

Sunday, February 15, 2015

Dear Valleybrook Family,

From Doug:

On Sunday, September 11, 2005, I stood on this stage to preach as the Lead Pastor of Valleybrook Church for the first time. I had butterflies that day. I really wanted things to go well, but I already had my hands full. I had previously shared with the staff what I was going to preach about that first Sunday, but by the time I actually got to preach it, I was surrounded by a swirl of controversy.

Some of you remember that day. People were really upset because Valleybrook had successfully navigated an 18-month transition without a Lead Pastor, and they wanted to hear that they had done a good job. They had done a very good job, and I was very proud of them. But that was not the message that God had given me to preach. Instead, He asked me stand before all of you and say, "I'm sorry." The teaching that day was based on Jesus' dying words on the cross --

Luke 23:34 (NIV)

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

That Sunday, I told this church that as Jesus hung there dying, He cried out words that were so powerful, they have echoed throughout all of history, even up until this present day. We need forgiveness because none of us knows what we're doing.

Two thousand years ago standing around a cross, God's chosen people didn't know what they were doing... and the story has been the same ever since. I don't know what I'm doing. You don't know what you're doing. We all desperately need to be forgiven. I did not understand why that message would create controversy, but in the middle of it all, God spoke to me.

He told me that the message of "I'm sorry" would be the defining mark of my ministry here -- and that whatever happened moving forward, Valleybrook would need a foundation of humility and forgiveness to become what He had called it to be. And then He told me that I would give the very same message on the day that I left Valleybrook. I had no idea that I would give you that message through this letter. But the message is still the same -- Father, forgive all of us. None of us know what we're doing. And that has become abundantly clear during the past two weeks.

Thank you to all of you that have been a part of this journey along the way. Our lives have been dramatically changed at Valleybrook Church. We will always remember what God has done here with great affection. And we will continue to love you, because you have been planted in our hearts.

In our absence, fix your eyes on Jesus and don't turn to the right or the left. He is your anchor. And know that we will be praying for you and cheering you on. We love you deeply.

From Nate:

The decision to resign today was not an easy one, but on Wednesday morning, God clearly showed us and our wives that this is obedience. God reminded me of 1 Kings 3, and the story of Solomon and the baby. Two mothers were fighting over one baby, because one of their babies had died. With great wisdom, Solomon told the women that he would settle the dispute by cutting the baby in half. The mother of the baby immediately responded by dropping her claims, because she loved the baby too much to see it cut in half and die.

Valleybrook Church is ripping apart at the seams, and we love you all too much to see this church divide and die. God has called us to lay down our lives and walk away.

Almost 11 years ago, I walked through the doors of Valleybrook Church. I sensed the presence of God in this place, and my life was changed forever.

I found my wife here. My four children were born here. And my call to ministry was born here. I am so grateful to God for Valleybrook. I was lost, but now I'm found. Today, I know God's love in ways I never dreamed possible, and it's been my joy to share God's Word and my heart with you. Thank you for giving me the chance to learn and grow. For that I will always be grateful.

My life is a living example of what God can do through the ministry of Valleybrook Church. And I am praying that you will remember why Jesus wants this church in downtown Eau Claire, and you will stand together so that many more lives can be changed, just like mine was changed. If you remember anything from this letter, I hope you remember my testimony and let it drive you to see that testimonies like mine are duplicated hundreds of times over as this church moves forward into all that God has for it.

Mary Clark prophesied that God's wind was going to blow through the porch of Valleybrook church, and when it came, we didn't have to frantically grab to try to hold onto things. Just let it blow and sit still because God knows exactly what he's doing.

So, Valleybrook, trust in the wind that is blowing today. Know that it's God's will, and He knows best.

We love you and are so excited for what God has in store for you all!

Doug and Nate