

Flawed Hero: The king before the King

Matt Hessel | 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Well good morning to everyone who doesn't have a ticket to the race. It's good to see you guys. Hey, bad jokes to start. Go ahead and open your Bible to 1 Samuel 16. 1 Samuel is in about the first quarter of the Bible, right between Ruth and, oddly enough, 2 Samuel. If you don't have a Bible there should be one in the seatback nearby you.

If you're a guest today I want to say, "Welcome." I'm glad you are here. My name is Matt. I'm one of the pastors here and I want to invite you to do two different things. First of all, right after service take some time and stop by Connection Central on your way out. There are some people (in great tee-shirts) who would love to meet you, would love to answer any questions you might have, show you around the building, and help connect you to the church.

And then also take some time to fill out a Communicate Card. It is in the seatback right in front of you. That's another great way for you to ask questions of us. If there is any information that you need or we can help connect you, and, most importantly, whether you are a guest or you've been here for 30 years, you can tell us how we can be praying for you. So take time, fill one of those out, and drop it into one of the silver boxes on the way out.

If today is your first time here or you weren't here last week, Aaron, our lead pastor, starts a sabbatical break this weekend. So he and his family are going to be gone for the next ten weeks, just away refueling and recharging. He is just going to be investing in them.

Like he said last week, today we are starting a brand new series called *Flawed Hero*, where we are going to look at the life of David. Here is some of the reasoning behind this series. Number one: We've just spent 30 plus weeks in the Gospel of John, so we want to spend some time now in the Old Testament. The Old Testament and the New Testament are not two opposing sections of Scripture, where the story is different in one than it is in the other, where God is different in one that He is in the other. The Old Testament is not irrelevant now that we have the New Testament. The New Testament is a continuation of the story that starts in the Old Testament. The Bible is one story of redemption and the more that we study the Old Testament it will actually bring the New Testament to light, and vice versa.

Here is another reason for this series: Maybe one of the leading criticisms today of Christians and the church is probably the Bible, right? How can you believe a book that was written over 2,000 years ago? How do you know that this is the authentic Word of God? You've heard those questions, right? Maybe you are even asking those questions, and whether we are asking those questions or just hearing them today, those aren't new questions, not at all.

The Bible has been under skeptical attack really ever since God gave it to us, but it's still here. Year after year it is the best-selling book, over and over again. Just because it is the best-selling book every year, that's not proof that this is the authentic Word of God. That's not the proof. But I do think that it says something about this book, that it's still here and yet it has faced two millennium of scrutiny. I heard somebody say once, "The Bible is an anvil that has worn out many hammers." I love that.

It's okay to ask those types of question, completely okay. God is not afraid of skepticism, God is not afraid of doubt and neither is the Bible. If God had stepped back from hard questions, if the Bible had to sidestep around hard arguments, He wouldn't be God and this certainly wouldn't be God's Word. But if we are going to ask those types of questions, let's ask them with the intellectual integrity to be open to a truth that might run contrary to what we already believe. Let's not use those types of questions to just shield us and guard us from a truth that we may not want to believe.

Now go with me on this for just a second. If the Bible is made up, this isn't the authentic Word of God. This is just some fabricated story meant to promote, for certain people, some sort of financial, political, or social gain or its main purpose is just to be a crutch. If that's all it is, why would you include all the sin and the flaws of the leading characters and the leaders, the sin and the flaws that completely discredit them? Why would you include them?

One of the things that speaks to the authenticity of the Bible is that it never does that. The Bible doesn't shy away from the sin and the flaws of its characters and its leaders; in fact the Bible magnifies them. If I'm making this up, if I'm writing this, I'm leaving out the part where Moses kills a guy. I'm leaving that out. I'm leaving out the part where Peter is a whiney coward. I'm leaving out the part where Paul signs the death warrants of innocent people. I'm leaving all that stuff out because if this isn't the authentic Word of God, or if I'm making this up, if I have all the flaws of the leading characters, if I have all the sin in there, that doesn't help my case to prove that this is true.

But the Bible doesn't do that, not at all. It goes a complete 180. Instead of avoiding them, it highlights them. It highlights the sin, it highlights the flaws to show what Scripture is really all about. Scripture is all about Jesus. Scripture all points to how Jesus covers every flaw, heals the deepest wound, and pays for even the most heinous of sins.

Now make no mistake, this is a character study that we are going to be doing for the next ten weeks, but the main character is not David. The main character of this series is not going to be Samuel, it's not going to be Saul, it's not going to be Jonathon, and it's not going to be Bathsheba. The main character of this series is Jesus. He is the One that we are going to study. And David, maybe better than any other Old Testament figure, foreshadows Christ. But Jesus is the far better David. All of Scripture points to Jesus. So what we want to do is we want to look at 1 Samuel and 2 Samuel. We want to look at the life of David and see how it points to Christ.

So here's what's going on. This is post Exodus. Israel has left Egypt and now they have settled into the Promised Land. They've been there for about 400 years, 400 years of struggling. There have been some bright spots. They've had a couple wins but, for the most part, a rough four centuries with some really dark stuff going on. Just read the book of Judges.

Now Israel was established as a theocracy, so God is their King, God is their Leader. And He has proven to do that. He has proven to lead them over, and over, and over again starting with the Exodus, but for whatever reason, Israel keeps forgetting about how He has constantly provided for them and protected them, and they keep forgetting about what He's promised them.

At this point in Israel's history, they are under almost constant attack and raid from their surrounding neighbors who are all around the Promised Land, and they are getting kind of tired of it. I can understand that. Even though every time this happens God raises up a judge to protect Israel, to fight

for them, they are tired of it. They are tired of the attack and they say, “You know what? We want a king to protect us.” That’s what they want. They want a king right now. That’s what they are asking for.

To Israel’s credit, they sit down and come up with a very elaborate plan as to why they should have a king. They really think this through. They sit down and come up with all the details, the reasons why, and then they take this argument to the Lord as to why they should have a king. Here’s their argument as to why they should have a king. This is what they take to God, “Because everybody else has one!” Seriously, that’s what they go with. Everybody else around them has a king so they want one too. My 5-year-old can make a better argument for Dairy Queen than Israel did for a king.

“All the other nations have a king. God, we want a king. All of them have a king. God, why can’t we have a king? We want a king to go out and fight for us and protect us in battle.” So they want to trade God for a man for protection in battle. That makes a whole lot of sense to me. It’s like trading a battleship for a bee-bee gun. That is what they are asking for.

At this point Samuel was the last judge of Israel. He was really God’s appointed leader of the people. He wasn’t a king, but he was God’s appointed leader. He was really the start of the prophets in the Old Testament. So he would speak to the people with what God would tell him to say. Really Samuel was kind of like Israel’s pastor. That’s kind of what he was.

And the people come to Samuel saying, “We want a king. We want a king, Samuel,” and he is ticked. He is not happy about this. It’s not because he wants to be king. Samuel doesn’t want to be king. He’s like, “Are you serious? Have you forgotten what God has done for us? You want a king because everybody else around us has a king? That’s what you want? Look at them. They’re all train wrecks. That’s what you want? Don’t you know that a king will come in here with his own agenda? Don’t you know a king will take your daughters and make them serve under him? Don’t you know that a king will take your sons and make them fight for him? You want a king to protect us? You want a king to go out and fight for us? Really, you want to trade a battleship for a bee-bee gun? That’s what you want?”

But in 1 Samuel 8, God says to Samuel, “Obey the voice of the people. Samuel, don’t worry. They are not rejecting you. They are rejecting Me as King.” So the Lord says to Samuel, “Give them a king. Give them what they want.”

One of the most terrifying things that can happen in this world is when God gives people what they want. It sounds ridiculous, doesn’t it? But when a sinful and rebellious person or people keep rejecting God for what they think is best, disaster will follow—maybe not immediately, but it will follow. Basically God is like, “You don’t want Me? You don’t trust that I know what’s best for you? You don’t trust that I love you and that I want what’s best for you? Okay, okay, go ahead. You can have it but this won’t end well for you.” That’s the passive wrath of God. God allowing a person to have the disaster they are asking for.

The hard part about this is the person or the people who keep annoying or rejecting God never think that they are. I’ve gone down this path myself. “God, I know what I want here. I know what’s best. I know what’s right in this situation. Don’t worry. I’m not turning from you, I’m not ignoring you. I’m just going to go down this path right now.” And the Lord was like, “Alright Matt, I tried to tell you. But go ahead,” and let’s just say the results were less than pretty.

Samuel is the last judge of Israel and God tells him, "Okay, give them a king." So enter Saul. So 1 Samuel says Saul is this really good looking guy, that his shoulders are actually taller than every other man in Israel. Saul is a beast. Saul is like Dwayne Johnson. That's Saul. The people are like, "Okay, so we get a king? We get a king to fight for us and go out and protect us in battle? We'll take this guy. We'll take the rock. I mean look at him. The guy is wearing a lion, why would we not pick that guy? He is so awesome."

So Saul becomes king. He is a great tactician, he is a great warrior, and he wins battles (and he better if he is going to wear a lion), but he goes south really quickly. Almost immediately Saul gets seduced by power. He comes in with his own agenda, just like Samuel said would happen. And for whatever reason, Saul insists on continuing to disobey the Lord over and over again, to the point where Israel falls deeper, and deeper, and deeper into sin. To the point where God finally says, "You know what Saul? I'm done with you. I reject you as being My king."

That's the point where we are picking the story up. Look at verse 1. "The Lord said to Samuel, 'How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go, I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for Myself a king among his sons.

"And Samuel said, 'How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.' And the Lord said, 'Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for Me him whom I declare to you.' Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem."

Here's how we find Samuel. He's a wreck. He's grieving, he's afraid for his life, and that's saying something if we're talking about Samuel because this guy has been the man in Israel for years. He is the pillar. He is a giant of the faith. Everyone knows the Lord has his back. In chapter 15, Samuel even goes and kills a foreign king. He is a pastor with a sword, that's awesome.

Samuel is not a guy to be messed with but here we find him curled up on the floor in the fetal position crying and almost crippled by fear. Why? It's because Samuel is grieving over the sin of God's people. He is grieving over the misery they are about to face and that they are going to experience for a long time. Samuel is grieving because the people have turned away from the Lord and because their leader doesn't follow the Lord. Saul didn't follow the Lord.

Some of the best leaders are some of the most impassioned followers. This is the way it works with the Lord. You have to be a follower before you can ever be a good leader. Relentless, humble, obedient followers of Christ can be some of the best leaders for Christ. Find people who are relentless, humble, and obedient and they are following after Christ and those will be the leaders to follow. You will know who they are. It doesn't mean they are perfect, not even close, but they will have a faith that is worth imitating. That's Hebrews 13:7.

Samuel is broken by the fact that Israel does not have this kind of leadership. They have a great warrior. They have a great tactician. They don't have a leader. This is the turning point. This is the turning point. Whenever God's people are broken over sin and the effects of sin, whenever God's people grieve over the lack of zeal for holiness in God's mission, whenever God's people grieve over the indifference for the Lord and His glory (which is exactly what Samuel is doing), whenever God's people do that, it's usually a sign that God is about to act out of His mercy. That's exactly what happens.

God says to Samuel, He is like, “Hey, Samuel, are you done crying yet? How long are you going to be afraid? Get up. Get up. I have a king for Myself. I’ve provided a king for Myself who’s going to make everything right.” Does that sound like anybody else to you? “I’ve got a king that’s after My own heart. I’ve got a king who will follow after Me so get up and go. Get up! I’ll show you what you shall do.”

Here’s what’s going on. In times of distress God comes to us with His grace. He is coming to Samuel with the grace. Samuel is not running to the Lord. God says, “I’ll meet you where you are.” At times of pain, God comes to us with His grace. Even in times of rebellion, God will come to us with His grace. Everything, everything starts with the grace of God. Creation comes from God’s grace. The church comes from the grace of God. God is providing a king for Himself, a king for Israel, right here in chapter 16, out of His grace. A thousand years from this point He’ll provide the One True King, Jesus Christ—all out of His grace.

Grace is the great initiator. The good news of grace takes people from fear to faith. That’s exactly what’s happening to Samuel right here. Go back to verse 4. I want to read all the way through verse 13 and then I want us to come back and look at a couple of things.

Verse 4, “Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, ‘Do you come peaceably?’ And he said, ‘Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.’ And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

“When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, ‘Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him.’ But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.

“Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, ‘Neither has the Lord chosen this one.’ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by.” I’ve told you before. If you ever come across a name that is hard to pronounce, say it loud, confidently, and fast and everyone will think you got it right. I have no idea if I got these names right but you thought I did.

“And he said, ‘Neither has the Lord chosen this one.’ And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘The Lord has not chosen these.’ Then Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Are all your sons here?’ And he said, ‘There remains yet the youngest, but behold he is keeping the sheep.’ And Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here.’ And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the Lord said, ‘Arise, anoint him, for this is he.’ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward.”

How many of you remember the Dream Team? Do you remember the Dream Team? I’m talking about the original one, if you are under the age of 25 just google it. So the Dream Team was the 1992 U.S. Olympic Basketball team and this was the first year that NBA players were allowed to play in the Olympics. So the United States’ team was absolutely stacked. Guys in their prime: Michael Jordan, Larry Bird, Magic Johnson, Carl Malone, David Robinson. The roster was filled out with hall-of-famer after hall-of-famer. And Christian Laettner—moving on.

So needless to say the United States team was absolutely ridiculous. They won the gold in the 1992 Olympics. They went 8 and 0. Their average margin of victory, remember this is against the best teams in the world. Their average margin of victory was 43.8 points per game. That's insane. Chuck Dailey, who was the head coach, never called a timeout in eight Olympic Games. He never called a timeout in eight games. You don't need to when you're beating people by an average of 43 points.

Here is the point. The Olympics is the highest level of athletic competition in the world, highest level of athletic competition. You train for four years before you go and compete. So this is the highest level of competition. You choose the absolute best to go. You choose the absolute best, in 1992, to put on those short-shorts and go win the gold, right?

What about this? How about instead why don't we send a seventh grade basketball team? Does anybody think that's a good idea? Does anybody think that's a sure bet to win the gold? That is exactly what God is doing in chapter 16. He is getting ready to pick who is going to be king. He is getting ready to pick who is going to lead His people. There is a lot riding on this. It's much more than just the wellbeing of a nation. Israel is God's chosen people, the people that the Messiah, the Savior of the world, Jesus, would come through.

God promises Abraham. He says, "Hey, there's going to be a people, there's going to be a nation that will descend from you and from this people, from this nation, all nations, all peoples of the world, past, present and future will be blessed because the Messiah, the Savior, the Redeemer who I have set forth ever since Genesis 3 is going to come through this people." You are I are sitting here today and can experience the salvation of Jesus Christ because God, in His glory and His greatness chose a nation, chose a person, became man Himself and came through this nation to bless all of us.

This choice is a big, big deal. It doesn't just affect Israel in chapter 16. This choice has consequences for generation, after generation, after generation. We're sitting here today, 3,000 years removed from chapter 16, and this choice affects us. God is about to pick the king of His people. God is about to pick the king who Jesus would come from. It's a big, big choice but God doesn't pick the Dream Team. Instead, He picks the awkward seventh grader with too much acne and no natural jump shot.

When the people chose Saul to be king they were like, "Hey, looking at it from the outside, this guy looks like a good pick. Saul looks like a good pick. Why would we not choose Saul? Look at him. We want the rock." But God says, "No, no, that's not my pick. I choose David. I'll take this guy." God chooses the young, awkward shepherd, which, by the way, was a very embarrassing job in those days. That's who He picks.

David was forgotten. David was overlooked. David didn't even get invited to the sacrifice. Nobody though he was going to be a pick. Nobody even thought he was a consideration. We don't need to invite David. He's not a pick. Just leave him with the animals. His dad, his brothers, even Samuel overlooked him. But God says, "No, my pick for king is David. My pick, to establish the line that Jesus will come from, is David."

Here's a consistent theme throughout Scripture. God's choice tends not to be the world's choice. If you're following Jesus and you feel like you are facing increasing opposition from the world because of your choice to follow Jesus that might be a good sign. Now if you're facing opposition just because you're a jerk, that's on you. I can't do anything about that. But God will often choose what is weak and foolish in the eyes of the world to prove His might, strength, and wisdom. David had no business being

king, no business by the world's standards for being king at all. But God will often choose and do amazing things through unassuming people with unassuming circumstances.

I'm convinced that the preachers will not be the ones called forward first in heaven to receive their rewards. I'm convinced, I'm convinced that the people who will be called forward first in heaven will be the people you've never heard of, unassuming people with unassuming circumstances and unassuming gifts, people behind the scenes who are faithful to the Lord, faithful to what He's called them to do.

So the question that we all have to ask ourselves is, "What has God called me to do?" What we pay little attention to, what we tend to overlook, what we might consider as unassuming, maybe even not very important, God is like, "I can really do something amazing with these circumstances. I can do something great with this person if they'll let me, if they'll trust me, if they'll be faithful to what I've called them to do." What is God calling you to do right now? What has He chosen you for? Why would He do that? Why would God choose you? Why: Because of His grace, because He can, and because He wants to.

Now maybe being chosen is a completely new concept to you. Maybe you've never been chosen for anything before. Maybe you weren't chosen for, hypothetically, maybe you weren't chosen for your eighth grade basketball team. Again, this is completely hypothetical. I've no idea where I am getting this. I'm just pulling this out of thin air. So, hypothetically, you weren't chosen for the team even though you scored in your scrimmage, let's just say you scored 18 points with six rebounds and four assists. But again that's hypothetical because who remembers something like that? I'm seeing a counselor.

But seriously, maybe you've never been chosen before. Maybe you weren't chosen by family members. Maybe you weren't chosen by friends. Maybe you weren't chosen for a job. Maybe you weren't even chosen by a church. Hear this, look right at me, the God of the Universe, the One True God, Jesus Christ has chosen you.

God has chosen the writers, the doctors, and the contractors. God has chosen the blue collar, the white collar, and the privileged. God has chosen the intellectuals, the not so intellectuals, and the unemployed. God has chosen the slave, and the coward, and the soldier. God has chosen the murderer, the thief, and the liar. God has chosen the abused. He has chosen the abuser. He has chosen the adulterer. God has chosen the rich, and the poor, and the middle class. God has chosen the marginalized, the neglected, and the forgotten. God has chosen those who are not marginalized, who are not forgotten, and who are not broken. Over and over again the list goes on, and on, and on and every single one of us can identify with one of those categories, probably more than one.

And you want to know where I got those descriptions? The Bible. All of those terms describe people God chose in Scripture. Moses was a little dumb—self-admitted bless his heart—and a murderer. Paul was a privileged intellectual. Peter was a poor coward. Rahab was a prostitute. Gideon was a soldier. Luke was a doctor. And we'll see where David falls in.

God has chosen you because of His grace. God has chosen you for Himself because of His grace, because He can, and because He wants to. You're not picked out of obligation. You're picked out of desire. You are wanted and when you realize that, when you realize that you've been chosen by the grace of God simply for Himself, the only response, the only response, is humility. That's it. It's to humble yourself before the Lord and follow Him.

Maybe for you, you heard that for the very first time today or maybe you've been following Christ for decades. And even if we've been following Christ for decades, we have to humble ourselves every single day and continue to follow Him. That doesn't stop.

So what was David's response to being chosen? Did he pound his chest and say, "That's right." What was his response to being chosen? Well later in chapter 16, after he is chosen, he goes and serves, not overthrows. He goes to serve King Saul, the king he has been anointed to replace. That's humility. That takes a lot of humility to go and serve the guy who is sitting in your rightful seat. That kind of humility only comes once you're overwhelmed by the chosen grace of God. And Jesus is the model for it.

God the Father chose God the Son, Jesus, and here is how Jesus responded. This is Philippians 2. This is a classic passage of Scripture. Verse 5, "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." That's the model.

If you are following Christ, let me ask you this question: Do those three verses, do they describe you? Are you a humble servant? Now I'll be honest with you. This week when I asked myself that question it was a needed punch in the gut. I have a long way to go in this humble servant thing. I have a long way to go. I'm chosen by grace for grace, that's humbling. If we don't let that humble us, all we're doing is robbing ourselves of joy.

We just miss out on joy. It's contrary to the way the world thinks and it's even contrary to the way we think ourselves. But to humble ourselves before the Lord brings on joy, that's it. The Lord having to humble you Himself, that's painful. I've been there.

Here's something I try to pray often. This might be helpful to you, I don't know. If it's not, that's okay. It's simply this. God, help me humble myself so You don't have to. Make no mistake, everyone will take a humble posture before the Lord, everyone will. But here is the catch. Everyone gets to choose how they take that posture. We either take that posture ourselves or, and this is as gently as I can say it, the Lord will help us with that posture.

Here's how that passage in Philippians ends in verse 9, "Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the Name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow," humble, "in heaven and on earth and under the earth. And every tongue confess," humble, "that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

So back to David. Why would God choose David? Why would God choose David to be king? Because if I have my choice of king between the awkward teenage shepherd and the rock, I think I'm going to go with the guy who was casted to play Hercules. Why did God choose David? Number one: because of His grace. We already know that.

Here is the second reason. Go back to verse 7 in 1 Samuel 16. "For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance," underline this, "but the Lord looks on the heart." That's the key. That's the key right there. With the Lord it's all about the heart, it's not about strength. It's all about the heart, it's not about skill. It's all about the heart, it's not about stature. It's about the heart, it's not about accomplishments.

Now make no mistake, the gift of salvation is not based upon the condition of your heart. Salvation is a gift despite the condition of your heart. Ephesians 2 says you are I, we are dead in our trespasses; we are dead in our sin. So we are dead, that means Jesus' heart stopped beating on the cross so that yours and mine can start beating. The cross was meant to remove our heart of stone and replace it with the heart of Christ. The cross is where Jesus went from life to death so that you and I could go from death to life. The gospel of grace is a gift and a promise of a new heart, and that new heart, you and I, we cannot create it on our own and we cannot earn it.

So if we're not talking about the condition of our heart to pass the test of salvation, what are we talking about then? What are we talking about in chapter 16? We are talking about calling. When the Lord says, "Hey I look on the hearts," He is talking about character. Your character is a reflection of your heart. If I'm extremely successful, if I have this long list of accomplishments, if I'm skilled in all these different ways, that's great. It's meaningless if I don't have character. It's meaningless.

A couple months ago I got the chance to meet the future president of an African country and this guy's resume was incredible. He has his MBA. He has a PhD. He's ordained and he speaks 14 languages fluently, incredible. There were a couple of people who got up to introduce him before he spoke. Not one of them talked about his resume. They all talked about his character. Afterward we had a chance to talk to him for just a few minutes and the thing that stuck out to me the most, by far, was his humility.

God looks at your heart. Your character is a reflection of your heart. Don't let your stature in this world fool you into thinking you are the obvious choice, you're the obvious pick for some certain role in God's mission. God doesn't care about your talent, He doesn't care about your success, He doesn't care about your accomplishments, He doesn't care about the experience you have. He cares about your heart.

It's pride to say, "I'm talented. I'm the obvious pick for this particular role. If God doesn't use me here, well then He's really missing out." That's pride. I hope we would never articulate it like that, but is that a reflection of your heart? It's another form of pride to say, "Woe is me. I'm no good. I can't be used. The Lord won't call me." It sounds like Winnie the Pooh. Don't be Eeyore. It's false humility. It's another form of pride. Is that a reflection of your heart?

If God has called you, don't you think He'll qualify you also? Have the humility to be called and used by Jesus for His mission and not yours. The first person I'm saying that to in this room is me. Talent, skill, success, influence, stature, accomplishment, all great things, all fantastic things, and we should strive to use what the Lord has blessed us with and gifted us with through His grace. This church is filled with some incredibly gifted, and talented, and blessed people. It's amazing.

We should use our gifts for God's mission but we cannot evaluate ourselves based upon that list, because that's not how the Lord evaluates us for His use. The Lord uses those whose character overshadows their capabilities. There are plenty of places in Scripture that tell us to examine ourselves, to test our hearts, to take a look at ourselves; all over the place.

So here's the question for all of us: How is my heart? How is it? It's a scary question to ask. Is my heart about me, my agenda, my advancement, my pursuit, my happiness? Or is my heart focused on and pointed to Christ? Which is it?

David was chosen by God to be king because he had character. That's why he was chosen. He had character. But character doesn't mean perfection. David was far from perfect. David fell hard more than

once. And we'll see those flaws. That's why this series is called *Flawed Hero*. But even though David was imperfect, even though David fell, he always pursued the Lord.

If you've ever studied David you know how God describes him in Scripture. Here's God's description of David: He's a man after My own heart. God doesn't say David is perfect. He doesn't say David was a train wreck. He doesn't say he was skilled, and talented, and had it all together. He says, "No, David, that guy, he is a man after My own heart." Just like Jesus. I don't think there is a better way to be described by the Lord; a man after My own heart, a woman after My own heart. I want to strive for God to describe me like that. That is character.

Here's what I've found. Whenever I've examined myself, whenever I've tested my heart and looked at it, I've always found something I don't like, "Really? That's in there?" My heart is dark. When that happens, when your heart is off, when you find something that is dark, whenever you find something that needs to be gone, here is what you do. Run to Jesus, full-on sprint. Encounter the Living God through His Word and in prayer. Encounter the Living God through service and other believers and He will change, mold, and shape your heart. Encountering Christ creates character in the heart of the believer. You've been chosen by grace, you've been called for a purpose. Now have the character to be used by Jesus. Forget stature and circumstances, they don't matter.

Nobody expected David to be king, let alone the greatest king in the history of Israel. Just like nobody expected Jesus to be the Messiah, the Savior of the World. Nobody expected the shepherd boy looking after the sheep to be the greatest king in the history of Israel just like nobody would have picked the One who was born in a barn among sheep to be the One True King. Today I wonder. I wonder what God has called you to be and what He's called you to do that nobody else expects. I wonder what that is for you.

This is a special weekend for me every year, based on calling. Some of you know my story. Five years ago I was working in racing and I was doing that, that's where God had me. I was in a season of my life where God was humbling me. Memorial Day weekend was the hardest weekend for me every year. I felt like I was just floating by not doing anything. I was Eeyore. If you would have told me five years ago on Memorial weekend that I would be preaching the gospel at Traders Point five years from now... Only God can do things like that.

What's He calling you to do and be that nobody else expects. Probably more than anybody including you, yourself expects. What is that? Don't pay attention to the evaluations of this world. Have the courage and the character to follow the King and keep going. Have the courage and the character to follow Jesus and just see what the Lord will do.

We're going to enter into a time of communion right now where we just get to reflect on that. We get to reflect on how our hearts can start beating because Jesus' stopped on the cross. Communion is just a time for us to meditate on that and focus on the King, the One True King who has called us to do things, who has called us to be things through His strength, not our own. We get to be here today because of the cross and the resurrection. If the crucifixion and the resurrection don't happen, this is all meaningless. Everything I just said is meaningless if what I just said didn't happen. But it did. It did.

So this is a time for believers just to meditate on the cross and what Jesus has done for you. Humble yourself before the Lord. Go to Him. Take your heart to Him. And if you are following Christ, if your heart is off, if there is something going on—if there is something going on between you and the Lord, if you're

off with another believer, don't take communion. Let it pass. Go get right with the Lord, get right with another believer, then come back and then take communion.

If you're not a believer, just let the tray pass. Its' okay, nobody is going to think anything of it. Nobody is going to be watching you. This is just where we get to reflect on the cross. And you can take that time too. So I'm going to pray and then the servers are going to come.

Father, we want to claim the name of Jesus and that's why we come before You right now. Thank You for being good. Thank You for being gracious. And thank You for being great. God, I don't know why You would choose any of us for Yourself. Me particularly, I'm broken and I'm a sinner. But because of Your grace, and because of Your goodness, and because You can and You want to, You've chosen us for Yourself and then You've asked us and said, "I want you to go. I want you to be on My mission. Don't worry," just like You said to Samuel, "I'll show you what you should do."

Father, I pray that You open our hearts, that You melt them, that You break them, that You crack them, that You strengthen them, that You plant seeds that You water and that blossoms of salvation happen today. Father, as Your children, place a hunger and a zeal in our hearts to run to You right now. I pray that You are pleased by that. I pray that we would run to You, that we would embrace You for the first time or after decades. The people are saved because of Your Word. The people are sanctified because of Your Word. And You get the glory, You get the praise, You get the worship. It's Yours.

Jesus, You are the King. Reveal Yourself to us, Father. In Jesus' Name. Amen.