

Here For Good 3.0
Here For Our Community
Proverbs 11:11; Luke 19:10

1. **Seeking.**

- *Matthew 18:14; Luke 15*

2. **Saving.**

- *1 Corinthians 19:19-22; Mark 10:45*

3. **Serving.**

- *Luke 22:27; John 13:14-15*

4. **Sacrificing.**

- *Philippians 2:5-8*

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West Valley Church
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Here For Good 3.0: Here for Our Community

We are in the midst of a major shift in the life of West Valley Church; we're in an effort that is going to help us tremendously in growth and influence for Christ in this community to a degree that we've never had before. We believe what we've begun is *vital* for the future of our church and our ability to impact West Valley – and beyond – with the Gospel. As you know, over two years ago we began our three-year effort that reflects our commitment to be **Here For Good** – a commitment from all of us to raise at least \$1.6 million dollars – over one million to eliminate the debt that this church had carried. That debt began over 20 years ago when this church stepped out in faith to expand this beautiful building; the children's areas, the gym and youth area and commercial kitchen, and the admin area were all added to our Worship Center and foyer, which were built in the 70s.

And, as I reminded us last week, after starting Here For Good, *during a pandemic and not being able to worship together in person*, together by the provision of God *in one year* we paid our entire remaining \$1.1 million dollar mortgage! We saved our church what would have been another quarter of a million dollars in interest alone, and we freed up nearly \$100,000 dollars in our budget annually to begin investing in ministries! And we have already begun doing that, and we continue to – helping us achieve our vision of being a multi-ethnic, multi-generational, multi-site church. We also realized after the pandemic that there were three strategic initiatives that we needed to pursue if we are going to be healthy in achieving our vision: we needed greater member care, we needed missional prayer, and we needed more meaningful evangelism. We are investing in all of those initiatives, and we will talk more about each of them.

Not only did we eliminate our debt, but as you prayed and made commitments, you raised our goal beyond \$1.6 to just over \$1.7 million! That's because as you prayed and committed and as you give, God has led us to a higher goal than we even thought. And that's good, because the work we have ahead of us is going to take everything that we give. Now that we are no longer in debt, we must finish reaching our goal so that we can renovate the oldest areas of our facility, as well as the spaces that have become inadequate: namely, the foyer restrooms, this room (both in its configuration, appearance, and seating as well as the technology areas), and then increasing the flow of the foyer and the safety of our children's area. Now, we can't do *all* of that – it will cost far more than what our goal is, and we are committed to NOT go into debt again. But the more money we raise for this remaining nine months of Here For Good, the more we will be able to accomplish.

So that's why we launched **Here For Good** – because we are here for *good* – we needed to be rid of debt so we can be here for another 60 plus years. But we are also here to *do* good, so why wouldn't we want to maximize our resources – especially our budget and our building?

In this series, we've been talking about what it means for us to be **Here For Good**. It means that we are Here For Christ: Christ is the reason we are here, that we've been saved, that we have a new life; Christ is the reason that we have Good News to share. Amen? That means we are also Here for our Community.

In 1956 God placed our church on this corner on purpose; we are in this community to make a difference for Christ. There are people in our community that need to see and hear the Gospel from us; that's why we are on this corner!

In the Bible, the book of Proverbs says:

“Through the blessing of the upright a city is exalted.” (Proverbs 11:11, niv)

Our calling is to make this city great by being a blessing to our community!

Let me help explain why this is your calling if you are a Christian. As someone who has put their faith in Jesus, you *already* have access to all the riches of God in Christ *today*, and you have eternity one day. But you were NOT saved just so you could go to Heaven. If you were saved just to go to heaven, then why are you still here? If you are supposed to be in heaven, why are you still sucking air here on earth? You are not still here because you have to hang tight and avoid sin and sinners until you get to heaven. There is a reason you are still here. The reason you are *not* in Heaven yet is because right now there are other people in West Valley who have not met Jesus. *You and I are here to introduce people in West Valley to Jesus (repeat)*; that's our mission and that's why we're still here. So listen church: we need to maximize all the resources we have in order to accomplish *that*. I don't know about you, but I don't want to someday get to Heaven and have God ask, “Why didn't West Valley Church reach people who were lost without Christ?” God's Word is clear: he intends for us to make this city great, by being...

Here for Our Community.

All followers of Christ have been commissioned by Him to carry out His work in the world. After Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, three days later he rose from the dead. He appeared to hundreds of people for a period of forty days – and spent most of that time with his disciples. Before he ascended into heaven, he commissioned all his followers to reach people. That was Jesus' last command to us in Matthew 28:18-20 when he commanded us to go and make disciples of everyone.

Jesus wants more and more people to be his disciples, to be loved by God and be his forever children, and he wants to do that *through us*. Until Jesus comes back, that's exactly what the priority is of *every* follower of his, and that's what *every* church is supposed to do; make disciples of Jesus. If Jesus expects us to carry out his work until he comes back, we'd better know what his work is, right? Fortunately, he tells us very clearly in his Word. Jesus stated *his* purpose in a couple of key statements. These two statements especially reveal Christ's passion and His purpose, and so therefore they reveal *ours* as well – because his mission is ours.

The first we find in Luke 19. You'll be reading it in your small groups, and you can read it later, but let me summarize it. It's the story of Zacchaeus. Zacchaeus was a tax-collector –

not a job that was respected. It was well documented that tax-collectors were thieves. They were the kind of Jewish “middle man” for the Roman government. Rome demanded taxes from people. Somebody had to be the IRS and assess peoples’ taxes and go collect those taxes. *That* was the tax-collector; sort a government contractor. Tax collectors weren’t paid by the government, so their pay came out of whatever they collected from the tax-payer. So tax-collectors would add dollars on top of the total tax that people had to pay. They were gouging their own people. The Jewish taxpayer could not do a thing about it, because if they didn’t pay, the soldiers would come looking for them and drag them away into prison and slavery until they could pay it all. Rome didn’t care what the tax-collectors did, so long as the government got what it demanded. So tax-collectors took advantage of their own people and literally robbed them by extortion, and that’s why they were commonly considered to be the worst of sinners. They were traitors to their people. *That* was Zacchaeus.

So Jesus was walking through Jericho and a crowd was following along and word of Jesus’ arrival went ahead of him. That’s when this short-statured tax collector climbed a tree so he could see over the crowds and could get a look at Jesus.

When Jesus reached that spot, Zacchaeus was shocked to hear Jesus call his name. Jesus called out, “Zacchaeus!” which was amazing because as far as we know, Jesus had never met Zacchaeus before. The crowd was shocked as well. Jesus said, “Come down immediately. I MUST stay at your house today!” Jesus knew that this man was a sinner. He knew what people would think of him for staying at Zacchaeus’ home. But when Jesus came to Zach’s house, Zach repented of his sin and became a follower of Jesus, and then Zacchaeus proved it by taking from all his wealth and paying back everyone that he had extorted from. Then Jesus made an amazing statement: he said that Zacchaeus was a “Son of Abraham” – meaning that Zacchaeus was a full-blooded, full-rights Jew; a chosen person of God. This was unbelievably insulting to the Jews who were watching this. But Jesus clearly loved Zacchaeus. Here’s what’s interesting: Jesus said that Zacchaeus was a *lost child of God. (repeat)*

Have you ever seen those “lost dog” signs? They post them on our mailboxes in our neighborhood, and you see them on power poles and community bulletin boards – have you seen them? There was a sign once that said there was a big cash reward for whoever found the lost dog, and then it had a description of the dog so folks could identify him. It said: "He's only got three legs, he's blind in the left eye, he's missing a right ear, his tail has been broken off and he was neutered accidentally by a fence (yikes!). He’s almost deaf. He answers by the name 'Lucky.'"

That dog is *not* lucky! He's been through a whole lot of mess. But he's lucky because he's got an owner who loves him and wants him back. That was Zacchaeus!

Jesus finished his greeting of Zacchaeus when he said:

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:10, niv)

Jesus was very clear with everyone there and with us that he came to seek out and find those who were lost. So, if we are going to continue doing the work that Jesus gave us to do, then the first thing about our church being *Here for Our Community* means that, like Jesus, we will constantly keep...

1. *Seeking.*

We, too, need to seek those who are lost. It's important here to understand what it was that Jesus was seeking. We know he was seeking what was lost, but let's learn what he meant by "lost." The word that Jesus used (*appollomei*) means the whole of mankind – that is, all men and women. And the word indicates that those who are lost are *totally* lost (which is *all of us*). The word can be translated to mean "destroyed, drown, ruined, executed, killed, perished." It means that the lost are *completely* dead, that there is not an ounce in us that is "found" or even remotely "findable" without Christ. We are completely and totally lost, cut off from God and from all hope and all eternal life, whether we are Jews or not. It is true for all people everywhere through all time.

That's important because it tells us how much we need what Christ has done for us. All of us are that dog named "Lucky" – the only reason we are lucky is because we have an owner who loves us and is looking for us.

So, as the church, the word "lost" is also important to us, because it tells us who *we* should be seeking for Jesus. Do you see this? If it is *people* that Jesus came to seek, and we are supposed to carry on Jesus' work, then all of West Valley, no matter what ethnicity they are (including and especially those in our neighborhoods) are *all* on our agenda to seek and build relationship with, that we can welcome them into our home and perhaps be welcomed into theirs.

So when we say we are "seeking," it means that we are to do anything we can to build relationship with the unchurched. The *best* way we can do that is by serving them in all ways that we are able. For sure, the mortgage money we freed up should be invested in whatever it takes to introduce people to Jesus, but we need to also do all we can to make this beautiful church as attractive and effective as possible to help us. It is called a "facility" because it needs to help "facilitate" our mission, and right now, some spaces are actually slowing us down from that. These spaces may be fine for you and me; that's because we're already saved. But we need to think about what it takes to reach and seek people who have *not* met Jesus yet, including the effectiveness of and the impression that our facility makes. We need to use every means possible.

Jesus said he came for the lost sheep and that:

"In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish." (Matthew 18:14, niv)

Jesus emphasized this desire for the lost by telling not one, not two, but three stories (**Luke 15**) in a row about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son – all to show how much we matter to God and how desperately he's looking for us.

Now when Jesus said he was seeking all people in general, He meant something very specific, too. The word he used for "seek" (*zeteo*) meant to desire, to diligently seek after, to pursue with such passion and intensity that it is like worshiping the thing that is lost. You heard that right: we are to be as passionate about seeking lost people as we are about worshiping God!

Of course, Jesus didn't worship anyone but the Father and neither should we. But the *intensity* of Jesus' seeking was equal to his *worship of God*; that's how much passion there is in it. That's how deeply Jesus feels about us and how strongly and desperately he seeks us. And it's with that same intensity that *we* should seek those around us who are lost. *You* are a consuming passion of Jesus, so you need to have that same passion to seek people *for* Him. That's what I want; my prayer is, "God, give me the same desire to seek people that Jesus has." It means that I will be conscious of the people around me. That I will engage in developing relationships so that I can determine ways I can serve them, being genuinely interested in their lives, and ready for any opportunity that they give me to introduce them to Jesus. Would you dare to pray that prayer? Would you be willing to pray, "God give me the same desire to seek people that Jesus has"? If you are, then it will make sense that you will do things differently, including giving in significant ways to **Here For Good** so that we as a church can seek people.

But there's a second part to this. We're not just seeking out new friends so they can be like us. We are seeking them so that we can see Jesus save *them*, too. It means that our passion is...

2. *Saving*.

Remember, Jesus said he came to seek and to *save* us. The word that Jesus used for "save" ("sozo") means to turn toward, to secure, to receive, to deliver, to heal, to protect and to preserve.

Jesus is the *only* one who can save us like that because we are so totally lost. He gave his perfect life in exchange for our lost lives. He came to *save* us. So we too, want to see people saved by Jesus, to begin a relationship with him, to experience his forgiveness and new life at an astronomical level of life with him as the Lord and Leader of their lives.

This is what the Apostle Paul said was *his* purpose, too.

Listen to his driving passion to see people saved so they can know Jesus too:

"Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." (1 Corinthians 19:19-22, niv)

"I've become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some." Is that your attitude and passion? This was Jesus' driving ambition – to save people. He would give anything and everything to see them saved; in fact, he gave his very life. He was willing to face horrible torture and crucifixion in order to save us. If Jesus gave absolutely everything he had to save us, and he has commissioned us to carry on his work, shouldn't we also give everything we can to see people saved? In light of what Jesus gave so that you

could be saved, is giving sacrificially for **Here For Good** too much to ask of you, so you can help people be saved?

I know it's messy work to seek people and get involved in their lives. In the process you have to accept them in all of their stuff – divorce, addiction, abuse, confusion, anger, pain, relational issues – wait a second...come to think of it, that's all the stuff that *we* have! That's us! Seeking people so Jesus can save them is exactly what Jesus did for us, and he tells us to do the same for others so that he can save them, too.

Did you hear about the guy who bought an old yellowed piece of paper from a Goodwill store for \$2.48 and it turned out to be one the of the original copies of the Declaration of Independence? (There he is) \$2.48! He turned around and sold it at auction for over \$2.42 million. Can you imagine? That is one valuable old piece of paper. So are we! We were worth nothing, but Jesus paid everything for us.

Let me put this another way: imagine that you found a Rembrandt painting, but it was covered with mud and dirt and yuck. But you know it's a Rembrandt – like that yellowed Declaration of Independence, you know it's incredibly valuable. What would you do? Throw it away because its dirty? Wouldn't you take it to an expert who can restore it to its original condition and beauty?

Well, lost people are that Rembrandt. They are made in the image of God. We don't want to dismiss them no matter how "dirty" and worn we might think they are. Instead, we want to connect them to the Master who will restore them to their original beauty and value. This is the motivation behind **Here For Good** – to give all we can to *seek* and to *save*.

Now there's another thing that Jesus came to do that we are to do as well. Jesus talked about it during a time when his disciples were arguing about who among them was going to be the greatest in Jesus' Kingdom. They all wanted to have top billing, but Jesus set them straight by telling them that whoever wanted to be greatest was going to have to be the least, and that they needed to follow his example. That same instruction applies to believers today, and this is the example that Jesus set for us. He said:

“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” (Mark 10:45, niv)

That was another part of what Jesus came to do for people, and therefore we too are here for our community. We are here to be a...

3. *Serving* church.

Do you realize that Jesus could have come and demanded obedience from us, and demanded that we worship him? He had every power and right to do that. But instead, he gave up his power and rights and came to serve us, and he specifically said that He was giving us an example to do the same thing for others. Jesus said:

“I am among you as one who serves.” (Luke 22:27, niv)

...and he demonstrated it over and over.

During Jesus' final meal with the disciples, the Bible tells us that Jesus got up during the meal, grabbed a bowl and a towel and began washing his disciples' feet. Normally a servant would have done this when Jesus and the disciples walked in the door, but there was no servant to do so, and of course none of the disciples volunteered to do something like that – they thought it was beneath them! So in the middle of the meal Jesus got up and started washing their feet. Keep in mind that these were fishermen – hard-working guys who wore sandals and walked everywhere on very dusty roads. Their sandals were not Chacos or Birkenstocks; they were straps of leather leaving not much separation between their feet and the dirty ground. Their feet had to have been really gnarly! But Jesus washed their feet anyway.

The feet that Jesus created, he washed.

He must have thought about how, in just a few hours, his own feet would soon be nailed to a slab of wood by the hands he created – the hands of men.

The hands washing their feet would soon be crucified by the creation he came to seek, save, and serve.

But still Jesus washed.

Then Jesus said:

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” (John 13:14-15, niv)

It if wasn't beneath Jesus to serve in this way, is it beneath us to serve people in our community?

As a church, we want to serve the needs of our community. I was looking back at my sermons that I preached when I first got here, and can I tell you something? Twelve and a half years ago, when I'd only been your pastor for a few months, I made this statement: “I promise you there will be intentional efforts and opportunities that West Valley Church will create in the future for us as a church to serve our neighbors and community.” (*repeat*) Now here we are, twelve years later, and we have so many ways that's come true; we have so many ways to serve! We already had Upward Soccer, but did you know it has grown over these last twelve years from 250 kids to, over 700 children involved, making it the largest Upward Soccer ministry in the world? That's not to mention their families, all being blessed by us every Saturday in the spring. Our city is being exalted by our blessings. Besides that, we now also have homework club with over 40 kids, we have school partnerships with Wide Hollow and Mountainview Elementaries where we give away backpacks and school supplies, we have summer science camps and Trunk or Treat and Breakfast with Santa.

We did all that WHILE we were paying our mortgage; imagine how much more we can do now that we are debt free and have come out of the pandemic!

And this applies not only to us as a church; it applies to you, too – to your neighborhood, to the people you work with and go to school with. Look for ways that you can serve!

So we are *Here for Our Community* to seek, save, serve, and finally we're here...

4. Sacrificing.

Jesus said that he came to give his life as a ransom or a sacrifice for many. That means he sacrificed himself for all those who are lost. And tell me, who again are the lost? All of us – all people. Sacrificing for others is an example that Jesus wants us to follow. It's a purpose he wants us to carry on. The Bible tells us to follow his example specifically:

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:5-8, niv)

“Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus...”

He sacrificed everything for us, and he wants us to also sacrifice for the sake of others who are lost. We are to seek, to save, to serve, and to sacrifice, all for the sake of people in our community.

Let me put it all this way: when we become Christians, we often talk about inviting Christ into our hearts and lives, right? So we have Christ *in us*. There are at least five places that the Apostle Paul wrote about how we need *Christ in us*.

But I'm *not* sure that should be our greatest focus, because there is *another* truth of the Bible, one that is *more important* than having Christ *in our lives*: the greater truth is that *we are in Christ*. Paul talks about Christ being *in us* five times, but he uses the phrase that we are “in Christ” 164 times! Here's why this is important: If Christ is limited to being *in you*, how big is He? He's only as big as you. But if all believers are *in Christ*, think how big he is! Here's the difference: if Christ is merely *in you*, then you take him along where-ever *you* go. But if you are *in Christ*, that means you go where-ever he goes; and I think you know where he goes: to seek and save and serve and sacrifice for those who are lost. We must do everything we can to be *in Christ*, not making him go where we go, but instead going where he goes, to seek, save, serve, and sacrifice all we can for the lost.

One very good, tangible way to do that is through **Here for Good**. It's certainly not the only way, but giving of our finances is certainly *one* way that God intends for us to sacrifice for the sake of the lost.

We must commit to be *Here for Our Community*. Two and a half years ago we made individual videos to describe each of these key areas that we are here for – here for Christ, here for our community, here for each other, here for Good, and here for Generosity. I want to show you again the video we made that talked about being here for our community. Watch this.

How great is that? We've got to keep meeting them where they are, and then have a welcoming and attractive and effective place for them to join us.

Prayer

We've still got an incredible opportunity in front of us! To accomplish this, it is going to require great faith and sacrifice on the part of every one of us; we still need 100% participation, and we want to encourage any of you who are new with us since we started all this to pray about joining us. When all of us are "all in," we will see God work as he multiplies our effort, and we will accomplish this tremendous task of raising what remains of our \$1.7 million so we can renovate this great place!

Just like you, Shelly and I have been giving what God called us to sacrificially do, making our best gift to **Here For Good**. When we first prayed about it, we really didn't know how we were going to be able to give such a big amount *above* our regular giving. But amazingly, God provided and this summer we had already met that goal! So we decided that as long as God keeps providing, we will keep giving to Here For Good until we all celebrate together next May! We're not the only ones. We've heard from folks who put off a home remodel and gave that money instead, and someone else who had an unexpected business addition, so they gave all the proceeds from that. Others have talked about selling a car, or paying off a loan and giving the same amount as the payments for Here For Good. Alex Robertson who leads our campaign actually postponed his retirement for months, so he had greater means to give to **Here For Good**. By the way, that's as close as we will ever get to telling you how much people are giving; we will *never* announce individual giving amounts; we only announce all of our collective *total* so you'll know where we are at toward our goal.

If you haven't joined us yet in Here For Good, there is lots of information out on the table for you, all in English or Spanish. This book was our original booklet, and it has a detailed explanation as well as devotionals to help you pray about what you might want to do. There is this smaller booklet that we prepared one year ago as an update. You can also go to the Here For Good page on our website. But if you are praying about joining, I'd really encourage you to grab one of these cards and, once God has given you an amount he wants you to give, please fill this out and turn it in to us; you can drop it in the offering or at the office, so we can add that to the total God has for us. But how much you commit to give is entirely between you and God; we will never ask you to give a specific amount. You must be obedient to God, not to the church! We as a church are obedient to God!

Now, let me give you a quick update on what the church has been up to since we paid off the mortgage.

Right away, your Church Board, called the Leadership Team, interviewed architectural firms and last August they hired BPH Architects; a firm from the West Side that has been working with churches in the Northwest for over 40 years. Then, last September the Leadership Team appointed the Renovation Team, chaired by Tom Froula and Steven Stillely. That team consists of a group of eight people from our church plus the principle architect who began having monthly meetings since last October to determine both priorities as well as what we can afford. They started out by sending out detailed questionnaires to 75 ministry leaders in our church, to hear from them what they felt needed to be updated in all the areas of the building in which they serve. Then the team reviewed and sifted through those pages and pages of responses in order to help the architect begin looking at spaces. The team also began researching the potential costs of those needs in those areas in order to help the Leadership Team prioritize the spaces that

we could make the most impact with whatever dollars finally come in when we finish in May.

The Renovation Team is in constant communication with the Leadership Team so that the best decisions can be made. At the end of this series next month, we will take time to give you as detailed information as we can give you by then.

Okay? We are all in this together!

Pastor Roger – Benediction:

1 Peter 3:15 –

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

And in the words of Jesus' command to us in Matthew 28:19-20 –

Therefore let us go and make disciples of West Valley, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything Jesus has commanded us. And remember, Jesus is with us always, to the very end of the age.”