

## “Emotionally Fit”, Mike & Sherri Harder, Jeremiah 17:5, 15:8, 2 Cor 4:17, Jan. 31, 2106

(Michael and Brenda’s introduction)

[Brenda speaking] Mike and Sherri are Vineyard Pastors from Des Moines. They are the pastors of the Des Moines Vineyard Church, and these guys have actually been people who have helped Michael and I walk through life. When I’m in crisis, I got to Iowa -- [laughter] [Michael interjects] So do the politicians! [laughter] There’s not much that gets me to Iowa, but that.. I’ll make any reason to stop at their house and spend time with them. I know that we’ve told bits and pieces of stories that have included them as we’ve preached and you guys know the story of Michael talking about how we were at a family’s house and their grown kids would walk in the room and they would get up and go over and hug them and how the Lord ministered and taught him about the Father’s love through witnessing that and watching it. Well, Mike and Sherri, that was in their living room and I know you’ve heard that story multiple times. We just wouldn’t be who we are today without you guys in our life – and we love you dearly. And I thank you for coming here and sharing; they’ve been with us all week sharing with our Heroic Leadership Institute students and we get to have them share with us this weekend, so thanks for being here. Bless you guys.

[Mike speaking] It is great to be with you guys, it was really good to be with the HLI students this week. What a great group of folks. I learned a lot of different thing. I learned I am older than I think I am..[laughter] hanging out with them. There was a lot of shade thrown. I still have no idea what that means, but that’s what they said all the time. Jessica and Mike are doing a great job, Judy, serving with them. Actually, we’ve been up here several times and we’ve seen the growth here, what’s happening here, and we just love Duluth, we love you guys! We love your leaders; we feel really blessed and honored to be here today with you.

[Sherri speaking] Yeah, It’s just always such a joy to come and be – and one of the things I love about the Vineyard is, you know, it’ like this big family, like this tribe, and you go to different places and you just feel like you belong. And you always welcome us and make us feel so, like we’re a part of the family and we know we are on a bigger level, but still there’s just a culture here that is just so welcoming and you feel it right when you walk through the door. We are so privileged to have a chance to share with the HLI group this week and with you this weekend and I think it’s just so fitting that we’re talking about being emotionally fit and we have been -- and we’re doing it together – yeah, well, you’ll decide whether that really works or not. So you can take the good stuff or you can leave and say, “Hey, I can do much better than the two of them together, so I have hope – you know, so – they don’t let us do that at our church, together so – No – like this, it’s a big experiment, so thank you for letting us be your guinea pigs!

But I have just seen so modeled, emotional health in your staff and your volunteers here. People are part of a small group here. If you’re on staff, if you’re working, if you’re leading, they are not just pointing the way for you, they are going with you, doing the stuff. We’ve watched Michael

# the **Vineyard** church

*Love God. Love people. Period.*

and Brenda in our region do this for years. When we've watched as their church just exploded and they were sort of overlooked by people when people were being delivered and healed and unchained and out the door and things happening and – you know, that's just not what they were in it for. They were in it for what God was really doing in people's lives. And they just kept loving the bigger Vineyard and loving their church, and God kept trusting them with more. And I think one of the things I love about the leadership here is as they were noticed, that didn't tilt who they were. They just turned around and served all of us even more. That's emotional health! And you guys are blessed to be in a church that way and we're blessed to be with you here this morning. So do you wanna pray before we start? Absolutely. Will you join with me?

Father, we thank you for your goodness and mercy. We thank you for your loving kindness that never ceases. I pray for your spirit to be over us, to be in us, to be through us, and to permeate our time together. That we would be drawn closer to the love of God. And closer to the love of the those that are around us, in Jesus' name, Amen.

When I think of being emotionally fit, I think it is something we do intentionally. It doesn't just happen. Like, with a lot of the other fitness, but I think in the church, sometimes it seems to be like the lost piece, right? We know our bodies, we say, in the 80s in was so popular to say, "My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" and so we knew it was important because of how it's described. "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." We know our spirit's important. It's where we live forever, it's what goes on. But that soul-ish realm, that emotional realm, I think it's gotten maybe a little bit of a bad rap, almost like we think it's a bad thing or we wanna keep it as the secret part of us.

But when we look at Jesus, he was such a good example of really living an emotional life. I mean, he got angry! And he used it in a constructive way, but he felt anger. And he didn't try to hide it or push it down, he went with it, and did what God wanted him to do with it. He needed time away, he got tired. He got weary as he engaged the crowds. That must have been exhilarating when you think about what he felt emotionally. Filled with job, filled with power, he knew how to deal with that. But then he would go away and e with the Father. He knew that he needed – emotionally, when he was drained – he needed to find a place to fill himself back up. He wept! He felt sorrow and sadness. He experienced grief. He is such a good example to us of embracing emotion and having that be a part of us in how we were created in his image.

And when we don't do that, it's almost like we hide these, this whole section of our being. So we push these beach balls down inside of ourselves, right? We feel anger, but we tell ourselves the lie that, "Oh I can't love Jesus and be angry, so I'll push that beach ball down over here." And then we've had a big loss in our life, or somethings happened, and we think we have, in true fast-food American style, "I give myself a week, because that's how much time I have off of work." – that beach ball is pushed down and I'm done with that, right?

And soon we're filled with all these balls we're trying to hold down inside of ourselves and something triggers and they pop up here and they pop down here. And some of these emotions might be shame, or failure, or regret. And so we hide these in the closet like they are monsters

# the Vineyard church

*Love God. Love people. Period.*

that just can't come out. And that's when we start to get unhealthy and it seeps into every part of our life, and it affects everybody around us.

One thing I'm embracing in my life, really learning, and it's so free for me, is that God never trivializes our humanness. He actually reached down and used humanity to bring his son and to save humanity. God dwells with us in our humanness. It is not small to him when we grieve, when we're angry, when we're disappointed. God doesn't dismiss that or judge us for it. He comes and he enters our humanness and he actually finds hope in it.

One of the things I like about the scripture is how God uses it to describe certain things. I love the language; I love the imagery. And in Jeremiah chapter 17 we see just a really good picture of becoming emotionally fit. How we can become emotionally fit, as Sherri said, it's an intentionality. I didn't just wake up this morning and have a six-pack. [laughter] Michael offered me that but I -- Or any other morning for a long time! [laughter] Yeah, yeah! You know, I didn't just get up this morning and was a spiritual giant. You have to be intentional. We've been married 40 years. It just didn't happen. We worked at it. We had to be intentional about it. And so, this is a good look at being intentional with our emotional fitness. Being intentional.

God gives us a really clear picture of the choices that we have towards either emotional health or being emotionally unhealthy and it's framed in this passage, like I said, I really like, in chapter 17 of Jeremiah in the Old Testament. The prophet wrote this. And I'm going to underline this curse. It's the one we -- often times -- and I know I've done this in the past -- a curse, "Oh, God is just so mean to curse people!" No, I think it's more like, if you don't fill up your gas tank with gas and go down I-35, you'll be cursed. It isn't that the gas company wants to curse you for not buying gas, but it just happens. It happens. It's a byproduct of our decisions. And so he invites us to these decisions to consider with this great language and imagery to help us understand emotional fitness. He says: <sup>5</sup>The LORD proclaims: Cursed are those who trust in mere humans, who depend on human strength and turn their hearts from the LORD. <sup>6</sup>They will be like a desert shrub that doesn't know when relief comes. They will live in the parched places of the wilderness, in a barren land where no one survives.

That's a picture of emotional unhealth. That you're alone, desolate, barren, but God's hope and desire for each and every one of us is to flourish in our lives. To flourish mentally, to flourish emotionally, to flourish physically, to flourish spiritually. That we are whole beings, made in the likeness and image of God and he has a template for us. And as we go further in this, he gives us the language and the understanding and a picture to help because spiritual health and fitness is the foundation of emotional health and fitness. So he says this: Happy are those who trust in the LORD, who rely on the LORD. <sup>8</sup>They will be like trees planted by the streams, whose roots reach down to the water. They won't fear drought when it comes; their leaves will remain green. They won't be stressed in the time of drought or fail to bear fruit.

What a beautiful picture! We sit with that for a while. From my understanding, Jeremiah never visited Northern Minnesota. He missed out. He missed out, that's right. So when he's talking about trees, I do not think he is speaking of the evergreens or the birch. But when he's trying to make this correlation of our spiritual fitness, our emotional fitness, he is drawn to what is

# the **Vineyard** church

*Love God. Love people. Period.*

familiar to him and in the Middle Eastern region at that time, the predominant tree was the date tree.

So he gives us this picture of the date palm. And there's some characteristics of the date palm [stumbles over words] – you know, this is my third time, I should be getting that right! [laughter] they pay me to talk, I don't – They should never do that! [laughter] But the date palm. And there's some characteristics and attributes of the date palm that may be helpful for us to understand what's it's like to move toward emotional fitness.

And the first one is, these palm trees are flexible. They can bow down really low! It's just amazing, the movement in them. And we're just using this picture to say the first real step to emotional health is – and you can't skip this one in our opinion – is we bow low and we surrender to the love of God. We surrender to a God who is good and loving. We bow low to that love. A. W. Tozer has this quote that I really love and appreciate. He says, "What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us." And that's because it's very hard to bow low and surrender if we think God is a tyrant or a judge or is waiting, you know, to point out what is wrong with us.

But when we know God as our loving Heavenly Father, when we know that we're the apple of his eye, that he does more than just take care of us, he cherishes us! When we know that he sent his only son for us that we could live a life of abundance and we saved, just like the palm tree, we can bow down low, we can surrender to God's love. It's the base for everything because when we know God is, really know who he is, then we know who we are because we're created in his image; in his likeness. Then we have the courage to face the monsters in our closet. To let the beach balls just pop up whenever they need to.

You know, when I was a teenager and I first surrendered to the love of Jesus and given over the control of my life to him, someone older than me had said, "You know, a good way to grow is just to read a Proverb a day." I don't know how many of you have done that or heard that. But I was really anxious to grow in my relationship with Jesus, so I started reading a Proverb a day. And about a year and a half later, I was in a small group with some of my friends that had also found Jesus. It was the 70s, you know. I had hair down to here and all that stuff. And so we were talking and this girl – I had hair. That's right, you did! And it was dark. Yeah, it was dark. So, anyway, she just said, "Oh, I'm loving reading the Proverbs." Well, one of my beach balls just slipped out and I said, "I can't stand the Proverbs!" And they all looked at me and I thought, "Oh great, now let's see what other thing – I'm ashamed, I'm less than" They started popping all over the place. And she said, "You can't stand the Proverbs??" So it was too late, I let it out, you know it was too hard to grab it and put it back

So I said, "Yeah, they make me feel terrible!" And they just looked at me and said, "Sherri, you're not the evil person in the Proverbs, you're the righteous person! You've been saved, you know, Jesus lives in you. You're the righteous person!!" And you know, I've told this story now

# the **Vineyard** church

*Love God. Love people. Period.*

this weekend and my memory is coming back a little bit. I think I sat in that group and just started to cry. At the thought that God loved me and forgave me! It was so easy to bow low to that Jesus.

Because you see, the cross is where emotional health really starts. Because what the cross does is it levels the playing field for all of us. It doesn't matter if you live by the lake, or away from the lake, or at the top of hill or the bottom of the hill; it doesn't matter if you work at the grocery store, or McDonalds, or the University or the Hospital. The cross makes us one. The cross makes the field level. The cross is where emotional health starts. So the good news for you today is that no matter where you are in the things that we're going to share today, you can bow low and surrender to love and Jesus will meet you there and he will heal you there and it will be the beginning of your new life and you can learn like I learned that the Proverbs is a good book because we're the righteous ones in that book.

Another attribute of the palm tree is that all parts of the palm tree are useful. Nothing goes to waste. The leaves make phenomenal baskets and if you've ever been to the far east, they make really cool hats too. The wood is used for building, there's medicinal purposes in the bark, the fruit is really great to eat. Every aspect of the tree is useful. Nothing is wasted in it. And so it is in our lives. When we get the picture, the overview of our lives and understand that every aspect of our lives are useful.

You may ask me, "Well how is my cancer useful? How is my depression useful? How is my inability to manage my time useful?" All of these things can drive us to Christ or away from him. They are meant for our growth, for the good things to happen in our lives. That everything is useful in our lives. The Old Testament is full of stories of men and women who experience this. I mean, take the life of Moses, if you watched the Prince of Egypt cartoon like I did – I read the bible too – but I got really a lot out of that one that Disney did a couple years ago, it was fascinating. And so you see the life of Moses. He was a promised child and yet he was abandoned to be put in a basket, to be raised in a foster care system of a culture counter to his; he grew up and he messed up and he got angry and he killed someone in fit of desperation, he ran off and hid in the desert and at the time that he encountered the burning bush, he was 80 years old and working for his father-in-law. That's depressing! Nobody should be working for their father-in-law when they're 80 years old! Get a job somewhere else!

And yet, all of his life became useful to the deliverance of entire nation. The life of Joseph is another one in the Old Testament. The favorite of his father, a promise through dreams, and through situations and circumstances that were beyond his control he found himself in prison for ten years. Being popular, no so popular. Popular, no so popular. Understood, really misunderstood. And yet, at the end of his life, when his brothers came looking for food, Joseph said, "You guys wanted to really do me harm. You planned evil, but God caused it for good for the welfare of many." Emotional health happens when we can embrace – accept some of the stuff we go through – but embrace it as growth in our lives.

In second Corinthians Paul wrote to the early church, he said, "For our present troubles are small and won't last very long, yet they provide for us a glory that vastly outweighs them and will last

# the **Vineyard** church

*Love God. Love people. Period.*

forever. He told the Romans, “All things work together.” And that’s a real tough thing when we’re going through it, isn’t it? But all things work together for good that love God and that are called to his purposes. Our emotions are set free when we know all of our life matters and is valuable to God.

And the other thing is the date tree is watered well but it’s because they know how to go to their source, they know how to find the source of water. Whether it’s straight up from rain or in the air and they’ll stand straight up but if the water is close by and they have to bend and contort to get to it, they do. They know how to find that source. They know where their source is. They move toward the source of water. And that’s how we become emotionally healthy too. When, like Mike said, when we know that nothing is wasted, that all of our life is useful, that God doesn’t waste what happens to us, he doesn’t trivialize it, then we can move towards him. Today, you move towards a source in your life by choosing to come here! By choosing to come where you’re going to be watered and fed and transformed and encouraged under the presence of God. We move towards what’s living.

What isn’t being healthy emotionally is when we’re constantly living in regret and fear. We’re constantly looking backwards; not towards where the light is, not towards where the water is. And when we look backwards and we get stuck there, what happens in our minds? We live in regret or we live in shame or we live in those most unhelpful words, “would have, should have, could have” and we live there. That’s not emotional health! We may need to look back there to learn some things but we need to look back to move forward. If we look back, we need to look back to move toward the source of living water, of forgiveness, of life in our life.

You know, in my life, it’s easy to look back at trauma, at things that have happened to us – maybe a trigger happens, right? And you sense shame or you sense something happening and it brings back a memory. You don’t push that down like a beach ball and ignore it. But the other thing you don’t do is when it pops up, you don’t live in it. You say, “Ok, there it is. Why is that there?” And you get prayer, or you look at the truth and you take it to Jesus, and you find out what he’s doing in your life. We look back, but only to look forward, or only to bring it to Jesus to be healed. I think Paul, in Philippians 3:13-14 is such a picture of what this means. He says: <sup>13</sup>Brothers and sisters, I myself don’t think I’ve reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. <sup>14</sup>The goal I pursue is the prize of God’s upward call in Christ Jesus.

That’s Paul, right? Forgetting the past and pressing on. And I used to read that verse like I just read it to you now, in triumph and determination and boldness. And that’s not a wrong way to read that verse, but as I become more and more emotionally healthy in my life, and more and more in touch with what’s the false sense in my life, the beach balls I have to keep hidden, the monsters in my closet and I live more in my true self, which is that God loves me no matter what and wants me healthy, I’ve come to look at this verse very differently. Because I’ve taken Paul off a pedestal and thought, you know, “Paul was a human and God didn’t trivialize his humanness, he went and found him in it.”

# the **Vineyard** church

*Love God. Love people. Period.*

Paul was – as C.S. Lewis would have called Paul, “a righteous prig” and I mean I can say that because it’s in Mere Christianity. And that’s who Paul was, he did everything right. He touted it, he bragged about how right he was. And he did a lot of terrible things! He was responsible for people’s deaths! Paul had a past. And I think his past came back to haunt him, just like ours does sometimes. And I’ve changed the way I look at this verse. And I think Paul said this verse – I think he wrote it through tears: “..forgetting what lies behind...forgetting what lies behind...I press on towards the prize in Christ Jesus.” I think Paul wrote this verse with humility and tears and even in his own battle to be emotionally healthy.

The thing about a palm tree is their life is in the core. Most trees, life is right under the bark, you know, you hack up a tree in the bark and you open it up to pestilence, you open it up to diseases, you open it up to insects and pretty soon your tree dies. And it’s gone. It dies from the outside in. But a palm, it’s life is in its center. Our internal health is so important. So the question, how is your soul, is supremely important. How are you caring for your soul? How are you being intentional about the fitness of your emotional health? Are you spending time in the long, loving gaze of God? Are you spending time in his word, not as a duty, but as a delight? Are you deriving internal strength and life from things that don’t necessarily give it to us? As Jeremiah said, are we trusting in our abilities, or are we trusting in our inabilities, or others? Life is in the center of a palm. You can hack up, beat up, kick, stomp, cut, slash a palm’s bark and it will never – unless you get to the core, it will not die! I don’t know if you’ve ever seen pictures of dead palms, but they – everything dismantles but the core is still there. I just read in preparing for this, I just read about a group of people that discovered a two- thousand-year old core. A stump of a palm tree. And they nurtured it back and now it’s producing fruit somewhere in Egypt.

See, the things in our life come to try to beat us up. They try to destroy us. There’s criticisms, there’s failures, there’s inabilities, there’s disabilities that come and try to rob and steal the life. But we can resist that and we become emotional fit when we first understand who we are and who’s we are. And it brings a contentment that no matter what – almost like a well-being when all else it not well. I love these passages in Romans. And 2 Corinthians 4. And last – I flubbed them up, I’m a dyslexic kinda guy, I get kinda...I highlighted it..there. And this is it; This is the question to ask in the life of the center: Romans 8:36-39 **35**Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? **36**As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered”. **37**No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38**For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, **39**neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Nor our failures, our shame, our grief, nothing can separate us from the love of God. Nothing can separate you from the love of God. Let me say it one more - Nothing can separate you from the love of God. [long pause] Did you get that? Nothing can separate you. He goes on and writes to the Corinthians church in 2 Corinthians 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. **8**We are hard pressed on every side, but

# the Vineyard church

*Love God. Love people. Period.*

not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; **9**persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. **10**We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. Life is in our core. It provides great resistance from the crap that we live in that is thrown at us.

And then also, date trees are very unusual because they cannot produce without other trees close by. They will only reproduce and have fruit in a grove. They only flourish together. I love this piece of emotional health. We flourish when we come together as a church. You know, the ICU on a floor is called that because when you're really, really sick you have to be isolated. But as you start to get better, you're introduced to the other floors because that's health. When we isolate, it's just such a sure sign that we're -- you know -- somethings wrong! There's a monster in your closet, there's a beach ball being pushed down when we isolate. I know for me, when I feel like I need to run and hide is when I push myself forward to be with people. To engage. Just like all of you who came this morning because that forces me to health. The church is the place where we get to be re-parented. Where we get to be loved and have our wounds healed. Where we get to become something we never thought we could be!

I know this will be shocking to Mike, but I wasn't the perfect parent -- and neither was he, but that's okay. But you know, we really tried our best with our kids to love them. I'm so glad they have the church to re-parent them in the places where I missed the mark! That doesn't bother me, I'm glad! And I'm glad I had the church for when we went through really, some struggles with some of our adult children. Life and death struggles. I could march into my small group as a pastor and say, "Hey you guys, you know the rule of what's said in small group stays in small group?" And I could fall on my knees and weep and say, "This is my worst nightmare! All I ever wanted to do was have the good family! Have things turn out right!" And I could cry and be prayed for and I could do my stuff, I could do the work, right? Even though I was the pastor, I wanna challenge you this morning, if you want to be emotionally healthy, open up this small group thing. It's open month, I have good news for you, there's still time! Go back there, go to the booth, find a small group, be a part of one. Say, "I'm gonna be known and I'm going to know." If you're struggling financially, don't let shame keep you from going to Financial Peace University.

You know, I survived leukemia, was diagnosed I forget how many years ago, but it's an expensive disease. And we had health insurance but it was catastrophic health insurance. And my chemotherapy was a prescription which was not covered which was thousands of dollars a month. We were left with medical bills, we were left with credit card debt when Mike couldn't pay the mortgage and the electric, those went on there. And when I was sick, he wouldn't tell anybody!

Those are big beach balls! They're really hard, it takes a lot of courage to bring those out in the open. When we came up for air, we were \$80,000 in debt! It still doesn't feel good to stand up here and say that to you today but I will say it to you if it gives you the courage to face that. I forgot to say this in the other two services, but you know, next month, we're going to pay our last \$2,000 payment on our \$80,000 of medical debt. Three and a half years that never would have

# the **Vineyard** church

*Love God. Love people. Period.*

started if I didn't say, "Either this truth is for me as a pastor too, because if it's not, I'm going to quit." I could never have done that alone. I had to do it with other people in a grove.

If you struggle with anger or anxiety or any other things, don't be afraid of Freedom for Life. Run to Freedom for Life! And you know what you're going to do, you're going to do what C.S. Lewis said, you're gonna find a friend that you can look in the eye and go, "[sharp intake of breath] You too!!" And that's gonna bring emotional health and freedom to you. You know, I don't know why, But I feel this in this service; I think some of you have been free from anxiety or addictions or other things and you're rejoicing in that freedom. You need to go to Freedom for Life and you need to sit and encourage somebody else in that group who's struggling to go through it. It's time for you to give the gift you've been given away to somebody else. We flourish together. We are better together.

When we are better together, a lot of you in your other 6 days of the week, you're part of that. You're on the ICU floor, you're counselors, you're pastors, you're social workers, your job is to help these people who are trying to be emotionally healthy. If that's you, would you stand up? We want to pray for you and we want to honor you today. If you're in the helping profession, would you stand up today? You know, if you're a teacher in a school, I want you to stand up. You deal with emotional messes all the time in school. You love students through it, you love parents through. First we want to say to you, thank you. Thank you, thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you for your service. Thank you for doing the hard work of ministering to people who are trying to be healthy. Thank you for that. We appreciate that.

So now, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, we bless you to be filled with the love of God that cherishes you. To be filled with the power and refreshing of the Holy Spirit, to receive the living water that Jesus promised would never run dry. To have the desires in your personal life be stirred up and awakened inside you and to know that you get to have desires too. We bless you to say them out loud. To say them out loud. And to know what God, your Father, sees them and sits with you in them. We bless you to be filled with the love and peace and power of Jesus. Amen. Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you for your service.

And lastly, it's the fruit. This is the best part. I love dates. He does. With my wife and the fruit. I love dates. And the unique thing about date palms is it's the only fruit that gets sweeter as the tree gets older. It's the only fruit. The older the tree, the sweeter the fruit. It's the opposite of what we experience, isn't it? I told you I was hanging out with the HLI group this week and I saw how old I really am. And older. And we old men, we tell really bad jokes, we scratch where we shouldn't in public... That's only when I'm not with you. That's true. We get cranky and cantankerous and tell the kids to get off our lawns.

But in actuality, our fruit, for learning to let our roots go deep in the soil God's planted us in, to be flexible and bow low to his authority and lordship and ownership over our lives, if we have the big picture and see that all of our life is useful, if we are watered well, and dig those roots down deep and know where we get our source, if we take care of our inner life and we understand that life is in the core and if we flourish together in a grove, in a community, our lives become fruitful and sweeter. And I don't know about you but I think you would agree with me

# the **Vineyard** church

*Love God. Love people. Period.*

that our world needs sweet fruit. We need sweet fruit. Our families, our friends, our neighbors, our city, our country, our nation, our world. When we become those trees, when we make the decision, when we take the first step to put our trust in the Eternal One, that starts the process. I have never seen an apple tree stressed out about producing apples. It's an apple tree, it just does it! And when we allow the spirit of God to flow through our lives, it's inevitable that we bear the fruit of the spirit.

I'm going to read this last part one more time. And I'd like you just to imagine it again as we close. Blessed is the one who trusts in me alone. The eternal will be his confidence. He is like a tree planted by water. Sending out its roots beside the stream. It does not fear the heat or even the drought. Its leaves stay green and its fruit is dependable no matter what it faces. No matter what you face.

If the worship team wants to come up as we close and if you'll stand with us. I hope today that we can have the courage to let the beach balls out. This is the safe place to open the closet door on the monsters. I think there's some of you here that have just had loss in your life and you've had grief that you've just pushed down. Heavy loads, heavy burdens and you know, you're good, strong people and you just keep your face forward and you just barrel down and get through it. And I think today, your loving Heavenly Father is saying, "I'm here to be the arms where you can be honest. And I can hold you and comfort you." I think there's some of us here today that may just have shame around even financial difficulties and today's the day to get prayer and let it out loud and let God meet you there and do miraculous things. But as the ministry teams come up and get ready to pray, let's just take advantage of the presence of God here and let's get prayer and get healed and get hope. You are a community of hope! You get to experience that hope today too for yourself!

One more time, would you join with me and pray and invite the Holy Spirit into this place and for our eyes to see his activity: Come, Holy Spirit. We welcome you here. We thank you for your love that nothing can separate it. That we could never do enough good things nor could we ever do enough wrong things to separate us from your love. May we experience it as a church, as a community this morning, so we can go out and just give it away, in Jesus' name, Amen.