

"The Biggest Battle to Running Your Race"

August 2, 2026 | Pastor John Stickl

All right. Hey everybody, welcome to Valley Creek. I am so glad you are here with us today. And I am so glad to be here with us today. Come on. Whatever campus you're at – Denton, Flower Mound, Gainesville, Lewisville, online, somewhere in the world – let's just welcome each other together. We are one church that meets in multiple campuses carrying the hope of Jesus to thousands of locations. Hope is here. Everyone is welcome. Jesus changes everything. We are a movement of hope for the city and beyond – a Jesus-focused, Spirit-filled, Life-giving church. And we want to help you discover who you are, who God is, what you were created to do, and learn to act as if it were so. So, welcome to Valley Creek. So glad that you're here. What a great summer it has been at our church. I hope it has been a great summer for you. And whether you realize it or not, August is here, which means the fall is knocking on the door. Back to school, all those good things are coming.

And it was a great summer here. 60 Days of Enjoying God and the Life He is Giving You – it was a great series. And I thought our team did a great job pointing us to Jesus. Communicators that were both young and old, new and seasoned, but they brought the Word of God and pointed us to Jesus. And we had 60-day celebration practice plan. I hope you engaged in that. And that, that changed your perspective, your mindset a little bit. We had Kids summer – which was incredible. We released our first ever Kids book and a Kids worship album. Student summer was amazing. We had Gen Hope night, a live recording, Creative Camp. We had great young adult gatherings throughout the summer. We had Circles, Tuesday Night Prayer, Transformation Tuesday – all kinds of ways and opportunities for you to keep growing as a disciple of Jesus.

And we have some great progress this summer in our Missional Move: Create the Future initiatives. See if you've been here with us about 18 months ago we started Missional Move: Create the Future. We said we want to create a future that doesn't exist over the next five years. Five things that we're doing. And so if you haven't seen it yet or not but this summer construction on the Prayer Center has begun. It's really happening. The guys are working hard. The Flower Mound main entrance is closed down. They're doing all the civil work, all the utilities. When that gets done in the next few months, we'll be able to reopen the entrance. And then you will watch as the Prayer Center gets constructed from the ground up – a sacred place to meet with God. It's happening in Jesus' name. You can actually start to see it.

And so, not only do we have that great progress, we are weeks away from VC College being opened. Our Training Center is just about done. We're a few weeks away from the inside being done. We'll be able to get our students in there. Then the outside will get done and we will have that entire thing done in 2026 as we continue to raise up the next generation. When that sign went up this week, we were all like, I mean, that just looks incredible. That's creating a future that doesn't exist. So for every person that's a part of Missional Move: Create the Future, thank you. You can see it. We're 18 months into our two-year financial commitment. Let me encourage you – keep going. God is doing great things in the lives of the people that are giving. I'm hearing amazing stories of how God is moving and creating a future for them

because we said if we create the future for others, it's the best way to create the future for ourselves. So, some amazing things this summer.

Uh, some of you wonder like what happens to me in the summer and, and where am I and all that stuff. Well, if you've not been here, every year we take a little bit of time off in the summer. We want to do this a long time together and that's just part of the healthy rhythm that we've built in. And basically, people are always like, "What do you do and where'd you go and what happened?" Like the answer is nothing. We rest, take a breath, and then I spend a whole lot of time praying and seeking God, praying for you, seeking God for our church. And I'm really excited in the weeks and months to come to share with you a lot of the things that I feel like the Lord is saying and wants to say to us and where He is continually leading us. And next week we're going to start a brand new series called Prophetic Reset – Aligning Your Life With What God is Saying. I don't want to get into it now, but it's really important and I think it's going to be really important for you to have a prophetic reset with the Lord and hear what He's saying to your life so you can align with what He is doing in your life in the here and now. We'll start that next week for the next few weeks.

And so what I want to do today is kind of a transition from the summer to the fall is I just want to do three things. So, if you'll just stay with me today, I'm going to kind of walk you through three things. And the first thing I want to do is just a little bit more celebration because we've been practicing paying attention and calling attention to the goodness of God. And I want to celebrate one specific person today because this is a really, really big deal. You see, this past month marked Pastor Ben Moreno's 25th year on staff. 25 years of Ben and Rachel being on staff. So, he didn't know I was doing this. 25 years on staff. This is Ben. This is Rachel. This is their beautiful family. 25 years. Some of you haven't even been in this church for 25 minutes. Some of you aren't even 25 years old. For 25 years, they have served and loved and given and blessed and laid down their life to create a future that didn't exist that we all now get to enjoy as the present. They have loved and they have led. They are bold. They are courageous. They are faithful. What I can tell you about them is they love Jesus. They love each other. They love their beautiful family. And they love this church.

If you made me say one thing about Ben and Rachel is, is that they're people of pure in heart. The greatest unique distinguishing mark of their life to me is that they are pure in heart and they want to see the Lord. And because they are pure in heart, they see the Lord and they bring Him to us. And Jesus says, "Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains by itself. But if it falls to the ground and dies, it bears much fruit." And for 25 years, you have fallen to the ground and died to yourself. And because of that, much fruit has been borne. Hebrews 13 says, "Remember your leaders who spoke the Word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith." Well, Ben and Rachel are worth remembering because they speak the Word of God and their outcome of their way of life is worth considering and their faith is worth imitating. And you can't become what you haven't seen. And in our world of convenience and transaction and short-term everything, sometimes

you have to see an oak of righteousness to realize that you can become that, too, in your space and in your place. I love you. I'm so grateful for you. I'm so proud of you. You have been faithful in the little and God has entrusted you with much. And I believe that the greatest days of your guys' life and ministry are not behind you, that they're in front of you. You have found this new space in the kingdom of God that God has carved out for you. And I can't wait to see what you're going to continue to create and build. You have been a gift to this church, but you've been a gift to me. Man, I love you. Rachel. I love you. We love your family. You guys are so dear and you are a picture of the kingdom of God.

So they had no idea. Well, Rachel did cuz I had to ask for a picture and production knew that's it. So here's what I want us to do. I just want us to bless them. In the Old Testament, people realized how powerful a blessing was. They, they understood that a blessing was simply using just – stand up with me just for one more minute – just is using your will to release God's goodness in someone else's life. God has commissioned you to rule and reign on this earth with Him. He's given you authority. Your tongue has the power of life and death. And you have a will, a desire, a choice and action. And you can use that will to actually direct God's goodness and command it to be released in someone else's life – the way a child can sit with their father and say, "Dad, let's do something for that kid over there." So, what I want you to do is I want you to close your eyes for a second and I want you to think about your will and I want you to think about God's goodness being released into the life of Ben and Rachel. What kind of blessing do you want to see God release into their life? Now, I want you to use your will. I want you to align it with that. Now, I want you to lift your hand towards them at whatever campus you're at. I just want you to bless them in Jesus' name. In Jesus' name we bless you. We bless your marriage. We bless your children. We bless your health in Jesus' name. We bless your finances. We bless your spiritual journey. We bless your dreams and your visions. We bless your destiny. We bless you with the Spirit of wisdom and revelation that you may know Him better because that is the deepest cry of your heart. So may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord turn His countenance towards you and give you peace. In Jesus' name we bless. We love you. Love you. 25 years is a big deal.

So, here's what I just want you to see in that is we're playing the long game as a church. We don't play the short game in a world of disposable, convenient, superficial, transactional spirituality that plays the short game. We're not interested in that at all. We're playing the long game. You say, "What does that mean?" That means every decision we make is about being a church for generations, plural, not a church for a generation. We don't want to be a firecracker that blows up in the sky and everybody goes oos and ahs for a few moments and then it's over and forgotten about. We want to be a long-burning flame that withstands the test of time. So that means we need to be people and leaders that are deeply rooted in Jesus, His kingdom, and His church. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish. Do you know that the shortest person on our, our leadership level teams has been on staff for a decade? That's the least. Everybody else is from 10 to 25 years at our Lead Team Campus Leadership level.

That means this field – which the Bible calls a church a field – this is not like one of those boring lots with nothing but grass on it. It's dotted and filled with oaks of righteousness all over the place. And if you ever wondered what made a lot valuable besides location, it's the trees. That's what makes this church valuable is that you have people that have given decades of their life to create the future that you and I are enjoying.

So here's my question for you is are you playing the long game? You can't become what you haven't seen. And most of us, if we're straight up honest, just don't have people in our life like Ben and Rachel. Our fathers weren't like that. Our, our coaches weren't like that. Our teachers weren't like that. Our bosses weren't like that. So, we don't have people like that to look at to see what does playing the long game actually look like? But now, if you've been a part of this church or even if you're new, you see this reality that's possible. Now, you have a vision for it. So, my question for you is, are you playing the long game? Are you deeply rooted in Jesus, His kingdom, and His church? Or do you have a disposable faith, a convenient faith, a transactional faith? Yeah, this was a good meal, but now I'm going over here. Yeah, this was a good meal, but now I'm going over here. That wasn't a good meal. I'm going to go back to where I started over here with this meal. And I know we joke about it and we laugh about it and you're aware of it and you see social media and you have friends and you've probably done it.

At some point in time, we have to wake up past like the the the the drive-through Christianity to be like, man, do you know how many people they had to forgive to be here for 25 years? We like to talk about church hurt as a person. Do you know how much church hurt a pastor's wife takes from people consuming, disposing, and going? You know how many people had, you know, how many offenses they've had to get over? You know how many yeses they had to say to Jesus? You know how many next steps they've had to take? You know how many, how many times they've just had to be obedient to do something to God? Do you know how many times Ben has thought my time is to go and I, and I want to go, but then a leader in his life says, "Bro, that's not the Word of the Lord." And he says, "Okay, I want the Word of the Lord." And also his life and his roots grow a little deeper and he gets a little bigger and his crown both in heaven and as a tree gets a little larger. This matters.

So, are you deeply rooted? And, if not, here's the cool part. The best time to plant a tree was 25 years ago. Second best time to plant a tree is today – today. So maybe today is the day that God's saying, "It's time. Let's put our roots in Jesus, His kingdom, this people, and grow and become who we're created and called to be." Cool, man. I just want to call it a day on that. I like it. But I have so many more slides. Grateful. I'm grateful. I'm very grateful. Lot to celebrate. Lot to reflect on for you. You're blessed with great leaders who have been here a long time that love Jesus. May you not take that for granted and see what a gift it really is from the Lord in your life. That's the first thing.

Second thing is basically most of this year we've done two things – a Conversation on Fueling the Fire and 60 Days of Enjoying God and the Life He's Giving You. And if you were here at the

beginning of the year, we said that this is a year of fueling the fire. We wanted to have a conversation on fueling the fire and getting things really hot, really vibrant, really bright. That we wanted to do everything we can to partner with God to fuel, to tend, to steward this fire of God in our lives because God is a consuming fire. He is a consuming fire. He is an uncontainable, all-consuming, everlasting, powerful, eternal, vibrant, holy, glorious, radiant fire. And He is looking to consume a people who want to submit and surrender to Him. He doesn't indiscriminately burn like a wildfire. No, He waits for people who say, "I, I want to be consumed by You, Lord, and I'm going to offer my life for Your fire to fall." And we said, "We want to be people of radiant faces, burning hearts, and holy and powerful lives." That we don't want to have zombie faces and apathetic hearts and worldly lives. So, we talked all about tending our fire and stewarding our fire and what it looks like and how to, how to get it going and what are things that put it out. And we wrestled through all of that all through the entire spring from January to May.

So, here's my question for you – how's your fire? How's your fire? How's your fire coming out of the summer? Have you been tending it? Have you been stewarding it? Have you been aware of it? Is it brighter? Is it hotter? Is it more vibrant? Or did you kind of forget about it? And did it go out and go down? And are you finding yourself flaky and ashy and cold? Did you do all the things that we talked about, about how to tend it like the secret place and godly relationships and the prayer and Word and just being obedient to what God has asked us to do? Like here's the question I want to ask you is what was your fire like before your vacation, during your vacation, and after your vacation? It's a great question to ask yourselves. What was my fire like before summer and vacation season? What was my fire like during vacation season? And what's my fire like kind of after vacation season? Because you see, Jesus doesn't invite us to take a vacation from fueling the fire. Remember, we talked about this over and over again. Whether it was hot or it's cold, whether it was windier or or or calm, whether it was the fall, the spring, the summer, or the winter, keep the fire burning. Remember how many times we said that? Okay. So, then you went into vacation season. Did you keep the fire burning? And if not, why?

You see, I want to, I want to tell you the same story that I told you the last week in May when we kind of pulled the whole conversation of fueling the fire together. And it's simply the story of Peter. For three years, he has this burning hot radiant fire. And then Jesus says, "Guys, I'm going to the cross. It's time. And you're all going to deny me." And Peter in only the way that he can steps forward and says, "Not me, Lord. I don't know if all these other guys' fires goes out. Not me. I will never deny You. My fire will never go out." And in that moment, Peter made the classic mistake that we all make. He was more focused on his commitment to Jesus than Jesus' commitment to him. What he should have done is step forward and say, "Lord, I have no idea what's about to happen, but I know this. You will never deny me. I don't know what's about to happen, but I know Your fire will never go out." And Jesus looks at Peter and He says, "Oh, Peter, on this very night, you're going to deny me before the rooster crows." And what happens? Peter denies Jesus three times before a servant girl, rooster crows. His fire goes out. Jesus goes to the cross. They think it's over. They go back to their boat fishing. Peter is sitting

there with this flaky, ashy, cold, charcoal life – shame and defeat and discouragement. In a matter of moments, this raging fire went out. And he's sitting there thinking, "How did this happen to me?" And the resurrected Jesus comes walking down the shore. They don't realize it's Him. He says, "Throw your net over the side of the boat." And they're not even paying attention to Him. They do. It's so full of fish it begins to break. And look what it says, "Then the disciple whom Jesus loved (John) said to Peter, 'It's the Lord!' As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, 'It is the Lord,' he jumped into the water. The other disciples followed Him in the boat.. And when they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with some fish on it, and some bread... Jesus said to them, 'Come, come and have breakfast.' Jesus took the bread and gave it to them. And He did the same with the fish." Here's my question for you – whose fire was it? It's Jesus' fire. Peter's fire had gone out. He's sitting in a boat of shame, defeat, discouragement, despair, embarrassment. Like, how did such a little thing cause my great fire to go out? And in that moment, Jesus isn't talking about whose fire is on and whose fire is off and whose fault it is and why it happened. No, Jesus just has a fire and He says, "Come," and He invites them to come and sit at His fire and He heals them and He warms them and He frees them and He feeds them and He restores them and then He offers them a burning coal and a pile of wood and said, "Now, let's go rebuild this fire together."

See, I don't know what your fire is like. I don't know if you forgot about Jesus all during summer. I have no idea what is going on inside of here. I do know this – that kindness leads to repentance and Jesus' consuming fire never goes out. And He is always inviting us to come back, be warmed, healed, and restored. And He offers us a burning coal and a pile of wood right now. Right now, you're sitting at Jesus' fire. Get out of the boat of shame, defeat, despair, and discouragement and move forward with the life that God has called you to build, to steward, to tend, to maintain – not for Him, but with Him. This is why it says, "A bruised reed He will not break, a smoldering (dimly burning) wick He will not quench." No matter how small your fire is, He will not put it out. The Lord gave me a prophetic picture for some of you. If you've ever been camping and you have a big fire that night when everybody goes to bed, the fire burns down. First thing in the morning, usually the dad gets up and he goes out and he can scrape that fire together and blow on it and bring it back to life. I think the Father is scraping your life together and blowing on some of you because this summer didn't go like you thought it was going to. And yet He is saying, "Let me restore the fire in your soul. Just let me, be honest, be open and let me." Because He is the Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin. How's your fire? I don't know how it is, but I know Jesus is a consuming fire and He is offering you His coals and His wood so that you will burn again. May this fall you fuel your fire with Jesus because He's really good at keeping it burning. Okay, that's the second thing. Still with me?

Number three. We talked about a Conversation on Fueling the Fire and 60 Days of Enjoying

God and the Life that He has Given You. And if you paid attention, those were in order. And the order mattered because you can't enjoy God and the life He's given you without a burning fire. Why? Because fire gives light so you can see. If you have no fire, you can't see God's goodness and you can't see how good your life is. So, you're in darkness thinking, "He's not a good God and He hasn't given me a good life." People that have the fire of God enjoy Him and the life He's given them. People who do not enjoy God or their life have no fire. They can't see. This is why it says about Jesus, "In Him was life, and that life was the light of men." The life of Jesus inside you is a fire that burns and that burning gives light so you can see. My gosh, He is a good God and my gosh, He has given me a good life – 60 Days Enjoying God and the Life He's Given You. And, and what I kind of want to do to pull that whole thing together is just simply this. Do you realize that that's not just an invitation, a good idea, a suggestion, a blessing? It's actually a command. Enjoying God and the Life He's Given You is actually a command. You say, "Huh?" Do you know what the tenth commandment is? You just think about this for a second. The Ten Commandments, right? God's universal law that governs all of His creation – the kind of base minimum that we as humans are supposed to live at – the, the Ten Commandments. Do you know what the tenth commandment is?

Let's get there together. First one is you shall have no other gods before me. Second is you shall not make any idols. The third is you shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God. The fourth is remember the Sabbath. The fifth is honor your father and mother. The sixth is do not commit murder. The seventh is do not commit adultery. The eighth is do not steal. The ninth is do not lie. And the tenth is do not covet. Do not covet. Do not want someone else's life. Why? Because you have a really good God and a really good life. In fact, this is how it reads. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his manservant or maid servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. Paraphrase. Enjoy God in the life He's given you. This is one of the Ten Commandments that govern universally all of creation and humanity. Enjoy God and the Life He's Given You.

Say, "What is coveting?" Coveting is a fleshly lustful longing for that which does not belong to me. It's a fleshly, lustful longing for that which does not belong to me. It belongs to someone else. And coveting is a broken mindset. Because when I covet someone else's life or their stuff, what I'm saying is God was good to them, but He is not good to me. And if I had their life, then God would be good to me and I could enjoy the life that I have. So do not covet is literally paraphrased is enjoy God and the life He's given you. Now this is fascinating. If you can catch it, look at the Ten Commandments written there. Do you realize the first nine are all external? The first nine are external. We can tell whether or not you honor your parents or whether or not you've committed murder, whether or not you've stealing something, whether or not you misuse the name of the Lord or have another god. They're all external. But the tenth one – it's in the heart. All the other are out here, but the tenth is in the heart, which is a great reminder that God cares deeply about our heart. That you could keep all nine commandments, but if your heart isn't enjoying God and the life He's given you, you've actually violated them all. And what you have to understand about the tenth commandment, why it's so important, is

it is a gateway sin. It's literally a sin, right? It's one of the Ten Commandments. So if you violate it, if you have fleshly, lustful longing for things that don't belong to you, it's a sin. And it's a gateway sin because once I start coveting and set my desire and my mind and my eyes and my heart on what God has given to someone else's life, I will find myself now violating the rest of them. If I covet your life, well, I'll probably start lying because I'm going to do everything I need to do to get that which I want. And I'll probably start stealing at some point. and I'll start taking that which I feel like should have been given to me in the first place. So, it's not really stealing cuz God should have given it to me instead of you anyways. And I may start committing adultery like I'm going to take that person cuz really I should have them and and and not someone else. And I might commit murder. Think of anger, control, rage. You might not murder a person, but you might murder their spirit or their heart or their mindset in the way that you act to get what you want. And you'll probably stop honoring spiritual leadership in your life, starting with your father and mother, then pastors and leaders and coaches and teachers because you're going to get that which you want and they're kind of just in the way. And then you'll probably not remember the Sabbath because now it's like I got to work seven days a week to go get that which I want cuz I need that because I won't have a good life without it. And then I'll probably start misusing the name of the Lord. Not just swearing, but literally using the name of the Lord in a way that misrepresents His character and His nature. Like God isn't good to me. That's misusing. That's violation of the third commandment. God is good to them but not to me. Why would God allow this in my life? He, He doesn't care about what I'm going through. That is violation of the third commandment. It's misusing, misrepresenting the character and the nature of God. It's not just cursing when you smash your toe, you know, on on a on a on a rock. Then you'll probably make an idol. You're worshiping that thing more than anything else. You got to have it. You got to get it. And then all of a sudden, you find yourself having a god – a different god who controls and consumes your life all because I didn't enjoy God in the life He's given me.

You see how important this is? It's literally the tenth commandment rephrased and thought about differently. And if you can see one and 10, enjoy God and the life He's given you, and you'll probably be great on the rest. Isn't that interesting? Seek first His kingdom – the rule and reign of God in my life – and His righteousness, His goodness to me and everything else will be given unto you. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. I can't love my neighbor if I don't love myself. I can't help my neighbor enjoy their life if I don't enjoy my life. So, could it just be enjoying God and the life He's given me is pretty important to God? And could it save me from a lot of other destructive realities in my life?

See, I wrestled through this a lot this summer. Over the summer when I see God, He talks to me and we about lots of different things. I do a lot of heart work, pray for you, all the things. And one of the things that I was wrestling through a bunch of different stuff. And one of the things that God said to me as we went into the summer was, "Stop feeling sorry for yourself. Stop coveting someone else's life and run your race." That's strong. And I was like, "Okay, say

that again, Lord." Stop feeling sorry for yourself. Do you realize when you feel sorry for yourself, it's just a fleshly emotion? There's no kingdom in it. There's no redemptive narrative in it. Feeling sorry for yourself is woe is me. And feeling sorry for yourself, there's no repentance. There's no godly sorrow. And there's no reflection that leads to action. It's just woe is me. My life is hard. My life is bad. My life is, is in need. Stop feeling sorry for yourself and stop coveting someone else's life. I had to wrestle through that – that I was like, "God, I don't feel like I covet, like I don't covet somebody else's marriage. I don't covet somebody else's children. I don't covet other people's stuff. I don't covet other people's lives." But the Lord said to me, He said, "But you do covet other people's results." And I had to stop and think about that. And I realized I covet other people's perceived results in everything from hunting food pods to ministry fruitfulness. I covet other people's results, impact, fruitfulness. I know how hard I work. I know how much I put in. I know how A plus B should equal C. And I feel like I look at other people's lives and they have C without A or B and I have a lot of A and B. Where's the C? I covet other people's results. And the Lord says, "Run your race. Run your race." And the more I thought about that, I thought, realize if I feel sorry for myself and I'm coveting someone else's results, I can't actually run my race.

Do you realize coveting is one of the biggest barriers to you running the race that God has called you to run? "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses," by all those that have gone before us, the giants, the pillars, the oaks of righteousness that have enjoyed God and the life He's given them, "let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. And let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men so that you will not grow weary and lose heart." Can you see it? Let us fix our eyes on Jesus. Enjoy God and run the race marked out for us and the life that He has given you. And let us throw off all the things that entangle and keep us from running this race that He has in store for us. And I think those things are coveting.

If you've ever heard the statement, comparison is the thief of joy. Yeah. No, coveting is the thief of joy. Coveting is the thief of life. I can't run my race if I'm looking at your race. And the Lord walked me through this whole thing of we poorly compare results anyways. If you're running the 40-yard dash and you get a 4.7, this great time and I am running an Iron Man triathlon and I get 10 hours. I can't compare my 10-hour time to your 4.7 seconds. We're running totally different races. And I think this is where we get in a lot of trouble. We compare our race that is very different than their race. You might be running a totally different game, but their time is faster than mine. Yeah, only the speed of light could do an Iron Man in 4.7 seconds. And this is what coveting does. And then it starts to seep and it starts to grow and it becomes this desire and it becomes all-consuming. Then we stop running our race altogether, sit down and then we start longing and we start scheming. Then we start judging. Then we start trying to make other people look poorly upon this person and their race because it's actually the race that I want and it should I mean it's, it's a whole you're like I don't steal when I

covet. Do you gossip about someone else who has what you want? Then you just stole their reputation. So you have to think bigger and deeper about these things. So the question for you is are you coveting like anything somebody's someone, their something, their reputation, their beauty, their finances, their their things, their their impact. I mean what is there – something you're coveting – because I think what happens to us is we think it's a victimless crime. We think coveting is, is a sin without consequence. In the Old Testament, Achan coveted what belonged to God. And when he took it, the entire army was defeated because of his sin. The Israelites wanted other people's kings. They coveted having a king. And so, they went and got a king for themselves, and it caused the whole nation to go astray. David coveted another man's wife, and he went and took her and in the end had to kill him to cover up the whole thing and the whole nation, his entire family suffered for it. I wonder how much suffering there is in our people's lives because of the acceptable tolerance of coveting as a way of life. Do you realize? Go all the way to the back to the beginning. Perfection of the garden. When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also say it with me, desirable. That's the same word that's used in the Ten Commandments for covet. When the woman in the perfection of the garden coveted the one thing she couldn't have, she took it and she ate it. They were naked and afraid. They tried to control and a whole reality was released because of coveting. We think, hey, if I had good circumstances and a good husband and my children behaved and I had the finances I need and I wasn't single anymore, then I all would be good and I would – this is the perfection of the garden. She had everything except one tree. I mean everything except one tree. But because she looked at it, she kept looking at it. The more she looked at it, the more she thought about it, the more she thought about it, the more she schemed. And the more she schemed, the more she got to this place where desire was becoming uncontrollable. Then she acted. And then in acting, it set through a gateway that unleashed a whole bunch of other violations that set in motion death over not just her and her family, but all of humanity. So it kind of matters.

This is why 1 John says, "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world," covets the world, "the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world – the cravings of the sinful man, the lust of his eyes, the boasting of what he has and does comes not from the Father but from the world." So can you see it? The cravings of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life are not from the Father, they're from this world. Coveting, lustful, fleshly longing for that which does not belong to me is not from the Father. It's from the world. Which means it's the orphan spirit at work in your life. Coveting is the orphan spirit at work in your life. You say, "What does that mean? What does an orphan think?" An orphan thinks, "You had a good father who was good to you. I am alone and by myself, so I'm going to have to come and take that which is yours so I can have a good life." When the love of the Father is in him, he becomes free from the cravings of the flesh, lust of the eyes, the pride of life. The orphan spirit is not something we can cast out of you. It's something that has to be healed by the love of the Father. And when you realize I have a good God and a good life, it changes everything. This is why Proverbs says, "Better a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth with turmoil." In

other words, it's better to have nothing and enjoy God and the life He's given you than to have everything and feel distant from God and have a hollow soul.

But Jesus says, "What good is it to gain the whole world and yet lose or forfeit your very self?" Are you with me on this? See, here's the deal. Desire is not bad. God has made you to have desire. He tells us ask, seek, knock. He tells us to seek after Him. He tells us to look for wisdom as if it was hidden treasure. He tells us to cry out for wisdom and revelation. He says eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. Desire of good things of the kingdom of God is not a bad thing. Our problem is not that we desire too much. It's that we desire too little. You do not desire too much and that's why you covet. No, you desire too little and that's why you covet. You say, "What does that mean?" We desire too little. We desire a finite, earthly, worldly temporal things – comfort, convenience, pleasure, awards, accolades, social media, beauty, money, whatever that we desire – these worldly inferior things. When God invites us to desire the supernatural, invisible, eternal things, He says, "Desire Jesus and His kingdom and His Word and His ways and His Spirit and His revelation and His glory and His righteousness and His holiness and His divine power and all the things that belong to Him. Desire those and you won't want anything to do with these." You don't desire too much, you desire too little. This is why it says, "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you." Once you get a glimpse of Jesus in His glory, you're like, "I'm good. Here I go." Coveting no longer has a hold on me. Why? Because I have a good God and a good life and He is what I desire. So bless you in your journey. I'm on my journey and it's going this way.

Maybe, and if you can think about this, when God gives things to other people, they are things that He has given to them as instruments of worship. When God gives something to your neighbor, your neighbor's wife, your neighbor's house, his land, his servants, his ox, his donkey, everything that belongs to him, those are instruments that God has given to your neighbor to play their song of praise to Him. Now, they may play that song or they may worship the instruments that God gave them to play the song. But you have to understand that you don't have the gift, the anointing, the talent, or the calling to play that song. He's given you your instruments to play your song. And the more I'm focused on using my wife and my house and my land and my servants and my ox and my donkey and all the things that God has given to me to worship the Lord, I don't have time to look at how he's worshiping because I'm so busy focused on using the things that He has given to me to worship Him.

And I get it. Some of you are like, "Bro, this is you're like telling us do not covet it." It doesn't. The more I think that, the more I do. I know. Can't just say don't covet and it just goes away. That's not how it works. But you can change your mindset and you can do things like this, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." I promise you this. The more you delight yourself in the Lord, the less you desire the things of this world. Delight – turn your attention, your affection, your focus. Worship – think about, meditate, spend time with. If I'll delight myself in the Lord, He will give me the desires of the Spirit. But if I delight myself in the world, I have to go get the desires of the flesh.

Can you see this? If you delight yourself in the Lord, He will bring to you the desires of the Spirit. But if you delight yourself in the world, you have to go get the desires of the flesh. That is an exhausting way to live. Or this, "Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good. His love endures forever." It's really hard to celebrate and covet at the same time. It's really hard to be grateful and grumble about what you don't have at the same time. So, if I can practice giving thanks to the Lord as a way of life. Some of you maybe keep the celebration journal going all year long to be like, I am going to be one who enjoys God and the life He's given me. So, I'm going to fill my life with gratitude because there'll be no room left for coveting.

Or how about this? "Lord, You have assigned me my portion and my cup; you have made my lot secure. The boundary lines," the boundary lines, my race, my life is, "fallen in pleasant places for me. Surely I have a delightful inheritance. I have set the Lord always before me. Cuz He's at my hand. I won't be shaken." Can you see it again? I've set the Lord before me – enjoy God. And the boundary lines have fallen in pleasant places for me and the life He's given me. Here's the deal. We spend so much time trying to encroach our fence on our neighbors' lot.

And the more I thought about this one this week, the more I realized people who covet live with untended gardens. The reason I covet is because I'm not tending the garden that God has given to me. Because if I was wholeheartedly coveting the time, the place, the season, the calling that He has given to me, I don't have time to encroach my fence on someone else because I know I haven't gotten to the end of my boundary lines. The best thing you can do to run your race is tend your garden right where it is, right like it is, with all of your heart and let God be the one to move the boundary lines when He says it's time – when He says you've fully filled and brought to fruition everything that He currently has for you. Does that make sense?

And then let me give you two last ones. "No good thing does He withhold from those whose walk is blameless." Sometimes you have to tell yourself as you're walking on this journey and you see things that you want and the more you look at it, the more you want it. Sometimes you have to stop and say, "No good thing does He withhold from those who love Him. God, I love You and I'm walking with You." So, if You're not giving it to me right now, then Your Word says it's not good for me right now. This is really important. Some of you who are single and you want to be married. Some of you who are looking through that breakthrough and it hasn't come. Some of you who are wanting a child and you haven't had it yet. Some of you that are longing for this business thing to work and it's not come. Can you at some point when you wrestle through all of this get to this verse? He withholds no. No. No good thing from those who love Him. So if He's not giving it to me right now, my mindset has to change to say then it's not good for me right now. And the fastest way to get it is not jumping the guard rail into someone else's lane and taking it. No, the fastest way to get it is to run my race with perseverance because that thing may be just around the next corner and I don't know or it might be miles down the road and God says you're not ready for it yet. So, I'm doing something in you.

Or how about this? For some of our single people, maybe the person that God has for you, you're ready, but they're not. So, if He gave them to you now, it wouldn't be good for you or them. So, can you run your race with everything you got, believing that somehow, someday, if He isn't giving it to me now, it's not good for me now? Doesn't mean it's not good, and it doesn't mean it won't come. So I run and I throw off and I unentangle and I look to Jesus with everything I got and I go and I go and I go and I refuse to hop the guard rail and I refuse to spend all my time looking over there because I have a good God and a good life. Garrett, go to two more for me. We'll just skip that one. Enjoy God and the life He's given you – it's a heart posture. It's a mindset. It's a perspective. And it's a commandment. And it comes as you worship. Lift up the name of the Lord. And at some point in time, you have to get to this place. And I think this is so important for where we're going as a church, where you can trust.

Can I just trust that He is good even when I don't see it? If He is the creator, the sustainer, and the redeemer of all things, then can I trust that He says I am fearfully and wonderfully made? That He knew the exact times and places where man would live, and He put me where I was supposed to be. That there are good works which He has prepared in advance for me to do. Can I trust that every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of heavenly lights? That His divine power has given me everything I need for life and godliness. That He is working all things together for the good for those who love Him. And He is forming me into the image and likeness of Jesus. And even the things that Satan uses for harm, God is going to use for good. Can you trust? Can you trust? And even if you can't, and even if you don't enjoy God in the life He's given you, here's my last thought for you is He's enjoying you and the life He's given you. Scripture says He delights in you and rejoices over you with singing. God enjoys you and He enjoys the life He's giving you and maybe His enjoyment of you will create your enjoyment of Him.

So you close your eyes. There's a couple different things today. It was just the quick question. What's the Holy Spirit want to say to you? What's the Spirit want to say to you? Maybe He wants to talk to you about the long game. Maybe He wants to talk to you about your fire. Maybe He wants to talk to you about actually running your race and enjoying Him and this life He is giving you. I don't know. But I know God is speaking. And over these next few weeks, we're going to bring our faith level back up to have this expectation and this anticipation that every day of my life, God is speaking to me and He has great things to say. And every time I walk into this room, I'm not just doing an event or a gathering. I'm coming in to get a Word from the Lord because He has something He wants to say to me.

So, Holy Spirit, would You speak to us? Would You show us? Would You lead us? Would You guide us? May we be deeply rooted. May we have fires that burn. And may we enjoy You and be free from the lustful longing of someone else's life because You made us and You breathed life into us and You redeemed us and You marked out a good and beautiful race for us. May we run it in Jesus' name we pray. I love you. Amen.