard because it will. We get to have people that correct and counsel us. I get to have a girlfriend in this church. She's my sister. And she will look at me if I told her that me and my husband are in a fight. She'll go, "I'm so sorry. What was your part? Did you own it? And have you asked him to forgive you?" And I want to get irritated with her, but I can't because I know she loves me and she's right. We get all of that. We get to know that God has determined what is best for us. That is the benefit pack – or the blessings – of being planted in a family. But it's two-way. Not only do we get, we get to give. Sometimes we get to give first. Sometimes we get to give the stability – give love. We get to give the stability. Sometimes we get to give the counsel. And all of that does not feel like it's a burden. Why? Because God has determined it. So, we're actually walking out our purpose in the territory that He has decided for us. And that is so clear to me. That makes so much sense.

But there's one aspect of family and Church family that still confuses me. We can quickly agree on what's good and what's not good on a family in the world, but sometimes we don't see eye to eye on what's good and what's not good within our own church family. Let me give you a couple of examples. If we had a family that was in the world, husband and wife, been married for five years, and all of a sudden one day the wife comes home and husband's gone. Poof, he disappeared. He packed up. He's gone. Never said there was a problem in the marriage. Never

said anything. I'm pretty sure pretty quickly we could all be like, "That's that's not okay." Why? Because that family, he made a commitment to her. He is in covenant with her. It's not okay just to up and bail and run. Okay. Well, when you have a family that is part of our church family for five years and all of a sudden they just up and leave and they don't talk to anybody. They don't say anything to anybody about it. That's not okay because go back and remember, remember what Jesus said when He was talking to Peter. He said, "On this rock, on this solid belief rock, I'm going to build my Church." So think if I was building a wall right here and I was putting rocks in it and then one day I came back and like 20% of the rocks had just jumped out and I didn't know. Don't you think that would change the stability of the wall? It would. So the same thing is true for the stability of our church family. It's not okay just to bail.

Let me give you another example. If we had a woman in the world who was a single mom and one day she just said, "You know what? Being a single mom's hard. It is hard." And she's like, "I, I'm just kind of done." And I she just walks out on her kids. I'm pretty sure we would all say that's not okay. I mean, those kids are your responsibility. Who? Who's going to take care of them? We would probably all agree that's not okay. Okay. Well, if you're in our church family and you decide that you want to lead in our Students and we have you leading our Students, we ask for a one-year commitment so you can walk with that student through their whole school year. If three months in you're like, "This is hard. It's not really what I thought it was going to be." And you just bail. That is not okay because you made a commitment to these students. Listen, you probably don't know across all of our campuses, y'all. All of our campuses, we have so many kids and students that have zero – zero spiritual support at home because their parents aren't believers. God has entrusted them to us. We have a responsibility to God to take care of this next generation.

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. I'm not saying that there's times when you actually move and God will send you to another church. I am not saying that there's not life events that could happen that you really need to step back from. I'm not saying that. Those get talked about. I'm talking about when it's just a poof, out, we're gone. That's what I'm talking about. And you may think I'm bold on this. I, I know. You may think I'm bold. Look how bold Paul was. Paul was talking to Timothy, a young leader. He said, "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives and especially their own household has denied the faith." Look at that – is worse than an unbeliever. What's worse than an unbeliever? Evidently this. And you might say, "Well, you know what? In context, Paul was actually talking about your, your actual earthly family." Okay, but Scripture also says that God's family is to be regarded as higher. Look at Acts 2. In Acts 2, they were selling stuff and doing all kinds of things to make sure that the family was taken care of – that was not their earthly or their biological family.

I recently heard a young adult – one of our Valley Creek young adults – make the statement. He just started his first like career job and he made this statement. He said, "You know what? I'm really excited. I'm excited to actually have like a decent amount of resources to be able to financially to tithe to the church." And I went, he got it. He got it. He doesn't see that as a

sacrifice that's hard. He doesn't see that as a burden. He sees it as a blessing to be able to support his church family because he knows he's been adopted into a family. God sent His son that we might receive the adoption to sonship. God did His part, but we have to do our part. And our part is to receive the adoption that's been given us. I have cred to be able to speak to this one because I was adopted. In the hospital when I was born, bio mom and dad – poof, they gone. And there I was, 30 seconds old trying to make friends with nurses because I had nobody to take care of me. I was I was abandoned. But God provided a wonderful, wonderful mother and father came. They adopted me. They loved me. They gave me their home. They taught me the values of their family and the dynamics of it. They did their part, but I had to do mine. I had to choose to receive that adoption into their family. That meant that I couldn't live for the rest of my life saying I'm an orphan. I couldn't stay in their home forever seeing myself as a valued guest. I had to see myself as part of their family. And that meant that I grew up and learned their ways. Okay? The same is true of us. We've been adopted to God's family, but we have to choose to receive it. And sometimes that means that we get to give up our preferences, our expectations, and get out of our comfort zone.

The first time I came to Valley Creek was about 25ish years ago. And um this church family's culture is very different than the one I grew up in. And I remember my first Sunday when everybody stood up and they started to play and sing worship songs. There's this lovely young lady right over here and she raised her hand and I thought, "Huh? She has a question." Never seen that before. And then I look over here and I see a whole row of people that have their hands raised. I said, "Okay, now I've got a question." It was brand new to me. But you know what? I trusted, I trusted God. I didn't trust man. I trusted that God had put me here. And there were some things He wanted to show me. And there was some things He wanted to break off of me and free me so I could know joy. God places the lonely in families and He sets prisoners free and gives them joy. If you have a strong preference, maybe you're in the prison of preference and He wants to set you free from it. Or if you're here and you're lonely, man, I'm here to tell you there's nothing harder than being in a room full of people and feeling lonely. I know that that's hard. But if that's you, maybe your loneliness is because you're in a prison of a bad perspective on family, and God wants to break you out of that? Maybe He's put you here with spiritual fathers that can help heal the wounds of your earthly father? Maybe He's put you here with spiritual mothers that can love you with the love of Jesus when your own mother never even gave you a hug? Maybe He's put you here with spiritual brothers or sisters so you could just experience what life can be?

Because listen, trauma from a family, it will leave scars on our heart and it'll leave skepticism on our hands. God can heal it. He can totally redeem it. He can totally heal it. Your future does not have to be shaped on your past. He's inviting you to trust. And sometimes the way we show we trust God is by trusting the people He's put around us. He wants to heal. But listen, to heal here, you have to be here. You have to be here physically. You have to be here mentally. You have to be here with a whole heart. And I'll tell you something, the enemy is going to come at you on this one every time – every time. He's going to try to fight you feeling like you're a part



of this family. He'll even use your past church experience to do it – good or bad. If you came here from a great church in another city or state, he'll say, "Yeah, this one's never going to minister to you like they did." That's a lie. Hey, if you had a hard church experience, he'll say, "Uh-huh. These people are going to mess up, too. Just wait for it." And that's a lie. The enemy knows the Scriptures. He knows Matthew 16. He knows he can't win, but he'll do everything he can to make you lose. And the way he does that is by convincing you to convince yourself you don't belong. So you want to, you want to fight it. Best way to fight it is just to say I am going to be obstinate. I am just going to be just absolute stubborn and saying I'm not taking this family for granted.

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together. He wants us to stir up. He wants us to stir up love. Nothing else. Stir up love. And He doesn't want to take it for granted. Don't take for granted the ability to come together. And listen, there's a lot of you that don't. There is a lot of you. I call you the core of our family. You're the big brothers and big sisters. And you don't neglect meeting together. In fact, you love being with the family. And what I want to say to you first is thank you. Thank you. And that I love you and I want you to know your voice is so important. I mean, stop and think in an earthly family. Sometimes the siblings can convince each other of something that a parent couldn't. You're a big brother or a big sister in this church family. Sometimes your weight can carry so much farther than any leadership can. So, if that's you, don't get weary in well-doing. Keep leaning in. We need you and we need your voices because this family needs our big brothers and our big sisters. I gave y'all warning. I told you I was pretty passionate about this topic.

And now that you know what the topic is, if you're thinking, "Well, of course you're passionate about it. You're on staff." That's not it. That's not it. The passion that you're hearing inside of me – it's the passion of a 12-year-old little girl that I was. And I grew up with a mom and dad that loved me so well, but they weren't believers. So, I didn't have a church family. At the age of 12, I got on a bus and went to church by myself. You say, "Why would you do that?" Because once I experienced it, oh my goodness, those people, they loved me. I mean, they took me in. I was their spiritual daughter. They loved me. They led me. They corrected me when I was a teenager. They really corrected me. They kept me from going in the ditch. I experienced that. And I said, "I'm not settling for anything less than because I believe that's what God intends." That's my desire for you. My desire for you is to enjoy God and enjoy His Church because that is what you have. That's what He's made affordable to – made to you. I really pray that you don't settle, that you don't settle for being a valued guest when God has invited you to the family because His invitation is for you and it's real and it's today. So whatever you've sensed in this message – maybe it's family past, maybe it's fearful present. Man, I pray that you would just submit that to God and say, "I want to enjoy You and I want to enjoy the family that You've created in Your Church because that that that's where you'll enjoy so much more."

"Are You Enjoying God and His Church?"

June 28, 2026 | Pastor Becca Reynolds

You close your eyes with me. So God, I thank You. God, I thank You that You see us. I thank You that You want us to be in family with You. I thank You that You've made a way for us to do that. Jesus, You told us what it is by Your spirit. May we receive it and walk it out. And Lord, for anyone who's here that is lonely or they've come from a broken past, I pray that You would just show them the truth in their heart, speaking to a place that I can't, that there really is so much more. And I know Lord I didn't talk to them about the hows and the practicals but I believe that once you posture your heart to say I want to be part of a family, God, You will take care of the rest and lead and guide them in what to do. So Lord, thank You. May we always enjoy You and the life that You are giving us in Your Church family in Jesus' name. Amen.