BISHOP DOCTOR
ANTHONY COLLINS



FROM SHEPHERD BOY TO KING

A JOURNEY OF CALLING,
CHARACTER, AND PREPARATION

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FROM SHEPHERD BOY TO KING

By
Bishop Dr. Anthony Collins

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"To help people know Christ deeply, walk with Him daily, and represent Him faithfully through lives transformed by the presence of God."

From Shepherd Boy to King

A Journey of Calling, Character, and Preparation

Opening Prayer

Thank you for calling regular people to accomplish extraordinary things through the power of God the Holy Spirit; as we start this journey from the sheep pen to the palace, let us prepare our hearts to receive Your truth with humility and obedience.

Teach us to regard Your presence more highly than promotion, character more highly than reputation, and faithfulness more highly than success; take away altogether every trace of pride, entitlement, and self-reliance, and form within us men and women in accordance with Your own heart.

O Lord, let us also learn to trust You in the unseen situations, to serve You loyally in the ordinary parts of life, and to stand with courage when our own Goliath situations come.

Let the reading of these pages have the effect of not only increasing our knowledge but also of transforming our lives, so that we may be made conformable to the image of Jesus Christ and that all that we think, say, and do may be for the glory of Your holy name.

Equip us for all the assignments which You have ordered for us and grant us the grace so that we may complete our journey with steadfast faithfulness.
We pray in the mighty name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

DEDICATION

To the One who takes the overlooked and anoints them for purpose. To the God who sees beyond fields, beyond failures, beyond the opinions of men.

This book is first and foremost dedicated to You, Lord Jesus, the true Shepherd and the eternal King. You are the One who calls, who equips, who sustains, and who brings to fulfillment every assignment You ordain.

To those who have walked through seasons of obscurity, who have labored in fields unseen, who have been tested, shaped, and refined in private places - this is for you. May you be reminded that the same God who found David in the pasture still finds, forms, and favors His people today.

To the shepherds, pastors, leaders, and servants, who carry both the weight of responsibility and the heart of humility: may you never forget that the oil of anointing often flows after seasons of faithful tending.

To my family, spiritual sons and daughters, and all those who have stood beside me in ministry and in life - your prayers, support, and faithfulness have been a constant reminder of God's grace at work.

And to every reader, may this journey from shepherd boy to king awaken in you a deeper trust in God's process, a greater surrender to His will, and an unwavering confidence that what He has spoken over your life, He will surely bring to pass.

For His glory, always.

FOREWORD

No journey in the Scriptures is more compelling, instructive, and intensely human than that of David, *the shepherd boy who became king*. The account of his life is not just historical; it has strong theological significance and a highly personal character. It is the story of being called before being recognized, of being anointed before being raised to power, and of being prepared before his presence was made known.

In the book *From Shepherd Boy to King*, Bishop Dr. Anthony Collins brings this holy journey to life with clarity, determination, and sound pastoral insight. His well-experienced voice, the result of a long career in ministry and spiritual leadership, enables him not only to tell the story of David's life but also to reveal the permanent principles which govern God's relationship with His people. It is clear from the beginning that God's method is deliberate. David was not selected because he was ready; rather, he was selected because God was ready to use him. The pasture was not of little importance; it was where he was being trained. The battles were not plain interruptions; they were assignments from God. Delays were not refusals.

The book is aimed at people who find themselves between a promise and its fulfillment. They have been called but not yet placed, anointed but not yet approved, and prepared but not yet promoted. Bishop Collins gives a careful and faithful notice that God carries out His most profound work in the still, unseen areas, where character is formed, faith is tried, and identity is secured. What makes this book special is the way it combines biblical depth alongside practical application. It doesn't just provide information; it confronts the reader. Rather than merely inspiring, it encourages the reader to align themselves with God's process. There is a mild yet clear appeal on every page: place your trust in the Shepherd who is guiding you, even if you haven't yet seen the throne.

While you are reading, you will be more than just watching David's journey—you will also be thinking about your own life. You will see in it the periods of obscurity, the times of trial, and the way God has been guiding you through everything. Most importantly, you will realize that the God who raised up David is the same God who is at work in the life of the genuine Christian.

The book is timely, necessary, and based on the truth. It hopes to strengthen your faith, make your calling clearer, and increase your trust in the God who takes shepherd boys and turns them into kings.

Pastor Omar Exume - Senior Pastor
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Use with the Companion Workbook for best results.

Introduction

God's Way to the Throne

There is nobody who wants to end up as a failure. At the core of every human being there lies a natural desire to succeed and to achieve something significant. We all want to live a life that counts and to be certain that our existence has a purpose and worth. Success, whether it is openly acknowledged or simply pursued in silence, is something that everyone seeks.

We may, for the sake of this discussion, define success as achieving a worthwhile objective. Not every goal is of equal importance and so not every kind of success is the same; the more worthy the goal, the greater the success. On this basis, the greatest type of success is not to be found in wealth, social position, or acclaim; it is to be found in fulfilling the very purpose for which we were created.

Our existence is not chance. We are no mere random happenings in a pointless universe. There is a Creator, and He is intentional, all-powerful, and purposeful. Either He has called us into being or He has permitted us to be here in accordance with His divine will. It therefore follows that our lives have a significance that goes beyond what we can see, and that our being on this earth is connected to a divine purpose. We are here on purpose.

Each morning when we wake up is not simply the prolongation of life. It is confirmation that our purpose has not yet been completed. This reality brings us face to face with two of the most important questions anyone can ever ask: *Why am I here? and how can I achieve that purpose?*

One cannot arrive at answers to these questions merely by relying on culture, one's own personal ambitions, or human reason alone. Purpose is not something that is discovered by ourselves; it is revealed, and it comes directly from the Creator. Fundamentally, our purpose is obvious in that we were made to worship Him, the one true and living God, and to delight in His presence forever.

Worship is not simply something we take part in; it is the way in which our lives are properly oriented towards our Creator. It entails recognizing who God is and then responding with surrender, reverence, and devotion. It is from this state of worship that all the other things—direction, identity, clarity, and purpose—flow.

When we yield ourselves to the Holy Word of God and accept the guidance of His Holy Spirit, we start to live in harmony with the divine. It is in this way that we come to possess heaven's wisdom, principles that have been proven, strategies that can never fail, and processes that do not rely on human systems but are based on divine truth. It is this which brings about genuine success, a success which we are fully justified in calling *divine success.*

The fact that this is most clearly shown in the Cross of Jesus Christ is evident. The Cross is not simply the focal point of our salvation. It is the most clear expression of God's feelings towards humanity. There we see the love of God the Father, who sent His Son, and the obedience of Jesus the Son, who offered up His life. At the Cross, grace is shown, mercy is poured out, and compassion is displayed in its purest form.

As long as we correctly recognize the Cross, all questions concerning God's intentions towards us are put to rest. We need no longer doubt that God is on our side; we know this for certain. And since God is on our side, success in accordance with His plan is not only possible, it is promised by His process.

As we continue studying the Word of God, we find that fruitfulness is not optional in the Kingdom. Fruitfulness is expected. One of the first commands that God gave to His creation was to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 1:22). This was not simply a biological directive. It was a spiritual principle. God intended His creation to produce, to increase, and to thrive. This idea is also mentioned in 3 John 1:2:

Beloved, I most desire that you should prosper and be in good health, just as your soul does prosper.

Look at the order: *even as your soul thrives, God*'s priority is not external success but internal harmony. Spiritual prosperity becomes the foundation on which all other kinds of prosperity are built. Once the soul is aligned with God, your life starts to show the blessings He bestows. Jesus makes this divine order clear in Matthew 6:33.

So, loo*k first to the kingdom of God and to His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you.*

The kinds of things that Jesus refers to are precisely those which people spend their whole lives after: provision, stability, and security. But Jesus shows us a better approach - don't pursue what can be gained, instead seek *the One who gives it.* This is the divine way to achieve success and it is a method which never fails.

Yet there is one thing we need to grasp if we are to achieve this kind of success: *God's methods are seldom rapid and are by no means haphazard.* In a society which places a high value on immediacy, on being seen, and on fast progress, God acts in a different way; *His aim is not to raise people up quickly, but to prepare them thoroughly.*

A consistent truth is shown throughout the Bible: *promotion doesn't start with a position, but with preparation.*

God is a God of process. Before He entrusts influence, He develops character. Before He grants authority, He cultivates obedience. Before He releases visibility, He builds integrity. Before He places a crown upon a person's head, He shapes their heart in hidden places.

We now come to one of the most significant case studies in the Scriptures, that of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David. The accounts of them are not included simply for historical information; rather, they are kept as a means of providing spiritual teaching. In their lives we see a number of contrasts which show what is the difference between human choice and divine appointment.

- What people are impressed by versus what God values
- External appearance versus internal substance
- Natural qualification versus spiritual preparation
- Self-promotion versus God's promotion
- A heart which honors self versus a heart which honors God

Saul appeared to be a king, but David was actually made one. Saul wanted the throne, whereas David wanted God's presence. Saul's rise was quick, but David's was deliberate and took a long time. Saul was chosen by the people, but David was chosen by God. And perhaps the most important difference of all – Saul loved himself, but David loved God.

The ways of God have not changed; there is still a divine route to advancement, and this route cannot be based merely on talent, or on opportunity, or even on desire alone. It depends on preparation, surrender, and being in harmony with God. That is what this book is about.

This is about establishing a true and transformational relationship with God, a relationship that doesn't just consist of superficial faith and instead results in real change. It is about learning how to live with humility in a world which is based on entitlement. It also entails choosing the right kinds of voices to influence your life and rejecting those which lead you away from God's purpose.

It's concerned with integrity, meaning that you are the same person in private as you are in public. It's about having the right perspective, looking at your life through the lens of God's will. It's about attitude, involving the positioning of your heart in a state of surrender instead of one of effort. It's about faithfulness, consisting of remaining committed even when there is no spotlight, no acknowledgement, and no immediate reward. It's about becoming the person that God made you to be, not by imitating others but through submission.

Above all else, it is a matter of preparation—spiritual preparation, intentional preparation, and preparation that continues throughout one's lifetime—since at some stage every individual who is called by God will have to face a decisive moment, a point at which what has been developed in private is revealed. For David, that decisive moment took the shape of a giant called Goliath, and when it came, David was ready because he had been prepared.

God is still raising up leaders at the present time, not only for pulpits but also for families, businesses, communities, and ministries. He is still calling people out of obscurity. He is still shaping hearts in secret places. He is still preparing individuals for their purpose, and as always He starts in the pasture before bringing anyone to the palace.

Let us now go together through the experience of David, a young shepherd who was ignored by men but selected by God; he went from being in obscurity to becoming important not by chance but as a result of divine preparation.

The journey will show the way. The process he follows will reveal the principles. And his life will urge us to ask ourselves whether we are *truly ready for what we are asking God to give us.*

Chapter One

The Power of Relationship

"When Samuel became old, he made his sons judges over Israel. The name of his firstborn son was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judges in Beersheba. Yet his sons did not walk in his ways but turned aside after gain. They took bribes and perverted justice. Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." - 1 Samuel 8:1–5

No Entitlements

Before Israel ever rejected Samuel, they rejected God. And before God rejected Saul as king, Saul rejected God's ways. Rejection in Scripture rarely begins loudly. It most often begins quietly. It begins with subtle shifts of the heart. It begins when we grow comfortable, or we forget. It begins when we assume that we have an influence that was never ours to own.

Samuel, one of the most faithful leaders in Israel's history, was not immune to this danger. He walked with God as he judged Israel righteously for many years. He was a man of both integrity and devotion. Yet, Scripture reveals that when Samuel grew old, something changed. He became comfortable. And if we are honest, what happened to Samuel can happen to any of us.

Comfort is dangerous, because comfort can produce spiritual familiarity without reverence. It can cause us to settle into what we have done for God instead of remaining dependent on God. We begin to grow comfortable in our righteousness, in our relationship with God. It may be that, as we look at how God has used us over the years, we begin to think more highly of ourselves than we should. We can lose our sense of awe and reverence for God. We can lose our sense of urgency for holiness. We can become satisfied with our service to God. Over time, it is possible to forget:

- The holiness of God
- Where God brought us from
- How dependent we once were upon Him
- How desperately we still need Him
- That we must honor God above all things, at all times
- The sovereignty of God

This is what apparently happened with Samuel. Though faithful, he positioned his sons in leadership. But his sons did not walk in his ways. They were corrupt. They sold their influence. They polluted justice and perverted the land. *Spiritual maturity is not measured by how long we've walked with God, but by how carefully we continue to walk with Him.* When we forget who we were and who rescued us, entitlement begins to grow. Entitlement is very dangerous.

The spirit of entitlement often ushers in selective obedience. We obey God when we want to, when it's convenient or comfortable for us. We justify our sin, calling it a compromise or a negotiation. We prefer relativism instead of the hard truths of holiness, surrender, and sacrifice. We replace truth with preference. We do whatever we want, not what God wants. We give lip service to the things of God, but we make excuses for dishonoring God with our actions. We feel entitled to disobey, and that because of our entitlement, we will not suffer the negative consequences of our sin. Jesus confronts this attitude directly in Luke chapter six.

"Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I say?" – Luke 6:46

God does not honor our feelings of entitlement. Everything we have is because of His mercy. We were rescued from destruction. We were transferred from darkness and death to light and life. We did not get here by ourselves. When we begin to compare ourselves to ourselves or to others, the spirit of entitlement grows. We convince ourselves that our sin is canceled out because of our accomplishments in the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to be reminded that there are no exemptions for disobedience. Sin cannot be contained; it cannot be influenced; it cannot be negotiated or managed. It can only be destroyed.

Israel did not deny God's love, but they did presume upon it. They forgot that God is not only merciful but also holy. He is patient, but He does not tolerate rebellion indefinitely. *Love without reverence produces carelessness*. It produces a sense of casualness. A casual spirit towards God lacks reverence and awe. This casual spirit will always produce compromised obedience, or in other words – disobedience. When reverence fades, you can be assured that obedience will weaken. Reverence and awe will keep us humble. Scripture reminds us that wisdom often comes with age, but only when humility remains. Without humility, experience becomes arrogance.

"With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days is understanding." - Job 12:12

Let's make sure that as we grow numerically in age, we continue to grow in reverence for God. As we gain experience, let us deepen our humility. Let us determine to finish our race in a way that fully honors Christ.

The Power of Influence – Be Careful Who You Allow to Speak into Your Life

Samuel's sons did not walk in God's ways, and Israel noticed. The people were influenced, not by God's Word, but by what they saw modeled. Leadership matters, because Influence matters. And influence is not neutral. Who we allow to speak into our lives matters. Who shapes our thinking most certainly matters, because what we think will determine how we live, and how we live will determine our destiny – and even our eternity.

We must guard our hearts from those who do not walk in the ways of God. We must not allow their ungodliness to shape our response. Often the enemy of our soul's attack upon our spirit is subtle. Our enemy rarely begins with destruction. He most often begins with influence. It starts as a small shift. It could be a change in thought or a compromised perspective. It may seem harmless. It may even appear reasonable if we are not closely watching the Word of God and our hearts. But if it is not aligned with the Word of God, it is dangerous. We must be careful:

- What we listen to
- What we watch

- What environments we remain in
- Who or what we allow close enough to influence us

Because influence, even in small amounts, has the power to redirect our lives.

This is what happened to the nation of Israel. Samuel grew old. His sons were corrupt. The nation of Israel, instead of seeking God, began to talk amongst themselves. As a result, they chose to get rid of Samuel and his sons. They decided it would be better to have a king, like all the other nations. There is no record that the leaders of Israel prayed over the situation. No indication that they sought God's direction. As we read the text, it almost feels like a mob mentality. We must not make this mistake. We must make sure that those we allow to influence us are true friends of God.

Many believers know God's truth, but choose to follow voices that are more convenient, more popular, or more affirming. We often prefer others' approval to obedience. This is like a parent who raises children correctly, only to watch bad influences undo good instruction. Influence can either reinforce God's voice or drown it out.

We must be on guard for ourselves, and for others who are emotional, but have no spiritual root that produces good spiritual fruit. They are excited about God, but their spiritual foundation is lacking. This is a faith that responds quickly, but fades just as quickly. These are people who are initially excited about God and the things of God, but their excitement falls away under pressure, persecution, inconvenience, or discomfort. Their faith is connected to how they feel rather than any conviction they might have about God.

Not everyone that we love or that loves us should have a front-row seat in our lives. Let me say that again. *Not everyone deserves a front-row seat in our lives.* It is to our destruction to allow voices that are contrary to the word of God to be able to speak into our lives. Please escort these spiritually negative, mediocre, and complacent individuals to the back row, balcony, or parking lot of your life. They love you, and you love them. But they cannot be allowed to shape us if they are not submitted to God. For even the smallest of influences can lead to our disaster.

So, we must ask ourselves: Who are we listening to? Where did we get that bad spiritual habit? Who introduced that compromise? Where did that mindset come from? Has someone been speaking against our God-ordained purpose, and we have been listening? *We must kill the spiritual negativity – NOW!*

Please Jesus, send us some spiritual "*Come on Now Partners*"! When we want to go our own way, when we want to operate based upon how we feel and what we think instead of the Word and Spirit of God – Lord Jesus, please send us some "*Come on Now Partners*". We need influencers who will correct us with the Word of God and say to us, "Come on Now" – you know you cannot do that." "Come on Now" – you know that does not honor God." "Come on Now", as upset and frustrated as you are, (and rightly so) – we both know that a sinful response is not an option for you, child of God – "Come on Now". I pray for everyone reading this right now, Lord Jesus, please send them two or three "*Come on Now Partners*". Please, Lord, put people in our lives who love God enough and love us enough to correct us when we are wrong. Please, Jesus, help us to surround ourselves with those who will speak God's word consistently, faithfully, and courageously.

We need to listen to those who would advise us with the Word of God. We need influencers who won't encourage us to take anyone's advice over God's Word. Gain influencers who would rather please God than their friends. Let us gain influencers who would rather have the esteem of God than to honor their friends. We must be careful, at all times and in all situations, to allow the Word of God to speak, so that we might hear and respond appropriately.

Working On Me – Being the Best Me That I Can Be

Israel's request was simple: *"Give us a king like the other nations."* What a tragic statement. They did not say that they wanted to be what God wanted them to be. They were asking to become like people who did not know God. Here they are, God's chosen people, asking God to be like all the other heathen nations, to be like the world. How revealing. Sadly, we are not comfortable with ourselves, with who God made us to be. It is sad that we do not want to be a better version of ourselves, but that we want to be like someone else, those who are actually worse off than we are.

What happened with Israel can also happen to us. We can fall into the same trap – God's chosen people wanting to be like the world. We see it every day. We don't truly understand who God is. We don't know His character. And so, we don't trust His word. Until we know who God truly is, we can't know who we are in Christ. We don't know that God accepts us into His family. We don't know that we are secure from all danger in Christ Jesus. We don't know how significant we are in the Kingdom of God. As a result, we become uncomfortable with who we are, especially as we compare ourselves against the world. And because our identity is grounded in what we think about ourselves, and how we feel about ourselves, instead of the Word of God, we begin to desire what others have, indeed, even what the world has.

However, we can never fulfill our divine purpose trying to be someone God never created us to be. We can never walk in God's purpose for our lives until we get comfortable with who we are. In difficult times, it is easy to focus more on what is wrong or what we have missed than to focus on who God is and what He has already established in us and for us. We cannot ever be truly anointed while wanting to be like someone else. We must know that Jesus got it right when He made us.

Discontent grows when we focus on what we lack rather than on what God has given. This is why we do not compare ourselves to others. *Discontent distorts identity. Comparison erodes calling.* We cannot walk confidently in God's purpose while being uncomfortable with who we are. We cannot be anointed imitators. God does not anoint copies. He anoints obedience.

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise." - 2Corinthians 10:12

God's desire for us is to do all we can to align our word to His word, our will to His will, that we might be the best version of ourselves that we can be. I don't want to be anyone else but me. I want to be the best me I can be, but not anyone else because no one can do me like me. And the same is true of you. No one can do you like you.

To align ourselves with Christ, we must keep growing in Christ. We must have an attitude of continuous improvement, always looking for ways to grow and to get better in all the significant areas of our lives. We want to grow as disciples of Christ, as a spouse, parent, son or daughter, as a worker. You name it. We are looking to grow in every significant area of life as a way to honor and please Jesus Christ.

We are looking to increase our confidence in Jesus Christ and rest more and more upon His holy Word. We are not seeking to follow the crowd or be validated by it. But we are looking to become active in a lifestyle of excellence, spiritually first, and then in every other way. We don't need the approval or validation of men when we have the approval and validation of God, as we work to become the best spiritual version of ourselves.

Confidence in Christ frees us from the need to follow the crowd.

For us to truly become the best that God has made us to be, there are a few foundational strategies that we must incorporate into our daily approach to life. We must desire spiritual growth. We must pursue spiritual excellence. We must:

- · Have a willingness to be corrected.
- · Be willing to not only accept accountability, but desire accountability.
- · Have a spirit that desires to be fully aligned with God's word, both in knowledge and in application.
- · Not defend ourselves against the Word of God. We will repent rather than attempt to justify actions contrary to the Word of God.

We are not unaware of the devil's devices. We understand that sin usually comes dressed up as an excuse, and we know that pride usually guards a shallow faith. But this is not who we are in Jesus. We are those who have a teachable spirit. We desire to be purified. We desire to be perfected in the spirit. We want clean hands and a clean heart that represent a right spirit aligned with God the Holy Spirit. Lord Jesus, we ask that we may be fully aligned with You.

As we commit ourselves to this divine process, we can rest assured that God will honor our efforts on His behalf. God will respond. The favor of the Lord will find us. The blessings of the Lord will pursue us. The promotions of God will hunt us down. Do not be surprised that as we become more confident in who God is and more determined to walk in the dominion and power of who we are in Christ, God's favor will attract a spirit of envy and jealousy. When God places His hands upon us in response to our commitment to Him, we will often find the enemy coming against us. God's favor often draws spiritual opposition. But I have good news for the righteous today. *Wherever the anointing of God is strong enough to take us, if we will keep our hands in His hand, that same anointing is strong enough to keep us.*

We must realize that God made us perfectly. We must stop looking at what others have and press into a place where we are comfortable with what God has done and is doing in our lives. God didn't make a mistake when He made us. We must stop looking outward and start growing spiritually inward. We must work on being the best me I can be. We must never stop working to honor Christ by being the best versions of ourselves we can be.

"For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong." - 1Corinthians 1:26-28

Remember, God did not make a mistake when He made us. So, work on you. Become the best version of who God made you to be. Never stop growing.

We need influencers who will correct us with the word of God and say to us, "Come on Now"

Chapter Two

The Imperative of Perspective

"Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the LORD. And the LORD said to Samuel, "Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." So Samuel told all the words of the LORD to the people who were asking for a king from him. He said, "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen and to run before his chariots. And he will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and some to plow his ground and to reap his harvest, and to make his implements of war and the equipment of his chariots. He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive orchards and give them to his servants. He will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants. He will take your male servants and female servants and the best of your young men and your donkeys, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day." But the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel. And they said, "No! But there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, and that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles." - 1 Samuel 8:4–20

"There was a man of Benjamin whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel, son of Zeror, son of Becorath, son of Aphiah, a Benjaminite, a man of wealth. And he had a son whose name was Saul, a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people." - 1 Samuel 9:1–2

Focus On the Long Term

One of my favorite sayings is this: "*Short-term gain equals long-term pain. And short-term pain equals long-term gain*." This principle is both practical and deeply spiritual. It teaches us that discipline in the present, yields rewards in the future, while indulgence in the present often leads to regret later. The idea is that it is more rewarding to discipline ourselves in the short term so that we might enjoy greater rewards in the long term. This brings delayed gratification into view and supposes another significant principle: sowing and reaping. We can invest in short-term gain by eating most of our seed and sowing very little or none at all. We are fat and happy in the moment, but when the storms of life come, we have made little to no preparations.

The tragedy is not that the storm came. Storms always come. The tragedy is that we were unprepared when the storm arrived.

The reason that many people do not focus on the long term when it comes to spiritual things is because they do not have a faith that will last. They do not have enduring faith, a faith that perseveres. They follow God as long as it is easy. They remain steadfast, but only until life situations threaten to become uncomfortable or inconvenient. They do fine as long as things are going fine. But when life's circumstances shift and living for Jesus becomes more challenging, we can see indicators of the depth of their relationship with Christ. They become easily offended, easily discouraged, and easily distracted. They walk away; they quit when honoring Jesus becomes costly. Their spiritual lives are not consistent. Their faith is fractured. They believe for a moment, but they lack the faith to withstand the pressures of a victorious Christian walk.

Eventually, they do what everyone who will not honor God with their commitment to His word does – they walk away; they fail. They fail spiritually because of their inconsistency. They have a faith that can celebrate, but not a faith that can fight and endure. They believe for a season, but their faith has no depth. This is where Israel failed.

What pleases people often conflicts with what pleases God. Israel wanted what they could see, measure, and admire. They chose appearance over substance. The people wanted something tangible. They wanted a visible leader,

a human solution, and immediate results. Walking by sight feels safer, but it is spiritually shallow. Short-term thinking always produces long-term consequences. God's Kingdom operates on eternal principles. His promises are everlasting. His authority is everlasting. But sight-driven decisions focus only on what feels good now.

This is about perspective. Do we have a human perspective or have we been changed? Have we now received and are we operating through the perspectives of Jesus Christ?

Imagine a five-year-old child presented with two dinner options. They can either have a bowl full of candy or a bowl full of rice, beans, and chicken. Children have a short-term view of life, and so for the child the choice is obvious – hand over the candy, please. Adults should have a long-term view of life. And so, the choice as an adult is equally obvious – you are having a chicken veggie bowl tonight, thank you. No matter how much the child demands the candy for dinner, the mature adult perspective must prevail.

This example is much like how many of us operate in the Spirit. We choose what feels good, what looks appealing, and what satisfies us immediately. We have the perspective of a spiritual child. We see what we want. We have the perspective that it is pleasing, so we trade long-term positive outcomes for short-term negative outcomes. We trade the spiritual for the temporal, the holy for the common. We don't want to be edified in the spirit or disciplined by the Lord. We don't want to be perfected in the spirit. It is perceived to be too hard. Our perspective is that we would have to give up too much. We prefer to be validated in our flesh. Please tell us that we are fine right where we are, without any sacrifice, without any surrender, without any change. We resist spiritual discipline. We avoid correction. And we reject spiritual transformation, because it feels too risky, too costly.

These are the perspectives of a spiritual child. And just like the child with the bowl of candy, if we are left to ourselves, we will destroy ourselves. We make decisions based upon what looks good to us right now. We don't calculate faith into the equation. We walk by sight alone. We are driven by human emotion and human intellect. We choose what we want and can have right now, without considering the long-term consequences.

But these are not the ways of God. And these are not the ways that guarantee our success and prosperity – spiritually first – and then in every other way. God's plan is for us to focus on those things that are lasting, not those things that fade away quickly. For God's Kingdom is everlasting. It is long-term. He is an everlasting Father. He is there with us for the long term. His power, provisions, protections, and principles are everlasting. They are long-term. His Kingdom, His Word, His joy, His peace, the treasures of heaven, all everlasting, all long-term.

Let us all pray for the correct perspective that will allow us to have a spirit and mindset that focuses on those things that honor God and build our spiritual character, that we might endure and be prepared not just for the challenges of this life, but for those things that God has prepared for us in His everlasting Kingdom.

Discipline Yourself for Positive Outcomes

If we reject the Lord long enough, He will turn us over to ourselves. One of the most sobering judgments in Scripture is when God gives people what they insist on having. Left to ourselves, we will self-destruct. *Our greatest enemy is often not the devil or society, but unchecked self-will.* Discipline feels restrictive in the moment, but it produces life. Without discipline, freedom becomes bondage.

When we go our own way, we are essentially asking God to remove His covering and allow us to be ruled by our own desires. Our biggest enemy is us. For most of us, if we are honest, we have done enough foolish, ignorant things on our own. We have done enough damage to ourselves. We've engaged in risky behavior thinking that we can beat the odds. Sometimes we did, and sometimes we didn't. We've made some seriously bad choices.

We have told ourselves that we can "change them", "watch whatever we want", "hang out as friends with whoever we want", "say whatever we want", "do whatever we want," and nothing bad is going to happen to us. We can say, just as Israel said, "Being like everyone else is the thing to do." We say "it is not just what is alright, it is what is best for us." We say "we can handle it", and "it won't affect us", or "this time it will be different". But it's not different, and it does affect us, and we can't handle it.

Have you ever regretted saying something in the middle of saying it? Have you ever regretted doing something in the middle of doing it? I have. This is why discipline is essential: *Discipline interrupts destruction*. One of our biggest challenges is disciplining ourselves toward positive outcomes, especially when everyone in the room is heading in the wrong direction. The crowd is rarely correct. Those who follow the crowd blindly often pay the highest price. It is not important what people want because they don't know anything anyway. It is important what God wants because He knows everything. Pray that we will want only what God wants for us. This is how we will be guaranteed success.

Woe to the person who has been given over to themselves. Woe to the person who is always following the crowd. Woe to the person who can't think for themselves. Woe to the person who cannot discern the Word of God. Woe to the person who is influenced most significantly by everything but the voice of God. We must learn to surrender to God the Holy Spirit, who will correct us and lead us in the everlasting way. We must not be afraid to be different than the world, but we must learn to use the standard of God's Word to correct ourselves. Our feelings, or public opinion, or cultural trends do not rule us. The Word of God rules us. Discipline is one of the most difficult and greatest strategies in God's plan for our spiritual success. Remember, discipline is not a burden. It is simply a wrong spiritual perspective that causes God's gift of discipline to be viewed as a burden. Discipline is not punishment. It is a gift from God to assist us in our journey to prosperity.

"Yet they did not listen or pay attention; they were stiff necked and would not listen or respond to discipline." – Jeremiah 17:23

Discipline is God's way of protecting us from ourselves and positioning us for success. It is part of His plan of preparation that flows from His great love for us.

Focus On Substance and Not Looks

Saul was tall, dark, and handsome. Saul looked the part. He looked perfect. Tall. Impressive. Charismatic. He made a strong first impression. Everyone noticed Saul. He had presence. He had position. He had influence. He had the people's attention. Saul began humbly. But over time, something deeper was revealed,

because *time exposes what appearance hides*. Before long, pride surfaced. In short order, Saul proved he:

- · Had a rebellious spirit
- · Had a bad attitude
- · Was unteachable
- · Was thin-skinned
- · Became defensive
- · Was hot-tempered
- · Was arrogant
- · Was depressed
- · Had a murderous spirit
- · Was unjust
- · Was a schemer
- · Was untrustworthy
- · Was self-centered
- · Was more concerned about himself than the people
- · Valued his image more than obedience

Saul started humble, but he ended up hardened; his heart was hard before God. This is the danger that accompanies choosing leaders based on appearance.

The people argued with the Lord. The Lord said, "Don't do it" - but the people demanded it. The Lord said, "You won't like it" - the people said, "Yes, we will." So, the Lord gave the people what they wanted, a fading beauty. There is nothing worse than a leader with a rebellious spirit towards God and an unteachable spirit. God gave them exactly what they wanted, and it turned out to be a horrible nightmare. Israel now had a leader who looked right, but was very wrong. They had a king with presence but without submission to God. They had a man with position, but who was without obedience.

There are at least two lessons we can learn from this picture. First, we need to be careful what we ask God for. It is best that we ask God for what He wants to give us rather than insist on what we think we want. When we want what He wants for us, we can be assured that we will like the outcome. And second, prioritize substance over appearance. Saul looked good. He sounded good. He came from a good family. He looked great on the outside, but he was rotten on the inside. Saul's external qualifications could not prevent his internal corruption.

This still happens today. Beware of those who focus on religious activity (church attendance, religious language, religious image), but they show little evidence of a changed heart posture. We find no repentance, no humility, no brokenness, no holiness, no sacrifice, and no surrender. We see many signs of religion, but few signs of regeneration. God warns us not to confuse appearance with anointing. Substance outlasts beauty. Character outlasts charisma. Qualifications for leadership are revealed over time, not at first glance.

"...the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is great in God's sight."
1Peter 3:4

Our greatest enemy is often unchecked self-will

Chapter Three

A Correct Heart Posture

"And the Philistines mustered to fight with Israel, thirty thousand chariots and six thousand horsemen and troops like the sand on the seashore in multitude. They came up and encamped in Michmash, to the east of Beth-aven. When the men of Israel saw that they were in trouble (for the people were hard pressed), the people hid themselves in caves and in holes and in rocks and in tombs and in cisterns, and some Hebrews crossed the fords of the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul was still at Gilgal, and all the people followed him trembling. He waited seven days, the time appointed by Samuel. But Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and the people were scattering from him. So Saul said, "Bring the burnt offering here to me, and the peace offerings." And he offered the burnt offering. As soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, behold, Samuel came. And Saul went out to meet him and greet him. Samuel said, "What have you done?" And Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattering from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines had mustered at Michmash, I said, 'Now the Philistines will come down against me at Gilgal, and I have not sought the favor of the LORD.' So, I forced myself, and offered the burnt offering." And Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the command of the LORD your God, with which He commanded you. For then the LORD would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not continue. The LORD has sought out a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." - 1 Samuel 13:5-14

"Now go and strike Amalek and devote to destruction all that they have. Do not spare them, but kill both man and woman, child and infant, ox and sheep, camel and donkey." - 1Samuel 15:3

"The word of the LORD came to Samuel: "I regret that I have made Saul king, for he has turned back from following Me and has not performed My commandments." And Samuel was angry, and he cried to the LORD all night." - 1Samuel 15:10-11

"And Samuel said, "Though you are little in your own eyes, are you not the head of the tribes of Israel? The LORD anointed you king over Israel. And the LORD sent

you on a mission and said, 'Go, devote to destruction the sinners, the Amalekites, and fight against them until they are consumed.' Why then did you not obey the voice of the LORD? Why did you pounce on the spoil and do what was evil in the sight of the LORD?" And Saul said to Samuel, "I have obeyed the voice of the LORD. I have gone on the mission on which the LORD sent me. I have brought Agag the king of Amalek, and I have devoted the Amalekites to destruction. But the people took of the spoil, sheep and oxen, the best of the things devoted to destruction, to sacrifice to the LORD your God in Gilgal." And Samuel said, "Has the LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He has also rejected you from being king." - 1Samuel 15:17-23

"And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you." - 1Samuel 15:28

Saul's fall was not sudden. It was progressive. His downfall was not the result of one isolated failure, but of a pattern of pride, impatience, self-protection, and resistance to correction. He did not collapse in a moment. He eroded over time. That is often how spiritual failure happens. Rarely does a person wake up one morning and fall all at once. More often, the fall begins in small compromises, quiet acts of disobedience, unchecked thoughts, and a heart that slowly drifts from humble dependence on God.

Saul teaches us a sobering lesson: *Position without submission always ends in disqualification.*

It is not enough to be chosen if we refuse to remain yielded. It is not enough to begin with promise, if we will not continue in obedience. Saul had position, visibility, influence, and opportunity. But he lacked the one thing a leader can never afford to lose - a heart that remains submitted to God.

Losing a Humble Spirit

Saul began well, but somewhere along the way he forgot where he came from. He forgot he was not self-made. He forgot that his elevation was not a product of his own brilliance. He forgot who brought him out of obscurity and placed him in a position of leadership. He forgot that he had been brought out by the hand of God. He forgot that leadership is stewardship and not ownership. And when a person forgets where God brought them from, pride quickly begins to grow in the space where gratitude once lived.

No one could instruct Saul. He forgot his purpose, if he had ever realized it at all. He was completely focused on himself; not the people and definitely not God. His pride, which led to a spirit of entitlement, quietly replaced any sense of dependency he ever had towards God. And as a result, he made bad choices and rash vows. This is always the danger of pride – wrong choices.

One of pride's great deceptions: *Pride often disguises itself as strength*. But heaven is not impressed by what merely *looks* strong. God examines what is true. God sees beneath the performance. He looks beyond public presentation and weighs a man's spirit.

One defining moment was Saul's rash vow during battle. In his desire to appear spiritual and decisive (focusing on looks instead of substance), he made an impulsive declaration that harmed his own people. Pride often masquerades as bold leadership, but it leads to foolish outcomes.

A leader who cannot be instructed is already in danger. Saul stopped listening. He knew better than everyone else, at least in his own mind. Pride closes the ear long before it hardens the heart. Scripture is clear: pride always goes before destruction. Not sometimes. Always.

"Pride goes before destruction…" - Proverbs 16:18

One of the striking things in Saul's story is how little value he seemed to place on true spiritual counsel. During his kingship, Saul never seems to pursue Samuel with any depth of humility for guidance. The tragic irony is that one of the only times Saul sought Samuel was after Samuel had died, and even then, he did so in

violation of the very commands he himself had established. That tells us something important.

Saul did not truly honor God's order. He did not deeply revere the things of God, the Word of God, or the man of God. Even the way Saul spoke revealed distance in his heart. He did not speak of the Lord as *his* God with depth of personal devotion. He more readily spoke of the Lord as Samuel's God. That language reveals a spiritual problem. Saul was close to religion, but far from surrender. He was near the structure of spirituality, but distant from its substance.

Saul feared Samuel, more because Samuel stood with the people than because of Samuel's relationship with God. Saul was political, not spiritual. He was highly aware of appearances, public opinion, and the preservation of image. And that spirit is still with us today. There are still people who speak the language of faith, who invoke the name of Jesus, and yet their true priority is not the Word of God, but their own agenda. Whenever any agenda, political, personal, emotional, or cultural, sits above obedience to God, the Saul spirit is present.

In 1 Samuel 13, Saul finds himself in a moment of intense pressure. The Philistines are gathered for war. The opposition looks overwhelming. His supporters are beginning to scatter. Fear fills the atmosphere. Saul is trapped between pressure and obedience. If he waits for Samuel, more people may leave. If he offers the burnt offering himself, he directly violates God's order. This becomes a defining moment. Instead of trusting God, Saul takes matters into his own hands. He offers the burnt offering. This is something only the priest was authorized to do. It is a serious act of disobedience. And with painful irony, just as Saul finishes, Samuel arrives.

That is often how impatience works. We move too soon, rebel unnecessarily, and then discover that if we had waited just a little longer, God's order would have prevailed.

Saul's defense for why he rebelled against God (entitlement) was filled with humanism. It was filled with what he saw, what he thought, and how he felt. Saul's explanation revealed his heart. His defense was not rooted in repentance, but in human reasoning. There was no brokenness, only rationalization.

Saul has a spirit that avoids the things of God. Today that spirit looks like one that avoids accurately surveying the Cross of Jesus Christ. This spirit wants the benefits of God, but without the cost of actually following Him. Saul avoided personal sacrifice, personal suffering, personal discipline, or personal accountability. This spirit rejects messages of dying to self and prefers convenience and comfort over consecration. It wants blessings without surrender. It wants victory without sacrifice, and it wants the power of the resurrection without the Cross.

"If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily…" - Luke 9:23

Saul lost the humility that he had when he began his journey as king. He would not obey the voice of God. He would not obey Samuel. He thought his way was better than anyone else's way, including God's. He forgot where he came from. He forgot what God had done for him. He forgot that the throne was a trust, not a possession. And the man who was supposed to be the solution became the problem.

Doing the Right Thing - Regardless

Saul repeatedly refused to allow God's Word to confront his situation. Instead of obedience, he rationalized. Instead of repentance, he justified himself. He became more concerned with how he looked than with whether he was right in the sight of God. He was always looking to protect his image first. This is always a dangerous way to live.

When confronted, Saul admitted wrongdoing, but not sincerely. His confession was motivated by self-interest, not repentance. He feared losing favor with people more than losing favor with God.

Saul had a rebellious spirit. He believed that what was wrong for others could somehow be acceptable for him. He thought position exempted him from consequence. He assumed that because he was king, he could move outside the boundaries of obedience and remain secure. His situation reminds us that there are no exemptions in the Kingdom from rebellion.

He had a rationalizing spirit. He rationalized all of his sin, his disobedience, and rebellion against God. He never really looked in the mirror to evaluate the condition of his soul. He was mostly concerned about his image rather than about pleasing God. And so, as a result, he was disqualified from serving as king.

David, by contrast, sinned grievously, but repented deeply. Saul sinned stubbornly and never truly repented. That is a critical distinction. Doing the right thing often costs us something. Saul was unwilling to pay that cost. Obedience was optional when it conflicted with his comfort or image. The issue is not whether a person has failed. The issue is what they do when confronted with failure. A broken heart can be restored. A stubborn heart becomes hardened.

When Samuel confronted Saul in 1 Samuel 15, Saul's words exposed the shallowness of his confession:

"Then Saul said to Samuel, I have sinned. I violated the Lord's command and your instructions. I was afraid of the people, and so I gave in to them (excuse). Now I beg you, forgive my sin and come back with me, so that I may worship the Lord (self-interest / outward appearance)." - 1Samuel 15:24-25

At first glance, this sounds like repentance. But it was not deep repentance. It was self-interested regret. Saul was grieved by the consequences, not broken over the offense. He wanted Samuel beside him, not because he treasured restoration with God, but because he feared what it would look like if Samuel abandoned him publicly. There is a difference between being sorry you were caught and being broken because you sinned. Saul wanted forgiveness without transformation. He wanted worship without surrender. He wanted public restoration without private repentance. And that never works with God. *We must become people who do the right thing - regardless*. Regardless of cost. Regardless of pressure. Regardless of how lonely obedience may feel in the moment. Regardless of perceived outcomes. Because, in the end, obedience is never loss. It is always gain.

Strength in Adversity

Strength in adversity does not mean the absence of pain. It means refusing to abandon obedience when the pressure rises. Saul's life stands as a warning: *God will not sustain what He did not authorize, nor endorse what contradicts His character.*

Adversity comes for all of us. No believer is exempt from seasons of testing, pressure, disappointment, or pain. But adversity does more than hurt us; it reveals us. It exposes what has been built into us. It shows whether our faith is rooted in Christ or merely attached to comfort. As followers of Christ, we face adversity that mocks *our commitment to Jesus*. It comes to expose whether our trust is genuine or conditional. True strength is revealed under pressure. Saul collapsed inwardly when adversity came. Instead of humbling himself, he hardened himself. He doubled down on arrogance. Instead of turning to God, he blamed others.

Saul's final actions reflected his entire life: self-driven, fearful, impulsive, and rebellious. He never learned to stand strong by submitting fully. Instead of standing in faith, he moved in fear. He never learned that true strength comes through surrender. That is what separates Saul from David.

The story of Saul's decline and David's rise, "from shepherd boy to king", is one of the greatest contrasts in all of Scripture. It is, in many ways, one of the greatest rags-to-riches stories in the Bible. But the true difference between them was not talent, appearance, or opportunity. It was spiritual posture in adversity.

What disqualified Saul and qualified David? David knew how to stay tender under pressure. David knew how to repent. David knew how to trust God in obscurity, in conflict, in delay, and in suffering. David was not perfect, but he remained reachable. He remained teachable. He remained correctable. And that matters.

The ability to show spiritual strength during adversity is one of the great separators between those who merely profess faith and those who walk in divine success. In the midst of adversity, the spiritual cream always rises to the top. Authentic believers do not become strong because there is no storm. They become strong because they cling to God in the middle of the storm.

Too many of us are too quick to give up. When life deals us a difficult hand, when our marriage is on the rocks, when we get a bad doctor's report, when our finances are under attack, when our loved ones have been destroyed, when everything seems to be circling the drain, instead of running to Jesus, we too often want to quit. We decide to give in. We choose to go our own way rather than stand on the Word of God. We would rather blame God than repent. We would rather blame others than address our own accountability. We prefer to discuss our woundedness instead of our waywardness. But woundedness is not an excuse for rebellion. Pain does not authorize disobedience. Don't give up on God, but run to Jesus – even when we are tempted to run from Him. We must stand on His word when we are tempted to surrender to our emotions. We must address our waywardness rather than focus on our woundedness.

Saul never repented. He gave up on God way too soon. He preferred to blame anyone but himself. He missed out on his chance to prove God's faithfulness and power by trusting in God during his season of adversity. And as a result, the kingdom was torn from him.

"And Samuel said to him, "The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you."
1Samuel 15:28

That verse should arrest every one of us. What has been torn from us because we would not obey God? What has been torn from us because we won't have a humble spirit, because we won't do the right thing regardless of the perceived consequences? What has been torn from us because we are not willing to pay the cost of showing strength during adversity? What great things have been torn? What things are the enemies of our souls scheming, even now, to tear away from us because we refuse to humble ourselves before God? What is about to be torn away from us that is of great value, all because we choose to go our way, instead of God's?

These are not small questions. They are holy questions. The deeper the valley, the greater the opportunity for the power of God to be revealed. The fiercer the test, the more clearly true character emerges. Adversity is not the enemy of greatness—quite the opposite. Adversity is often the proving ground for elevation that launches us to prominence.

The depth of our ability to handle adversity will be the height of our spiritual greatness. The deeper our valley, the higher our mountain. Adversity is the proving ground for greatness.

Pride often disguises itself as strength.

Chapter Four

Developing Alignment with God

"Then Samuel took the horn of oil, an anointed him in the midst of his brethren; and the spirit of the LORD came upon David from that day forward." - 1 Samuel 16:13

If God is the One who raises and brings down, if promotion truly comes from His hand, then we must pay very close attention to what He values. We must not assume that heaven rewards what earth applauds. We must not mistake visibility for favor, charisma for calling, or talent for trustworthiness. God's choice of David revealed what He values most. He does not exalt based on appearance. He does not promote according to human impressiveness. He does not choose as men choose.

God exalts according to the spiritual posture of the heart. He looks for hearts that are in agreement with His heart, aligned with His Word, and yielded to His Spirit. He is not looking for perfection, but for sincerity. He is not looking for those who never fail, but for those who remain reachable, teachable, and responsive when He speaks.

If we want to understand divine promotion, then we must understand the kind of life God can trust with influence.

Living in Harmony with God

God described David as "*a man after My own heart*." This did not mean David was flawless. What distinguished David was not sinlessness, but responsiveness. David was responsive to the Word of God. When David was wrong, he admitted it, and he did something about it. When God confronted David, he yielded. When God spoke, David listened. One of the big contrasts between Saul and David was that Saul wanted position, while David wanted God's presence. While Saul wanted the throne, David wanted intimacy with God.

It was David's pursuit of God, the pursuit of His presence, that caused God never to reject David. We should take this valuable truth seriously. God is looking for a

true worshipper - one who is in pursuit of His presence. *For it is the presence of God that breaks every yoke and that provides us with an undefeated life*. The presence of God brings clarity, strengthens us in battle, stabilizes the soul, and teaches our hearts how to trust.

God is looking for men and women who are in pursuit of His presence. He is looking for those who do not merely want blessings from His hand, but who want communion with His heart. God is looking for those who are not satisfied with religious duty. They desire nearness. They desire fellowship. They desire to know Him, love Him, and walk with Him. There is great power in the presence of God.

David was not perfect, but he learned how to live near God. And though he endured many internal struggles and painful consequences for sin, there is a sense in which David never lost an external battle because the hand of God remained upon him in remarkable ways. This is because the pursuit of God's presence marked his life.

To live in harmony with God is to care about what burdens Him, to value what He values, to love what He loves, to hate what He hates, to love what loves Him, and long to please Him more than we long to please ourselves. Authentic Christian Behavior begins here, with alignment, not performance. God actively searches for hearts that belong fully to Him. Not religious actions or impressive spiritual résumés. Not flawless records. He is searching for pure hearts, or hearts that long to be pure. He is looking for surrendered hearts. He is searching for those who desire to move on His behalf more than they want Him to move on their behalf.

God exalts those who are God-centered rather than those who are self-centered. These are individuals who are looking to surrender fully to God. They are looking to build their faith and are more concerned with honoring God than gaining personal benefits from God. A deep and recurring question shapes their lives:

"*How can I be a better disciple of Jesus Christ?"*

They have great concern for God's glory, holiness, and fulfilling the will of God as it is revealed in the Holy Scriptures. They are persuaded about who God is, and

they are not trying to hold God hostage to meeting their expectations. They are positive about God's love and His intentions towards them. They trust His character. They rest in His love. They are not trying to manipulate Him or bargain with Him. God is not a means to an end. He is their everything.

God exalts those who produce good spiritual fruit. We can tell the root by the fruit, and the motive of our heart matters to God. These are people who obviously love God and love people. They are patient in difficult times. The fruit of the Spirit is evident in their life's outcomes. They reveal self-control. They continue to grow in Christlikeness. They are quick to check their flesh, as the profession of their relationship with Christ leads to application of His word in their lives.

God exalts those who pursue Him. These are people of prayer. They are worshippers. They are readers of the Bible and students of Scripture. Their prayer life is not occasional or crisis-driven. Worship is not confined to Sunday gatherings, but it is a lifestyle. They talk with God regularly. They consult God often. They have not neglected their relationship with Christ.

There is something supernatural at work, moving within the ones God promotes. There is holy fire. There is a settled longing. There is an inner life shaped by communion with God. The one who wants God's presence above all else is the one that God will promote because they can be trusted to bring Him all the glory.

> *"For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His." - 2Chronicles 16:9*

What a powerful promise. God is not merely observing. He is actively searching. He is looking for hearts He can support strongly. May He find that kind of heart in us.

Living as a Servant to Others

David was a servant long before he was a king. He served his father faithfully. He served Saul respectfully. He served the people sacrificially. That matters because

servanthood is the spirit of Jesus Christ. Jesus said that He came not to be served, but to serve. That means anyone who desires to be exalted in God's Kingdom must first learn how to stoop low in obedience, humility, and glad-hearted service. Those who want to be first must first become servants. Those who want influence must first embrace responsibility. Those who want to lead must first learn how to serve without applause. They are not always asking, "Who noticed me?" They are asking, "How can I help? How can I honor God? How can I bless others?" We must be quick to serve - not grudgingly, but gladly.

Servanthood reveals spiritual maturity. Those truly anointed are usually willing to serve quietly, gladly, and consistently. David did not seek recognition. He did not seek to manipulate the situation to hurry the transformation from shepherd boy to king. He did not walk in what he thought or how he felt. He fully submitted his heart to the ways of God and waited on God to move him from the sheep pen to the palace. David trusted in the power of God's presence. He was confident in the character of God and His promise. He was persuaded that if he exalted the ways of God, God would exalt him, in due time. David embraced the responsibility of divine servanthood. That takes faith. *Serve and exalt others, and God will take care of you and exalt you.* This is the right way to live. Serve others. Honor others. Bless others. Lift others. *Trust God to take care of you*.

Saul had the look. David had the heart. Throughout Scripture, this pattern repeats itself. God chooses those who are servants before He makes them leaders: Moses, Elisha, Gideon, Joseph, David. These men all learned obedience, humility, and faithfulness before they stepped into greater public influence. They worked in obscurity. They honored authority. They obeyed instructions. They did not demand credit. Leadership that is not rooted in service is prone to becoming abusive.

When people want authority without humility, influence without submission, or leadership without love, they become dangerous. But when a person has truly embraced servanthood, power is tempered by compassion, responsibility is shaped by humility, and leadership becomes a channel of blessing rather than control. Jesus said it plainly:

"…and whoever wants to be first must be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give His life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:27-28

That is not merely a leadership principle. It is a revelation of the heart of Christ. Those God exalts must reflect that heart.

Living in Integrity

Integrity is who we are when we think no one is watching. It is the unseen wholeness of the soul. It is consistency between what we profess publicly and how we live privately. It is sincerity without performance. It is obedience without an audience. David understood that God sees beyond appearances. You cannot fake your way through life with God.

The world values image. The world says, "Make a good showing" or "Impress the right people". It even encourages us to "Fake it till you make it". The only problem with that is that we cannot impress God with the ways of the world. None of this works with God. This is because God values spiritual wholeness. Worldly methods do not move God. He values holiness, righteousness, surrender, and obedience. We can fake our way through a lot of things – our marriage, our jobs, parenting, and even the church – but we cannot fake out God. David knew this and responded accordingly.

David was not merely a gifted leader; he was a trustworthy man. The Scriptures tell us that David shepherded Israel with integrity of heart and skillful hands. His hands were skilled, but his heart also had integrity. His leadership flowed from private faithfulness, not public performance. Integrity made him trustworthy.

"He chose David, His servant, and took him from the sheep pens: from tending sheep He brought Him, to be a shepherd of His people Jacob, of Israel His inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them." - Psalm 78:70-72

God will entrust influence to those who are complete, sound, and unimpaired in character. God trusts those who trust Him enough to obey His word and trust Him for the outcome. That is the kind of person God entrusts with influence.

This is where modern Christianity is in serious trouble. Modern Christianity's greatest crisis is the gap between what we profess and how we live. We are surrounded by so-called disciples of Christ who show little to zero fruit of the Holy Spirit. Instead, we can easily observe relativism, humanism, hypocrisy, performative faith, and a superficial relationship with God. There is much talk, much branding, and much appearance. But too often there is too little transformation. James addresses this directly:

"Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves." - James 1:22

That is a piercing word. It is possible to hear the truth and still live in deception. Because knowledge without obedience creates an illusion, a person can think they are spiritually healthy simply by having heard sermons, quoted verses, or learned doctrine. But hearing alone is not the evidence of integrity. It is application that eliminates the incongruence between our profession and the reality of our behavior.

On the contrary, those who live a life of spiritual integrity not only hear the truth, but we live by the truth. Walking (living) by faith and not by sight for us is not a religious cliché. *We have not deceived ourselves into thinking that, just because we have heard the Word and know the Word, this puts us in a right relationship with God, and, as a result, we don't have to apply the Word*. We are those who love the Word of God, who expose ourselves to it regularly, and whose lives show the changes the Word has made and is making. Our knowledge of the Word increases as does our obedience. We receive God's information, and it leads to transformation. This is because the Word changes, it corrects, and it matures. That is integrity. That is the kind of life God can trust with promotion.

Serve and exalt others, and God will take care of you and exalt you.

Chapter Five

Preparation

"But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!" - 1 Samuel 17:34–37

Before David ever faced Goliath publicly, he faced lions and bears privately. Training always precedes testing. Preparation always comes before promotion. The purpose of preparation is to get us ready for the challenges that are coming our way. Preparation helps ensure that we can and will be successful when we go to the next level. Preparation is work, often hard work. It will usually deal with our perspectives, the posture of our hearts towards God and others, our attitudes, work ethic, our level of alignment with God, our levels of tenacity, our spirit of excellence, our integrity, and more. We are all currently in training for our next promotion, our move to the next glory. We are all being prepared.

Handling Being Alone - Privacy

The place of exaltation begins with being alone with God. *If we are not willing to spend time alone with God, we are in essence aborting our promotion*. God has a ministry of aloneness. When He is at work in this regard, we can be surrounded by people, yet still be alone. This is the place where we learn to trust and depend on God. We must use these moments to become comfortable being alone.

It is in our periods of being alone, our periods of privacy, that God breaks in on us and reveals Himself in ways we can never encounter outside of our solitude. There are some places that God will not take us if we insist on taking someone with us. We must go alone. Biblical examples are Moses, who was alone in the desert when he encountered the burning bush. Jacob was alone

when he wrestled with God. Joseph was alone in Egypt. David was alone, out in the pasture, tending sheep. Even Christ was alone in the Garden of Gethsemane.

If we want God to use us greatly, if we want to rise from the sheep pen to the palace, we must learn how to operate in a way that honors God, especially when we are alone. It is when we are alone that God moves upon us and in our situations with great power. If people are leaving you, if no one is supporting you, and if no one is standing with you – though you are standing with God – don't be discouraged, but get excited. God is up to something good in your life.

We must learn how to handle being alone in a way that honors God if we want to be trusted with great responsibility. Privacy is preparation. God often isolates us before He elevates us. In solitude, motives are purified, and character is shaped. David learned to endure seasons, storms, and silence alone. Those who cannot handle solitude often struggle with insecurity, distraction, and instability. We cannot lead others well if we cannot manage ourselves when no one is around.

*"Lord, they have killed Your prophets and torn down Your altars; I am left alone and they are trying to kill me." – Romans11:*3

The above Scripture is an account of Elijah's appeal to God. God's response in verse four is quite enlightening: "*I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal.*" God was saying to Elijah, and He is saying to us, that when we feel abandoned, and as though nothing is going the way we expected, our situation may be challenging, but we are not alone. God has not left us. Because we can't see Him doesn't mean He isn't working. When we think we are alone, we are wrong – because as authentic children of God through redemption – we can never be alone. God is always there.

Do Excellent Work in Obscurity

Too many people despise small beginnings. They complain about where they are. They minimize what they have been given. They overlook the value of present responsibility because it does not look impressive. But hear this clearly: *If we are not faithful in obscurity, we will not be trustworthy in visibility.*

God watches how we handle what no one celebrates. Do we pray when no one is asking us to pray? Do we worship when no one is leading us? Do we obey when no one is correcting us? Do we remain disciplined when no one is monitoring us? This is where trust is built.

Before David ever stood before Goliath, he stood alone in the pasture. Before he was known publicly, he was known privately, by God. David's greatness was not formed in the palace. It was formed in obscurity. He was tending sheep. He was fighting lions and bears with no audience. He was worshipping God when no one was watching. There were no crowds, no applause, and no recognition: just responsibility and God.

This is where many people fail. We want visibility before we have developed integrity. We want influence before we have learned obedience. We want promotion before we have proven faithfulness. But God's process does not work that way.

It is natural for us to want the spotlight, for us to want the glory, for us to want to be applauded. However, God often calls us to work in unknown, unseen, unappreciated, and un-applauded places. Places where there is no glory. He does this to test us and to prepare us for greatness. This is a picture of Jesus Christ. Born to common people from the world's perspective. He was born in a barn and laid in a manger, because he wasn't important enough to the world even to get a hotel room. He grew up in obscurity in Egypt and then in Nazareth. To the point that Nathaniel asked Phillip in John 1:46, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth*?" The world never truly lauded or applauded Christ. He was not highly esteemed. Jesus did not come seeking glory. But instead, Jesus came to get a job done – the redemption of all humanity. He became the Savior of the world. Now the God-Man Jesus Christ has the name that is above every other name, that at His name every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. He has been exalted for the excellent work that He did while in obscurity.

"And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death on the cross. Wherefore God has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." - Philippians 2:8-9

God often calls us into places that are unseen, uncelebrated, and un-applauded. Places where there is no spotlight. And He does this intentionally. Because obscurity tests our motives. Do we serve God, or do we serve attention? Jesus lived most of His life in obscurity. He did not seek applause. He did not pursue recognition. He came to fulfill a divine mission. And because of His obedience, God the Father exalted Him. That is the pattern. Humility first. Obedience first. Excellence in obscurity first. Then exaltation. David lived this out. He worked faithfully in places no one celebrated. He did not demand recognition. He did what was right, with excellence. Obscurity revealed his heart.

And here is the principle: *Those who accept obscurity without resentment are best prepared to handle recognition without pride.*

David did not wait for a platform to be faithful. He was faithful with sheep, and God saw it. He protected what belonged to his father. He took responsibility seriously. He developed courage in hidden battles. Because he was faithful in what seemed small, God trusted him with what was great.

David worked faithfully in places that were unseen, uncelebrated, and unappreciated. He did not seek applause. He did an excellent job. Obscurity reveals attitudes and perspectives. Ultimately, it reveals the posture of our heart, whether we have the heart of a servant or not.

David did not become a worshipper in public. He became a worshipper in private. He did not develop courage in front of Goliath. He developed courage in front of a lion and a bear. The public victory was simply the overflow of private faithfulness. And this is the pattern of God.

Before Joseph ruled Egypt, he served faithfully in prison. Before Moses led a nation, he tended sheep in the wilderness. Before David wore a crown, he carried a shepherd's staff. God is not in a hurry to expose what has not yet been developed. So, if you find yourself in a season of obscurity, be encouraged. God sees you. He sees your faithfulness. He sees your consistency. He sees your obedience in the hidden places. Nothing done for Him in private is ever wasted. Stay faithful. Because what you are becoming in obscurity will determine what you can sustain in visibility.

Those who easily, gladly, and quickly accept the silence of obscurity are those who are best qualified to handle the applause of popularity.

Obscurity is not punishment. Obscurity is preparation. It is the training ground of the soul. It is where character is formed. It is where motives are purified. It is where faith becomes real. What we do when no one is watching reveals who we really are. God develops in private what He will eventually display in public.

If we cannot handle silence, we will not handle applause well. If we crave attention now, we will misuse influence later. Learn to be excellent where you are, even if no one notices because God does.

Willingness to Do What Others Will Not Do – Monotony

Much of life is filled with the repetitive, the monotonous, and the mundane. We get up, get the kids up, fix breakfast, get the kids to school, go to work, have lunch, more work, get the kids from school, fix dinner, help the kids with homework, watch a little television, maybe read a book, go to sleep. And it all starts over again the next morning – if we are blessed. Nothing is exciting about it. It's just the "same old – same old" – over and over again. Some might say it's a rut. It is definitely a routine. Much of it is menial, even mind-numbing activity. Some would call it uneventful or boring. The question isn't "Is it exciting?" We know that for the most part it is not. The question is "Are we willing to be consistent when it comes to doing the right thing?" Be careful when we begin to despise the monotony.

God watches how we handle small responsibilities. Promotion comes to those who are dependable when the work feels insignificant. When we are faithful in the menial, in what appears insignificant, in the routine, the unexciting, the uneventful, we are learning to be the person God wants us to be. When no one else is around, when no one seems to notice, when it seems as though no one but God cares, are we able to continue to do the right thing in a way that honors God?

It is the monotony that gets us in trouble when we are not able to handle it well. We get uninspired and want something exciting to happen. We want to feel

appreciated, to feel significant. We want to be validated. We crave some excitement. We search for appreciation, significance, and validation, and we will usually find it, but it may not be in a place that honors God. We have begun to drift away from God.

Faithfulness in the mundane is about focus. It is about perspective. When the Word of God and God the Holy Spirit shape our focus and perspective, we have many fewer issues maintaining our consistency as we honor God in the mundane.

Faithfulness in the monotonous prepares us for the miraculous.

David was trustworthy in the menial, the routine, and the unexciting. That is why he was ready for the remarkable.

David, who had been anointed king, is still tending sheep. He is still running errands for his father. He is still humble. He is still responsible. He is still doing things that some, maybe most, would say are beneath him. But David is doing it all with joy. No rebellion. No arrogance. No frustration. This is the spirit that brought him to his Goliath moment.

God watches how we handle small responsibilities. Will we remain consistently faithful in doing the right thing? Promotion comes to those who are dependable when the work feels insignificant; When we are faithful in what seems menial, when we remain consistent in what seems routine, when we continue doing right when no one notices - we are becoming who God can trust.

"Let us not grow weary in well doing for in due time we will reap, if we faint not."
Galatians 6:9

The above Scripture exhorts us not to get tired (bored or distracted) in doing the right thing. Do not get tired of surrendering to God, forgiving others, worshipping, fasting, praising, studying, preaching, honoring God, obeying God, etc... Because if we don't get tired of doing the right thing as outlined in the Word of God, in God's timing, we will reap a great harvest, if we don't give up. What a wonderful promise.

Seeing Reality Clearly

Our perception of reality is not necessarily what reality actually is. Just because something looks a certain way does not mean it *is* that way. Reality is not defined by what we see. Reality is defined by what God says. If our perception does not align with God's Word, then our perception is wrong.

In the story of David and Goliath, all of the Israelites saw Goliath as a problem that no one and nothing could solve. They saw defeat, and they were afraid. That was their perspective. But that was not David's perception. He saw something different. He saw a man defying the living God. David had a righteous indignation about the whole situation. He was disturbed by what disturbed God. He was not intimidated by what intimidated others because his relationship with God had shaped his perspective.

This level of confidence is not forged in a moment. It is forged in private. It is forged in obscurity. It is forged in monotony. This level of confidence can only come from spending quality time with the Lord. David knows who God is. He knows what God has already done in his life in difficult situations. He knows what God is capable of doing. And David knows what he is capable of doing on God's behalf. He knows that when he seeks first to honor God, God will in turn honor him. We can never be promoted into our full purpose until we have the epiphany of who God truly is and who we are in Christ.

David understood reality. Goliath was real, but so was God. That understanding changes everything. This was David's moment. No one but David was prepared to handle this difficult situation. This was his moment, and he took full advantage of it, without even trying to. This was who he was. This is what all of the preparation was for. David passed the Goliath test in flying colors. It was this moment that propelled him from the sheep pen to the palace, becoming the greatest king that ever reigned in Israel.

David did not exaggerate Goliath's strength, nor did he underestimate God's power. This is the correct perspective. And this perspective positioned David for his moment. His confidence was grounded in experience with God, not theory. David had the correct perspective, forged by trusting God in life situations when it mattered. Correct perspective turns fear into faith. It turns intimidation

into boldness. It turns impossible situations into opportunities for God's glory. Correct perspective turns defeat into victory.

This was David's opportunity, not because he chased it, but because he was ready for it. All of God's preparation, the obscurity, all of the private victories, it all had led him to this moment. David passed the test. It is often this moment, the moment where preparation meets opportunity, that moves a person from the pasture to the palace.

Those who accept obscurity without resentment are best prepared to handle recognition without pride.

Chapter 6

Our Goliath Moment

Every person who walks with God long enough will face a defining moment. A moment where everything that has been developed in private is revealed in public. A moment where preparation collides with opportunity. A moment where what we believe about God is no longer theoretical. It must be demonstrated.

For David, that moment was Goliath. Goliath was not just a giant. He was a test. He was a test of faith. A test of perspective. A test of preparation. And the same is true for us. Our Goliath moment may not look like David's, but it will bear the same weight. It will challenge our identity, face our faith, and expose whether we have truly been prepared, or merely been present.

Perceiving the Moment

David did not go looking for Goliath. He was sent on an assignment of obedience. He was bringing food to his brothers. He was serving his father. He was doing something small. And in the middle of that straightforward act of obedience, he encountered his moment. This is important.

Our defining moment will often be found in the middle of simple obedience.

Not in striving. Not in self-promotion. Not in chasing visibility. But in doing what God has already told us to do. Many people miss their moment because they look for something dramatic while overlooking what is already in front of them. David was faithful in minor matters, and because of that, he was present when the opportunity appeared.

Seeing What Others Cannot See

Everyone else saw Goliath. But no one else saw him correctly. The army of Israel saw a giant too big to defeat. They saw intimidation. They saw risk. They saw defeat before the battle even began. But David saw something much

different. He saw a man defying the One True Living God. That changed everything because perspective determines response.

If we see our problem as bigger than our God, we will retreat. If we see our God as bigger than our problem, we will advance. David's confidence was not rooted in denial. He did not pretend Goliath was small. He understood that God was greater. And that is the key to every Goliath moment.

Drawing from Private Victories

When David spoke before Saul, he did not speak in theory. He spoke from experience. He said, in essence: "I have faced lions. I have faced bears. And the same God who delivered me then will deliver me now." David did not suddenly become courageous. He had already been courageous when no one was watching. Private victories produce public assurance.

What God does in us in obscurity is what we will draw from in visibility. If we have no history with God, we will have no confidence in crisis. But if we have walked with Him, if we have trusted Him, if we have seen Him move in our lives, then when our Goliath shows up, we are not starting from fear. We are standing on faith.

Rejecting the Wrong Armor

When David prepared to face Goliath, Saul offered him armor. It looked right. It was logical. It was proven, but for someone else. But it was not right for David, and David recognized it. He refused to fight in what did not fit him. This is an important lesson. *We cannot defeat our Goliath using someone else's identity.* We cannot walk in someone else's calling. We cannot rely on someone else's relationship with God. We cannot imitate our way into victory. David chose what had been proven in his own life: a sling and a stone. He had a history with God, and that was enough. God does not need impressive tools. He desires surrendered vessels.

Confronting the Giant

When David walked onto the battlefield, he did not hesitate. He ran toward Goliath. This is because he was not fighting for himself. He was fighting for the honor of God. That is what gave him boldness. Fear is weakened when purpose is clear. David was not distracted by Goliath's size. He was focused on God's reputation. And he declared it boldly: *"The battle is the Lord's."*

That is the mindset of someone who is prepared. They understand that the outcome is not dependent on them alone. They know that God is involved. They know that God is able. As a result, they move forward with confidence.

The Victory That Changes Everything

David defeated Goliath with a single stone. Not because the stone was powerful, but because God was. At that moment, everything changed. The same David who had been overlooked, the same David who had been hidden, the same David who had been faithful in obscurity - was now seen. Promotion had arrived. It did not come because David chased it, but because he was ready for it.

The Danger of the Moment

We must understand something important: *The Goliath moment is not simply a moment of opportunity - It is also a moment of exposure.* It reveals what is in us. If we are unprepared, it exposes weakness. If we are prepared, it reveals strength. And even in victory, there is danger. Because what follows promotion is often pressure. Visibility, expectations, and opposition all increase. This is why preparation matters so much. Because what gets us there may not sustain us. Only what God has built in us will.

Our Goliath Moment

We will have our moment. A moment where:

- Faith must override fear
- Obedience must override comfort
- Trust must override logic

And when that moment comes, the question will not be: "Is this opportunity big enough?" The question will be: *"Have we been prepared?"* Have we been faithful in obscurity? Have we developed our relationship with God? Have we built our lives on His Word? Have we allowed Him to shape our character? Because at that moment, we will draw from what has already been developed.

The Call

God is still looking for Davids. Not perfect people. Prepared people. Not people who look the part. People who have the heart. People who:

- Trust Him in private
- Obey Him in difficulty
- Honor Him in all things
- Stand for Him when it matters

Because when the moment comes, God will use them. And when He uses them, He will exalt them, not for their glory, but for His.

Our Goliath moment is our opportunity. An opportunity to reveal our preparation. An opportunity to demonstrate our faith. An opportunity to glorify God. So do not fear the moment. Prepare for it. And when it comes, run toward it. Because what God has built in us is greater than what stands in front of us.

We cannot defeat our Goliath using someone else's identity.

Chapter 7

Sustaining Promotion After Victory

Victory is not the end of the journey. It is the beginning of a new level of responsibility. Many people are prepared for the battle, but not for what comes after. They are ready to fight, but not ready to lead. They are ready to overcome, but not ready to steward what God entrusts to them after the victory.

David defeated Goliath in a moment. But sustaining the life that followed would take a lifetime. Here is a sobering truth: *It is often easier to achieve promotion than it is to sustain it.*

Because what gets you there is not what keeps you there. Victory may open the door. But character is what keeps you in the room.

The Danger After the Win

After David defeated Goliath, everything changed. He was celebrated. He was recognized. He was elevated. Songs were sung about him. Crowds admired him. Doors opened for him. And with that came something else: Pressure – Expectation – Attention - Opposition.

This is where many people begin to drift. Because success introduces new dangers:

- Pride begins to whisper
- Self-sufficiency begins to grow
- Dependence on God begins to weaken

We start remembering what we did, instead of remembering what God did. If we are not careful, the same success that lifted us can begin to undo us.

Stay Dependent on God

The greatest mistake we can make after victory is to become independent. What required prayer before now gets handled casually. What required fasting before now gets ignored. What required deep dependence upon God before now feels manageable. But hear this unmistakably: *If it took God to get us there, it will take God to keep us there.*

David's strength was never his skill. It was his dependence. He inquired of the Lord. He sought God's direction. He returned to God again and again. Even after success, David maintained a posture of pursuit. That is the key. Never graduate from dependence on God. The moment we believe we can handle it on our own, we are already in danger.

Guard Your Heart from Pride

Promotion exposes the heart. It reveals whether humility was genuine or temporary. Pride does not always appear loudly. It creeps in subtly. It shows up as:

- A diminished prayer life
- A resistance to correction
- A growing need for recognition
- A desire to protect image over truth

Pride tells us: "You've earned this." "You deserve this." "You don't need what you used to need." But none of that is true. Everything we have is still because of God.

David had moments of failure. But one thing remained true about him. He could still be corrected. His heart was still reachable. That is what sustained him. Stay humble. Remember where God brought us from. Remember who gave us the opportunity. Remember who sustained us in the battle. Because pride will take us further down than success ever took us up.

Remain Teachable and Correctable

One of the clearest differences between Saul and David is this: Saul could not be corrected. David could. Saul defended himself. David humbled himself. Saul justified himself. David repented. And that difference determined their outcomes.

After promotion, it becomes harder to receive correction. This is because fewer people feel comfortable giving it. However, that does not remove the need for it. In fact, it increases it. We must intentionally stay teachable. We must invite accountability. We must remain open to truth. We must allow God to confront us, especially when it is uncomfortable. The moment we can no longer be corrected, we are no longer safe.

Handle Opposition with Maturity

After David's promotion, Saul became his enemy. Jealousy arose. Attacks increased. Misunderstanding followed. And this is important: *Promotion usually attracts opposition.*

Not everyone will celebrate our success. Not everyone will understand our assignment. Not everyone will support what God is doing in our lives. And how we respond matters. David had opportunities to destroy Saul. But he refused. The reason is that he understood authority. He understood timing. He understood that vengeance belongs to God. He chose restraint over reaction. He chose honor over retaliation. This is what preserved him. We cannot sustain God's promotion if we respond to pressure in the flesh. We must learn to:

- Stay submitted under pressure
- Stay gracious under attack
- Stay focused under distraction

How we handle opposition will determine how long we remain in position.

Stay Faithful in the New Season

Promotion does not eliminate responsibility. It increases it. The same disciplines that developed us must continue. Prayer must continue. Obedience must continue. Integrity must continue. Servanthood must continue. We cannot abandon what built us.

David did not stop being a worshipper when he became king. He did not stop seeking God when he gained influence. He carried the same heart into a new level. That is how promotion is sustained. *Do not let the platform change your heart posture*. Stay faithful.

Protect the Presence of God

More than anything else, we must guard the presence of God in our lives because that is the source of everything good. It is not our title. It is not our influence. It is not our success. *It is His presence*.

David understood this deeply. When he sinned, his greatest fear was not losing position. It was losing presence. *"Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me."* That is the cry of a man who understands what truly matters. We can recover from loss. We can rebuild after failure. But if we lose sensitivity to God's presence, everything begins to fall apart. Guard it well. We must protect our time with God. Protect our sensitivity to His voice. Protect our obedience. His presence is our lifeline.

Finishing Well

It is not enough to start well. It is not enough to win battles. The goal is to finish well. Saul started well, yet finished poorly. David struggled, but finished with a heart toward God. That is what matters.

At the end of our lives, what will be said? Not how high we rose. Not how much we achieved. But whether we remained faithful to God.

Final Exhortation – From Pasture to Purpose

God is still promoting people. He is still raising leaders. He is still opening doors. He is still placing people in positions of influence. He is not just looking for people who can win battles. He is looking for people who can *sustain the victory.* People who will:

- Stay humble after success
- Stay dependent after promotion
- Stay obedient under pressure
- Stay faithful over time

Sustained promotion requires sustained surrender. We have been prepared. We have been tested. We have been positioned. Now the question is: Can we remain – can we stay humble - can we stay faithful - can we stay submitted? Because where God takes us, He expects us to represent Him well. If we will remain in Him, He will sustain us.

God's process still works. He still develops leaders in obscurity. He still values humility over image. He still honors obedience over popularity. He still prepares hearts before granting authority. The crown is not the goal. It never was. Faithfulness is. Before God ever promotes us publicly, He prepares us privately. And when we submit to that process, we discover that the pasture was never punishment - it was preparation.

This book has laid out fifteen Kingdom disciplines that, if applied as part of your Christian lifestyle, will help you to fulfill your divine purpose, as ordained by Jesus Christ. These disciplines are as follows:

1. No entitlements.

2. The power of influence – be careful who you allow to speak into your life. Be careful about who or what you allow to get close enough to influence you.

3. Be the best you that you can be. Look to improve continuously.

4. Focus on the long-term.
5. Discipline yourself for positive outcomes.
6. Focus on substance over appearance.
7. Keep a humble spirit.
8. Do the right thing – regardless.
9. Show strength in adversity.
10. Live in harmony with God.
11. Serve others.
12. Operate with integrity.
13. Handle being alone with God (privacy).
14. Do excellent work when no one notices (obscurity).
15. Do what others will not do (monotony).

These are the disciplines of preparation that will take us from the sheep pen to the palace. These are the disciplines that will prepare us for our Goliath moment. These are things that God values. And these are things that, when implemented in our lives consistently, will move us to the front of the line and bring Jesus Christ a tremendous amount of glory.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, I come before You with a humble heart, acknowledging that everything I am and everything I have comes from You. You are the Author of my life, the One who has called me, sustained me, and brought me to this moment.

Lord, I thank You.

I appreciate Your patience with me. Thank You for Your mercy toward me.
Thank You for not giving up on me, even when I have fallen short.
Father, I confess that there have been times when I have desired the crown without embracing the process. Times where I have pursued position more than

Your presence. Times where I have relied on my own understanding instead of trusting in You.

Forgive me, Lord. Forgive me for pride. Forgive me for impatience. Forgive me for disobedience. Forgive me for the times I have chosen my way over Your way. Today, I surrender. I surrender my will to Your will. I surrender my plans to Your purpose. I surrender my desires to Your design.

Lord, create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit within me. Remove anything in me that does not honor You. Teach me to walk humbly with You.

Father, give me a heart like David - a heart that pursues You above all else; A heart that is sensitive to Your voice; A heart that is quick to repent and quick to obey; A heart that longs for Your presence more than anything this world can offer.

Help me to embrace the process. Give me strength in obscurity. Give me faith in the waiting. Give me endurance in adversity. Give me discipline in the mundane. Teach me to be faithful when no one is watching. Teach me to serve without recognition. Teach me to trust You when I do not understand.

Lord, prepare me. Prepare my heart. Prepare my mind. Prepare my character. So that when my moment comes, when I stand before my "Goliath"- I will not shrink back in fear, but step forward in faith, knowing that the battle belongs to You.

Father, I ask for the right perspective. Help me to see as You see. Help me to think as You think. Help me to value what You value. Guard me from comparison. Guard me from distraction. Guard me from the desire to be like the world. Make me who You created me to be.

And Lord, when You choose to promote me - when You open doors no man can shut - keep me. Keep me humble. Keep me dependent. Keep me obedient. Keep me grounded in Your truth. Do not let success corrupt me. Do not let influence change me. Do not let me drift from Your presence. Let me never outgrow my need for You.

Father, surround me with the right people, those who will speak truth into my life, who will challenge me, correct me, and encourage me to walk in righteousness. Give me "Come on Now" voices - people who love You enough to keep me aligned with Your Word.

And Lord, I declare today: I choose Your way. I choose obedience. I choose surrender. I choose faith. I will not settle for temporary success. I desire eternal significance. Use me for Your glory.

Raise me, not for my name, but for Yours. Let my life reflect Your goodness, Your power, and Your grace. And when it is all said and done, let me hear these words: "Well done, good and faithful servant."

I give You all the honor. I give You all the glory. I give You all the praise.

In the mighty and matchless name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

If it took God to get us there, it will take God to keep us there.

Appendix A: Collins Kingdom Principles for Daily Living

Ten Daily Principles for a Life That Honors Christ

1. Before aiming at God's promotion, look for God's presence.
You must never make success, influence, or opportunity more important than your everyday fellowship with Jesus Christ, for his presence is your greatest reward.
Key Scripture: Matthew 6:33

2. Select the character over convenience.
The decision that is easiest is not usually the one that is most holy. One should live according to biblical convictions rather than for the sake of personal comfort.
Key Scripture: Luke 9:23

3. Stay faithful in little things.
God brings about His servants by means of their ordinary duties before giving them extraordinary opportunities. Do not look down on the pasture.
Key Scripture: Luke 16:10

4. Keep your heart above all else.
All the decisions, relationships, attitudes, and actions you take are based on the state of your heart and you should protect it by means of God's Word, prayer, and obedience.
Key Scripture: Proverbs 4:23

5. Move by faith, not by feelings.
Our feelings can vary depending on the circumstances, but God's truth remains constant. Let your view be based on His Word not on your emotions.
Key Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:7

6. Serve other people in the way that Jesus served you.
Greatness is shown through humility, kindness, and selfless service; any chance to serve is also a chance to glorify Christ.
Key Scripture: Matthew 20:26–28

7. Welcome correction as a gift.
God frequently makes use of His Word and godly people in order to keep us from ourselves, and a teachable spirit is one of the most notable signs of spiritual maturity.
Key Scripture: Proverbs 12:1

8. End each day by feeling thankful.
Gratitude eliminates the feeling of entitlement. You should thank God every day for His grace, for His provision, for His forgiveness, and for His faithfulness.
Key Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 5:18

9. Aim at everlasting rewards.
Do not judge your success by the things you gather in, but by those things that will be important to you when you stand before Jesus Christ.
Key Scripture: Colossians 3:1–2

10. To glorify Christ should be the aim in all things.
No matter how big or small, obvious or otherwise your task may seem, you should do everything with excellence as a form of worship, since your life is your testimony.
Key Scripture: Colossians 3:17

A Final Charge

Treat each day as if you are still looking after sheep. You should walk with God before you walk in front of people. Learn before you lead. Serve before you speak. Pray before you proceed. Obey before you understand. And remember: *God is not just getting you ready for your next task. He is getting you ready to be more like His Son.* So long as you steadily seek His presence, live with humility and obey His Word, He will faithfully carry out His purpose in your life.
The crown isn't the aim. Jesus Christ is.
Ad Gloriam Christi.

The Bishop's Blessing

Beloved servant of the Lord,

As you near the end of this journey, which takes you from the sheep pen to the palace, keep in mind that God's main aim has never been to prepare you for a particular position; it has always been to prepare you for His presence.

May the Lord grant you David's heart before He gives you David's crown.
May He grant you the humility needed to keep being teachable, the courage to obey even when it costs you, and the insight to tell God's voice above all other influences.

May He strengthen your hands in regard to every task which He puts before you and put your feet firmly on the unshakable foundation of His Holy Word.
May you never substitute character for charisma, integrity for influence, or God's approval for the applause of people.

May the private walk you have with Christ be greater than your public ministry.
I pray your worship remains sincere, that your prayers continue to be fervent, your faith stays firm, and your love for Jesus Christ grows ever more as each day passes.

When standing in the presence of giants, remember that the battle is the Lord's. As you walk through valleys, remember that He is with you by your side. May you, when you are blessed by Him with a successful outcome, remember that all good and perfect gifts come from His gracious hand.

May you act with compassion. May you serve humbly and show forgiveness promptly. May you love deeply and complete your tasks faithfully. May your home experience the peace of Christ, your ministry be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and your life show clearly the evidence of God's transforming grace.

And when your journey is complete, I pray you stand before our Chief Shepherd, our Lord Jesus Christ. May you hear the words: "*Well done, good and faithful servant; enter into the joy of your Lord." - Matthew 25:23*

Until that glorious day, get to know Him deeply, spend time with Him each day, and faithfully represent Him. May you always experience the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Ad Gloriam Christi.

Amen.

FROM SHEPHERD BOY TO KING

A Journey of Calling, Character, and Preparation

Study Guide

Download the "From Shepherd Boy to King" Companion Workbook at HOWICP.org

Use with the Companion Workbook for best results.

Author's Note

Thank you for reading "***From Shepherd Boy to King***". If this book encouraged, challenged, or strengthened your walk with Christ, would you consider leaving a brief review? Your review:

- Helps other believers find this resource
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- Supports Christian authors sharing biblical truth

Even a few sentences make a meaningful difference. Visit our website TonyCollinsMinistries.com and go to the "contact" page and leave a review. Thank you for partnering in ministry through your support.

Blessings,
Bishop Anthony Collins

All of our discipleship resources are available to the public at no charge through HOWICP.org. Our mission is to advance the Kingdom of Jesus Christ by equipping believers to obey the Great Commission through biblical discipleship, spiritual formation, and leadership development.

If these resources have encouraged your walk with Christ or strengthened your ministry, we invite you to partner with us. Your tax-deductible donation enables us to continue developing and distributing these materials free of charge to individuals, churches, and ministries worldwide.

Thank you for helping us make disciples who make disciples - for the glory of God.



In Matthew 28, our Lord Jesus Christ gave His Church its mission, its vision, and its process for reaching the world. We know it as the Great Commission.

Jesus commanded His followers to *go and make disciples of all nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything He had commanded*. This is not one ministry among many; it is the mission of the Church. It is the one assignment that every believer, every local church, and the Church universal has received directly from our risen King.

Sadly, much of the modern Church has neglected this divine responsibility.

Many who stand behind the sacred desk have never themselves experienced intentional biblical discipleship. Consequently, they have little vision or passion for discipling others. This stands in direct opposition to both the command and the example of Jesus Christ.

Disciple-making is rarely easy. It is often inconvenient, time-consuming, and personally demanding. It requires patience, commitment, and sacrifice. But the Kingdom of God has never been advanced through convenience. It has always been advanced through faithful men and women who were willing to invest their lives in others.

We cannot fully accomplish biblical discipleship from the pulpit alone. Preaching is essential, but it is only one part of the process. Neither can we effectively disciple someone through occasional meetings or brief conversations. Jesus did not simply teach crowds; He invested deeply in twelve men. He walked with them, answered their questions, corrected their misunderstandings, modeled obedience, and allowed them to observe His life day after day.

That remains the biblical pattern.

Discipleship is life shared together. It is walking alongside another believer, allowing them to see how we respond to life's victories, disappointments, temptations, and trials. It is opening God's Word together, praying together, encouraging one another, and holding each other accountable to grow in Christ.

For us, intentional discipleship means meeting regularly - ideally at least once each week - for meaningful conversation centered on Scripture, spiritual growth, and the practical challenges of living faithfully in a fallen world. It is helping believers develop the spiritual disciplines that deepen their intimacy with Jesus Christ and strengthen their walk with Him.

The goal is not simply to produce knowledgeable Christians. The goal is to develop mature disciples who, in turn, become disciple-makers themselves.

This is the multiplication strategy of the Kingdom.

At **Collins Discipleship Institute**, our passion is to equip individuals, churches, and Christian organizations with practical, biblically sound resources that cultivate mature, vibrant, and Spirit-empowered followers of Jesus Christ. Our desire is to strengthen believers in the essential areas of Christian life and ministry, so they can faithfully fulfill the Great Commission. We do not exist to produce better church members. We exist to produce mature disciples who make mature disciples.

We believe that the future strength of the Church will not be determined merely by the size of our congregations, but by the depth of our disciples. When disciples make disciples, churches become healthier, families become stronger, communities are transformed, and the Kingdom of Jesus Christ advances.

The Great Commission has never been rescinded. It remains the calling of every believer. May we not merely admire it, but may we obey it.

Contact us at info@HOWICP.org for more information. All resources are free.

Author Bio

Bishop Dr. Anthony Collins is a former pastor, a teacher, author, and international ministry leader committed to equipping believers to live with purpose, power, and spiritual authority.

Over 20 years ago, he planted a non-denominational, multi-cultural church that continues to impact lives today. His leadership is marked by a strong emphasis on discipleship, spiritual maturity, and the practical application of biblical truth. Bishop Collins has also led international ministry efforts for more than a decade, with work spanning Mexico, Central America, Russia-Ukraine, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, and regions of Africa.

He is the founder of **Houses of Worship International Christian Partnership (HOWICP)**, a ministry focused on supporting churches, developing leaders, and advancing the Gospel globally. Through this work, he also oversees initiatives such as the **Children for Christ Ranch** in Buctzotz, Yucatán, Mexico, an outreach dedicated to feeding, discipling, and caring for children while building sustainable, Christ-centered community impact.

Bishop Collins is passionate about mentoring pastors and leaders, helping them grow in spiritual depth, clarity of calling, and effectiveness in ministry. His teaching consistently calls believers beyond routine religion into a life marked by the presence of God.

Through his writing and ministry, he challenges the Church to return to what matters most - *intimacy with God, alignment with His will, and the power that flows from His presence.*