

# The BELL TOWER

VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH

## A Significant Investment

My earliest days as a follower of Jesus were marked by massive changes in just about every area of my life. This radical re-orientation included a change in calling, from law to ministry, and a change in colleges as I pursued this new direction. Shortly after arriving at my new school I met Ginger, the remarkable woman who would become my wife and now thirty-seven plus years of marriage later she is still the love of my life. In so many ways the unfolding of this story was, well, storybook.

Then about six months into married life I remember lying in bed one morning overcome with an incredible weight in my soul as I faced the realization that for all the change I had gone through, I was still capable of being an absolute, selfish jerk. All these years later I chuckle at my naïveté. How could I have possibly thought that I was beyond all that? The truth is that it took getting married for God to open my eyes to the depth of my need for His ongoing transformational grace. Living day after day with the same person exposes so much of our self orientation and then provides a laboratory for us to learn and grow more into the people we were created to be.

Because of this, I have come to see that marriage is one of our most important spiritual disciplines. When we think of spiritual formation or discipleship we naturally think of certain disciplines or practices that are important components of our growth. Prayer and the Scriptures are perhaps at the top of the list. Other practices like fasting, silence and solitude, and service are some others that are often mentioned. We have looked at a number of these this summer. But what about our relationships? If the writer of Proverbs is right when he says that “iron sharpens iron” and “one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17) shouldn't we view our relationships as a key tool for growth in our faith journeys?

Unfortunately, in our highly consumeristic, disposable, me-first culture we tend to run from things that are hard. This is certainly true in marriage. Things get tough and we run, if not toward separation and divorce, at least to some form of coexistence that is no real relationship of intimacy. We give up too easily. What if the hard times are gifts from God to form us? What if the commands for husbands to love their wives as Christ loves the church and for wives to submit to and respect their husbands aren't ideas that are archaic and burdensome, but rather paths toward deeper and deeper trust in God?

Because this is so crucial, we want to support our marriages in deeper and deeper ways. The upcoming Significant Marriage Weekend, September 14-16, is a great place to start. It will be just the kind of environment for you to receive great teaching and practical advice for building a stronger, more purposeful marriage.



The *Significant* Marriage

Jesus taught us that to find true life we have to lose our lives. He calls us into a way of living that is designed to lead us toward becoming fully human as God designed humanity. By working to build a great marriage you can take a great step forward in this process.

*Danny*  
 Danny Hall  
 SENIOR PASTOR

**REGISTER NOW!**

## Parenting Seminar with Duffy Robbins *Practical Principles for Intentional Parenting*



“The problem with parenting is that we have to practice on live subjects. Just when we think we’ve learned a little about how to do it better, another child comes along, with a different personality, and different issues, and different aspirations. And we have to learn all over again! But, there are some basic principles that encircle the whole process, and it’s those principles we want to identify and affirm in this helpful seminar.”

Attending this seminar will provide you with these basic principles. You will leave this evening with practical advice about:

- How to enforce rules without forcing your child away
- How to build communication with a child who has stopped talking
- The three most basic life skills a teenager needs to learn
- Picking the battles that are truly worth fighting
- How to turn the darkness of consequences into the light of discovery
- How to talk about sex—even if you don’t want to

Join us on Thursday, September 27 at 7:00PM in the Seminar Room. While all parents are welcome to attend, this seminar is geared to the parents of middle and high school students.

Our speaker for the night will be Duffy Robbins, Professor of Youth Ministry at Eastern University, St. Davids, Pennsylvania. He is a thirty-five year veteran of youth ministry and speaks around the world to teenagers and people who care about teenagers.

Duffy has his Doctorate of Ministry in Youth and Family Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary, and is the author of numerous books including *Ministry of Nurture, This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure*, and *Speaking to Teenagers*, which he co-wrote with Doug Fields. He also published *Youth Ministry Nuts and Bolts* and *Enjoy the Silence* (which he co-wrote with a wonderful girl named Maggie Robbins whom he married 35 years ago).



## VISION, IGNITE, BLAST

VISION (high school students), IGNITE and BLAST (middle school students) are returning after a short, summer break. By the time you read this, VISION will have had their back-to-school bash and Freshman Fest and VISION-kickOFF (during the last week of August). Don’t worry if you missed, there is lots more to come!

Starting Sunday, September 2, VISION will hold their morning worship and fellowship at 10:45AM on Sunday mornings. On Wednesdays at 7:00PM join us for a snack and time of community. Invite your friends and spend time together in smaller groups, getting to know one another and God. In September we will begin our “Third Saturdays.” Third Saturdays are service Saturdays, a time to come and participate in a service project together. MEGAVISION is always a spectacular event. You won’t want to miss our first one on Wednesday, October 17; another great time to invite your friends to join you.

IGNITE (Sundays 9:00AM) kicked-off on August 26. We will be launching BLAST (Tuesdays 7:00-8:30PM) on September 4. All incoming sixth graders are invited to join us a little earlier on September 4th—at 6:15PM for pizza and a special welcome. Our first Explosion event will be a Van Hunt on Tuesday, September 15. Explosion is open to all middle school students who are greatly encouraged to bring their friends. Then on October 20, our Explosion will be Glow-in-the-Dark Hockey, another night for outreach and fun.

Parents, our Middle School Ministry needs 20-25 of you (or other adults) to drive on Van Hunt night. If you can help us out, please contact Sheri Ellison ([sellison@vclive.org](mailto:sellison@vclive.org)) or Ryan Cochran ([rcochran@vclive.org](mailto:rcochran@vclive.org)) or call them at the church office at 846-6622.

# Developing Spiritual Rhythms of Life

Over the summer we looked at Soul Shaping Discipline; the spiritual disciplines that train us for transformation. All of the messages can be heard online at [vcclive.org/media](http://vcclive.org/media) and a booklet summarizing the messages and with all personal study guides compiled can be downloaded in association with the August 5 message, *Developing Spiritual Rhythms of Life*.

Take a look at these brief summaries and consider:

What am I drawn to?

Am I an extrovert or introvert?

Am I more of an activist or a contemplative?

What is my stage of life?

Is this new to me or have I had some experience with spiritual disciplines?

Is there a particular area that I want to grow in?

## Training for Transformation • June 17

Paul commands his protégé Timothy to “train yourself to be godly.” Spiritual training requires that we make a choice to practice various spiritual disciplines and then God works through them to shape our souls. This type of spiritual discipline produces in us an ability to more naturally and fully live like Jesus in every aspect of our lives.

## Meditation on the Word • June 24

The Bible is our primary source for knowing God and receiving instruction for life. Meditating on God’s Word helps us to deeply embed the Bible into our lives by: 1) thinking deeply about the meaning and application of God’s Word, 2) savoring the time spent in the Scripture, and 3) allowing the message to penetrate our daily activities.

## Love’s Lost Language • July 1

When it comes to prayer, for many of us, it is as if something is missing. It is as if a whole language has been lost to us and we need it to be deciphered, the code to be cracked. Jesus reveals to us that prayer is not some magical incantation or some mechanistic formula, but that prayer is “intimacy with the Ultimate One”; it is communicating with God. Jesus is the “Rosetta Stone”, the key to the mystery that makes sense of the how and the why of prayer by revealing God as our loving father.

## Slowing & Waiting • July 8

Hurry sickness poses a huge threat to our spiritual health, and a prescription for hurry sickness is the practices of slowing and waiting. Jesus’ response to Martha’s hurriedness poses this question for each of us: “Are you living in a rhythm that regularly has you sitting at the feet of Jesus?” The practice of slowing involves creating margin and deliberately putting ourselves in situations where we need to wait. God brings the practice of waiting into our lives when we are forced to wait and then we respond by actively trusting in God’s goodness toward us and wait for him to act.

## Confession is Good For the Soul • July 15

In order to grow spiritually we must be aware of and attending to the sin in our lives. When we do not do this our lives can be characterized by moral indifference or guilt, and often some of both. Confession brings with it forgiveness, healing, a heightened awareness of sin and grace, a deepening fellowship with God, and a more graceful disposition toward others.

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The graphic on the left side of the page is a vertical banner with a dark background. At the top, there is a green textured area. Below that is a yellow and white textured area. In the center, there is a blue silhouette of two hands holding a yellow and orange flame. Below the hands, there are blue swirling lines. At the bottom, the text "Soul Shaping Discipline" is written in a white, serif font. The background of the banner is dark red and black.

Soul  
Shaping  
Discipline

### **Solitude** • July 22

Jesus frequently practiced solitude in order to connect with his heavenly Father, and he invites us to do likewise: “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and rest.” Solitude is intentional time alone with ourselves and God, a place for us to be open to God and listen to him. Solitude helps to free us from the influence of the world and the distractions of our busy lives, and thus is considered by many to be an essential discipline for spiritual transformation.

### **How to Listen to God** • July 29

Before Christ came to this world, God’s people heard from God largely through the prophets. We can learn from the prophets to increase our ability to hear from God by: intentionally living our lives in his Presence (Samuel), learning to hear His voice (Elijah), and responding in obedience to His leading (Isaiah). Today we can listen to God more directly and intimately because we have the Spirit of God living within us.

### **Developing Spiritual Rhythms of Life** • August 5

Dallas Willard has given us a helpful three-step pathway to help us in our spiritual growth. These steps are Vision, Intention, and Means. This pathway simply means that we must recognize and believe in the possibility that God wants to conform us into the image of Christ, that we must choose to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in this transformation, and that we must actively engage in the kinds of practices that promote this work in our lives. By developing a specific plan for including these practices in our lives we begin the process of creating a rhythm to our walk with God.

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## **M2M: Great Journeys Begin with the End in Mind** *by Dean Hampton*

**What drives you?** It’s not always an easy question to answer. It can be difficult because we tend to react to life rather than be guided by a clear focus. Sometimes we need to be reminded of our first priority. Jesus revealed this to us when he said, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and all of these things will be added to you.” (Matthew 6:33)

**What is Ministry 2 Men’s focus?** Rarely are great things accomplished when we start with the phrase, “I hope so” or “We’ll see what happens.” Every great journey begins with the end in mind.

Ministry 2 Men’s goal is clear, our passion is to develop godly men who lead as Christ led the church—with purpose, sacrifice and love.

**How will we achieve this goal?** We will accomplish this by developing godly men primarily through intentional mentoring relationships. The process is highly relational and will be flexible regarding the time involved.

**What does the mentoring process look like?** We will follow the three-step process Jesus used to develop his disciples.

1. Come and See: The challenge is to be fully committed to Christ. We invite you into a mentoring relationship with a powerful, life-changing goal.
2. Come and Learn: You’ll build a relationship with the goal of growing spiritually. Time is spent learning, encouraging and challenging each other. You’ll discover and develop your spiritual gifts.
3. Go and Do: The mentee becomes the mentor and will continue the process. The torch has been passed!

**We’re just getting started.** Over the next year you can get involved through our quarterly men’s events, ongoing Bible studies, and more. You will also have a chance to participate in a mentoring relationship. Become a part of the journey! For more information, contact M2M Coordinator, Dean Hampton at [deanhampton10@gmail.com](mailto:deanhampton10@gmail.com) or Tony Catudal at [tcatudal@vcclive.org](mailto:tcatudal@vcclive.org).



## Divorce Hurts *Find help at DivorceCare*

One of our goals as a church is to become more and more of a church family; a place where people in their times of greatest need and suffering turn for love and support.

All too often when people are experiencing difficulties in their lives, they distance themselves from their church. This is especially true during a divorce or separation. But during such a time a person most needs loving care!

We will be starting our next session of DivorceCare on Thursday, September 13. DivorceCare is designed in a way to help so that you, or a friend of yours, don't need to go through a separation or divorce alone. It can be extremely helpful in helping families through the separation and/or divorce process and on into recovery. DivorceCare features thirteen video seminars that include more than thirty experts on divorce and recovering. You also become part of a small support group where, along with others in similar situations, you can discuss the seminar information and encourage one another through this difficult period in your lives.

If you are currently struggling with separation or divorce or someone you know is struggling, please consider participating or encouraging your friend(s) to participate. Look forward to rebuilding your life; don't go through divorce alone!

We will be meeting on Thursday evenings, 6:00-8:00PM, in the Conference Room. Child care is available for those who request it. To register, please call the church office at 846-6622.



## It's Never too Late to Go Green *Online Church Directory*

It is never too late to opt into the Valley Community Church online directory. Only those people who opt in will be able to access the directory for addresses and telephone numbers of other congregants who opt in.

To be a part of the directory AND to have access to it, each household member with their own, personal email address and over the age of thirteen will have to OPT in. When you opt in, the directory will display your name, address, and home telephone number and the first names of everyone in your household. You will also have the added option of displaying your email address, your cell number and posting a picture of yourself and/or family members.

On September 30 we will discontinue producing a paper copy of the directory and the only way you will be able to access the information of other members of our congregation will be to opt in to the directory yourself.

One of the great advantages for you will be the ability to access the directory from compatible electronic devices. Another advantage you will have is the ability to keep all of your personal and household information up-to-date especially email addresses and cell numbers.

To opt into the directory, [CLICK HERE](#), log into your VCC account using your email and VCC password. (If you have never set up an account, you will have to do this first.) Click on **PRIVACY SETTINGS** and opt in by clicking on the **CHECK BOX** (include me in the church directory) at the bottom of the page and then click the button to **SAVE PRIVACY SETTINGS**. NOTE: on this page you can also set your levels of privacy (what you would like others to see or not see).

## Transformers! by Tony Catudal

Why does our Groups Ministry exist? The reason is simple; life transformation! Valley Community Church's vision is Transforming Lives in a Christ-Centered Community. We believe transformation requires participation in small communities; in part because such communities are great places to experience God's grace.

A quote recently gripped me from Mindy Caliguire's book, *Become Like Jesus*. In it she writes, "When grace invades a human soul, everything changes! The former darkness turns to light, the soul has gone from death to life (Ephesians 2)." Sign me up! It is overwhelming to consider that God's work in our lives can lead to a genuine reality of life transformation.

Dallas Willard writes in his book *Renovation of the Heart*, that "Spiritual formation for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself." To this end, our Groups Ministry is undergoing a remodel of sorts as we continue to create environments conducive to life transformation. We will be sharing more about this with you in the coming year. Some of our current thoughts are:

- Adapt language to better communicate purpose for the Groups Ministry.
- Increase types of groups to better meet the needs of our body.
- Add a missional component to facilitate serving as central to discipleship.
- Increase opportunities for young families to participate together.

This is an amazing time in the life of VCC and the transforming work of the Lord is at the heart of it all. Let's give Him thanks as we continue to seek Him in all we do!!

### A question for all:

Am I currently in an environment where I am connecting in Christian community and being encouraged and challenged to grow in my relationship with Christ? Am I experiencing life transformation? If not, what next step will I take?

### A question for group leaders:

What is the true state of my inner-life and how does this serve to assist the Lord in the process of the life transformation of others?



### Upcoming events

- Group leaders meeting  
Sunday, October 14, 12:15-2:00PM
- Group database update project  
Letters to go out September 14
- Short-term message-based groups  
October/November 2012
- Topical groups (6-8 weeks)  
Winter 2013

# Sizzling Summer; Fun Fall *by Cheryl Blea*

Kidz Connection had an outstanding summer breaking records for all of our events.



**Blank Canvas**—Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might. (Ecclesiastes 9:10) Blank Canvas was a great event with 30 students learning and doing tasks with UPCYCLE materials. Students went home with lots of ideas on how to reuse what God has given us. Don Elser was an amazing blessing; teaching the students rhythm with plastic bottles and rocks!



**Sports Camp**—Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:24) Our Sports Camp was overflowing with 114 campers, grades 1-5, and 30 campers, 4 and 5 years of age. Each day was packed with God's word and stories to encourage us to go beyond the gold! It was such a blessing; 38 students made a decision to follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior. Over 300 folks joined us for a closing program and picnic for both camps.



**Vacation Bible School**—I am with you always even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20) Vacation Bible School hosted 220 students and over 130 volunteers. The stories of Daniel amazed us each day as our drama team acted out each story. We were blessed that our VBS students brought in an offering of \$2,268 for Kids Against Hunger. This money will provide 9,072 nutritious meals to children.



**Wild & Wacky Wednesday** was safe and adventurous as always! We traveled afar and nearby to mysterious destinations. Twenty-eight students recited the memory verses they learned over the summer to Mrs. Blea at Rock and Jump. We traveled to the Kids Against Hunger warehouse and packed over 3,000 meals. What a blessing! One hot, long hour on our feet and not one complaint.

## Looking Forward to our Fall Y'all

**Movin' On Up** to the next class begins Sunday, August 26, 9:00 and 10:45. Please give us extra grace as get into our rhythm; we have some new teachers and more space for children.

**Kidz Choir** for grades 1-5, begins on Tuesday, September 11. Children will meet in the Music room at 3:30PM, with our director Becca Cochran. Students will be performing monthly this year.

**Homework Club** begins in the Kidz Connection Portable on Tuesday, September 18. We will meet every Tuesday, 3:30-4:45PM. Come enjoy a great snack and friends to help get the homework done.

**Fall Sharing Closet** will be on Wednesday & Thursday, November 7 & 8. We will begin collecting gently used clothing and books on Sunday, October 7. Start clearing out those drawers and closets!

### Tips for a successful Sunday School experience

- Be a little bit early for check in; students do not like to walk into a room full of students. Note: ages 2 through 1st grade have an outside time; sunscreen is advised.
- Do not linger when you drop off your child, students get nervous when you are not sure. Our teachers are trained to help crying children and we will page you if your child needs you.
- Please pick up your children on time starting with the most anxious one. All students are welcome in the big church service if you want them to worship with you.
- Serve! You will learn so much about your child and get to know other families with your same age child.



## Early Risers *Five Years and Counting, by Ted Saito*

Early Risers is entering its fifth year of a men's Bible study combined with a hearty, delicious breakfast every Wednesday in Valley Community Church's Conference Room. Continuing our focus on God's word we had 30 lessons from Exodus which challenged us with principles, especially from Moses' life. We wrestled with how the principles apply to men today studying issues like:

- Dealing with the conflict of civil law with God's law
- Delegation
- God's Covenant with us today
- Roles of Priest, Prophet & King today

We open promptly at 6:30AM with prayer and each lesson gets us into the Bible. Typically after a short lesson, the 15 or so men are divided into small groups to discuss applying the principles. Lively discussion is encouraged giving the opportunity to build bonds. We circulate a sheet to record prayer requests, give a copy to each, and pray for those requests when we close at 7:30. Although it is a "guys" study, we are grateful to the ladies who regularly provide our breakfast: Diane Saito, Jan Mickelson, and Evelyn Mitschelin.

Our discipleship goals are served in part by other Early Risers preparing and facilitating lessons. Don Prescott, Drew Sanders, Ron Mickelson, and Bill Steuben have each blessed us with their insights as well as grown through their own study. Service projects give the opportunity to get to know each other better and allow us to include our children (we helped spruce up VCC for Easter and for the Global Leadership Summit).

Men are invited to join our fall series, starting September 12, *From Good to Great in God's Eyes*, using Dr. Chip Ingram's videos & workbook. Chip presents 10 principles he found in many "giants" of the faith. Each section has practical suggestions of developing a character which employs these principles. Some of the principles are "To Think Great Thoughts, to Dream Big Dreams, and to Pray Big Prayers" so that we please God and glorify Him by bearing fruit in His Kingdom.

If you'd like to fellowship with us, but Wednesdays are inconvenient, look for our next semi-annual no-host Saturday breakfast at a local restaurant like Vic's All Star Kitchen. (There is also a Thursday evening men's Bible study. Check the church website, [vclive.org](http://vclive.org), or watch the bulletin for information.) Contact Ted Saito, [tdsaito@comcast.net](mailto:tdsaito@comcast.net) if you are interested in joining Wednesday's Early Risers or if you have any questions.

## Mark Your Calendar for Fall

**Women's Bible study begins:** September 11 & 12

**DivorceCare begins:** Thursday, September 13

**Marriage Weekend:** September 14-16

**Worship Night with Friday Friends:** Friday, September 21

**Annual Celebration & Appreciation:** Sunday, September 23

**MS/HS Parenting Seminar:** Thursday, September 27

**Aphesis begins:** Monday, October 8

**Women's Retreat:** October 19-21

**Women's Mocha Moment:** Saturday, October 27

**Men's Retreat:** November 2-3

**Celebration of Hope Thai Dinner:** November 9

## Please note...

On August 26 a proposed budget as well as Elder and Deacon candidates were presented to the congregation. The budget and bios on candidates along with absentee ballots are available in the church office. Members can turn in absentee ballots until September 23 and questions or concerns can be addressed to Elders or Staff at any time during that period.

On Sunday, September 23 we will gather at 6:00PM to collect remaining ballots, and enjoy a time of Celebration in the sanctuary when we will focus on where God is leading us in the year ahead. We will also show our Appreciation to the Elders and Deacons who have served in the prior year. The evening will conclude with a potluck dessert.