

Power Under Control

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Additional Text: Matthew 11:28-30 King James Version

28 Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

Text: Matthew 12:15-21 ESV

15 Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all 16 and ordered them not to make him known. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

18 “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.

I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

19 He will not quarrel or cry aloud,
nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;

20 a bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not quench,
until he brings justice to victory;

21 and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”

Introduction: How my chiropractor saved my life. After treating me for my bulging discs, he started me on **rehab**. I needed to begin strengthening my core. As he demonstrated the exercises he wanted me to do I admit, the thought of laying on the ground and doing abdominal crunches scared me. I was so scared of re-injuring myself. I had to trust him.

Isaiah describes the Messiah as being like my chiropractor. Instead of chastising people in crisis, he engages their pain with compassion. Instead of judgment, he bring justice. He demonstrates his strength not by applying overwhelming force, but by practicing gentleness.

Gentleness, I once heard it defined, is “power under control.”

The way Jesus describes himself as “meek and lowly in heart” a la the KJV has become and unfortunate translation in modern times because the image it conjures up an image of Jesus as weak, submissive, and limited. We think of our Savior as Doormat Jesus the Ultimate Victim. Nothing

could be further from the truth.

Instead, Jesus is...

... so deeply anchored in his identity as the Beloved Son,

.... so focused on his mission of ushering in the loving, verdant government of God, and

... so disciplined in doing the right things, the just things, the healthy things,

That he can show us how to live the same way without needing to prove anything to anyone.

We, as the church, have the opportunity to engage in spiritual rehab that will help us....

- Be deeply anchored in our identity the Body of Christ,
- Be more clearly focused on our mission of Knowing Christ and making Christ known, and
- Being more disciplined in the way we do the right and healthy things that form the rhythm of a flourishing life with Christ.

The four areas of health we are going to focus on:

1. Direction. Where are we headed in the next 3-5 years? It's easy to say we want more people, programs, and participation. But that's not really a destination. That's like answering the question "Where would you like to go on vacation?" with the answer, "Someplace new, fun, and relaxing."

Choosing where we are headed begins with reflecting a bit on what it means for us, at West Valley, to uniquely express the mission of Knowing Christ and Making Christ Known. Who is Jesus Christ to you, personally? How has West Valley revealed Christ to you up until now? How has being a part of West Valley shaped the way you live Jesus? When we start comparing notes with each other about that, we will see the pattern and rhythm of how WV knows Christ and makes Christ known. And from there, we will far better able to determine the Next Right Step.

2. Strategy. Strategy is about what we do, and what we will invite others to do, in order to reach the destination with us. If we can't clearly describe it, we will never arrive where we want to go. The best strategies may have many parts of steps, but point of the strategy must be simple and clear. That way, we know what we need to do and what we need to stop doing in order to get where we are going.
3. Staffing. A church staff is always the most valuable and costly asset a church has. It must be stewarded with care. The greatest gift a church can give staff is a clear direction and easy-to-understand strategy. In turn, we need our staff to help us implement that strategy. They guide the programs, they resource the lay leaders, they constantly ask, "how is what we are doing NOW helping us arrive at our destination THEN?" Making sure we have the right staff, with the right skills in the right positions will be CRITICAL for arriving at our desired destination.

4. Programs. Programs are always and only a means to an end. If we care more about programs than the people, we will lose our way. And if the only thing we want is for people to show up at our programs, then we will never have a meaningful strategy or a way of knowing if/when we are being successful. Streamlining or de-cluttering our church and our programs is a powerful way to build momentum. Supporting our staff and leaders in this work will be crucial as well.

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