



# A Leader Named David

Psalm 23

August 12, 2018

As you may know, our church hosted the Global Leadership Summit on August 9-10. The Global Leadership Summit has been around for over 20 years. Its goal is to help leaders get better because, as their motto rightly states, “everyone wins, when a leader gets better.” Everyone wins WHEN a leader gets better. Unfortunately, the opposite is equally true: just about everybody loses, when a leader gets worse. The unfortunate irony, in the entire summit this year, is that there are serious allegations that are continuing to build against the credibility and authenticity of the summit’s key leader, Bill Hybels.<sup>1</sup> Now we do live in a country where someone is innocent until proven guilty, and we should keep that in mind. But, at the same time, the women who have come forward with these allegations deserve to be heard. And, if their hurts and abuses prove to be true, they deserve a sincere apology. Not only a sincere apology, but a public apology. They deserve our love and compassion. And, they deserve full restitution of their dignity and worth. Whether it be at Willow Creek Church, or anywhere else, any leader who abuses his or her power by abusing others should be brought to justice. The Church of Jesus Christ cannot afford to coverup sin. If we have not learned this yet, we better figure it out now, because otherwise the gospel will lose its voice, if its credibility continues to be undermined, by a lack of accountability among its leaders. So, let us resolve, here at Efree Bemidji, to be a church that treats both women/men with equal respect. God is honored only when we rightly identify sin as sin and deal with it head on. Certainly, we want to remember God’s grace, but that doesn’t mean that we go soft on sin, ESPECIALLY with our leaders.

James 3:1 tells us, that those who teach will be judged more strictly. And, 1 Timothy 5:20 makes it clear, “But those elders who are sinning you are to reprove before everyone, so that the others may take warning.” Now, we don’t want to spend our entire morning talking about Willow Creek Church. But we can certainly learn some lessons for our church, and we can see how this is a powerful impetus for us to listen carefully to what God’s Word says about leadership.<sup>2</sup> **Godly leaders...**

**1. ...are needed in our world today as much as ever before.** Here’s one way to define a leader: **One who influences others.** Another phrase that has been going around this year is that “**Everyone has influence.**” Therefore, if both of these things are true: if a leader is “one who influences others” and if “everyone has influence,” then clearly all of us are leaders in one way or another. Now, you might be sitting there thinking to yourself, “But, Pastor Jerry, I’m NOT a leader. I don’t own a big company, I don’t chair any boards or committees, nothing like that!” Regardless, today, I’m going to challenge you to consider the leadership role you DO play in this world. This morning, as we consider this leader named David, I invite each of you to consider yourself a leader. What leadership role has God called you to? This might be leadership among your friends, in your workplace, in your family, or your leadership in the community. Today, as we look at another part of David’s story, let’s consider what it means for each of us to be a godly leader. Because, Godly Leaders are very much needed in our world today! Please turn in your Bible to 1 Samuel 18. David’s life teaches us that **Godly Leaders...**

**2. ...trust in God’s sovereignty.** After David’s amazing victory over Goliath, 1 Samuel 18:2 tells us, “From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family.” God moved David from a shepherd out in the fields guarding his father’s sheep, to a leader in the service of the king of Israel. His influence as a leader was growing. 1 Samuel 18:30 says, “David met with more success than the rest of Saul’s officers, and his name became well known.” In fact, David becomes so influential that King Saul becomes jealous and tries to kill him multiple times. And this is where David’s trust in God’s sovereignty is put to the test. No matter how popular or influential David became, he held on to a strong conviction that God is sovereign. For example, David inquired of the Lord OFTEN; he would seek God’s direction. And whenever God gave him direction, David obeyed,

<sup>1</sup> Learn more at <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2018/august/bill-hybels-steve-carter-resigns-willow-creek-gls-summit.html> and other sources as well.

<sup>2</sup> Consider 1 Corinthians 10:12.

EVEN when his followers didn't like it! Take a look at 1 Samuel 23:1-5, "When David was told, "Look, the Philistines are fighting against Keilah<sup>3</sup> and are looting the threshing floors," he inquired of the LORD, saying, "Shall I go and attack these Philistines?" The LORD answered him, "Go, attack the Philistines and save Keilah." But David's men said to him, "Here in Judah we are afraid. How much more, then, if we go to Keilah against the Philistine forces!" Once again David inquired of the LORD, and the LORD answered him, "Go down to Keilah, for I am going to give the Philistines into your hand." So David and his men went to Keilah, fought the Philistines and carried off their livestock. He inflicted heavy losses on the Philistines and saved the people of Keilah."

David's leadership practice was based on a theocracy, which followed God as their sovereign King. David had no illusions that he was Israel's ultimate king. David knew that he was an undershepherd of the Good Shepherd. This wasn't a democracy. David wasn't asking his men for a vote or whether they felt ok about rescuing this town. David's concern was doing what the LORD wanted them to do. David's leadership practice was to inquire of the LORD OFTEN.<sup>4</sup> This was David's regular practice as a leader and this is a good model for each of us. So, let's each ask ourselves, "In my leadership, am I seeking God's guidance? Am I inquiring of the LORD OFTEN?"

David's trust in God's sovereignty is further illustrated by two really similar events in 1 Samuel 24<sup>5</sup> and 26. In both of these chapters there is a contrast between King Saul's intention to kill David and David's intention to let Saul live, despite opportunities to take his life. Now, ironically, there's a chapter between chapters 24 and 26, where David takes matters into his own hands with the story of Abigail and Nabal. We talked about this two Sundays ago. Initially at least, rather than trusting God's sovereignty and leaving things up to God's timing, David impulsively makes a rash decision to impose his own will. It was only due to Abigail's wise counsel that David avoided making a tragic leadership decision.

Interestingly enough, in the chapter after Abigail, we see David is back on track again. 1 Samuel 26:5-8 tells us, "Then David set out and went to the place where Saul had camped. He saw where Saul and Abner son of Ner, the commander of the army, had lain down. Saul was lying inside the camp, with the army encamped around him. David then asked Ahimelek the Hittite and Abishai son of Zeruah, Joab's brother, "Who will go down into the camp with me to Saul?" "I'll go with you," said Abishai. So David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with **his spear** stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him. Abishai said to David, "Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me **pin him to the ground** with one thrust of the spear; I won't strike him twice." This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> opportunity that David is given to take Saul's life. And this time, it's perhaps even more tempting, because this spear next to Saul, may have caused David to have a flashback. It may very well have been the one Saul threw at David, or at least a spear much like it. Several chapters back, we read about a time

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<sup>3</sup> Pronounced kih IGH (eye) luh

<sup>4</sup> Contrast this with 1 Chronicles 10:13-14. Also, consider 1 Samuel 22:15 when King Saul is accusing the priest Ahimelek of conspiring with David, "Was that day the first time I inquired of God for him? Of course not! ..."

<sup>5</sup> We read in 1 Samuel 24:2-3, "So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats. He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave." This one of those awkward Scripture passages that reminds us just how similar the lives of god's people in the Old Testament are to ours today. King Saul needed to use the bathroom and apparently this cave seemed like a good place to do his business. David's men see this as a prime opportunity to strike King Saul when he's all alone. 1 Samuel 24:4 tells us that, "The men said, "This is the day the LORD spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'" Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe." David, rather than seizing this opportunity to kill King Saul, decides to handle it differently. 1 Samuel 24:5-7 says, "Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe. He said to his men, "The LORD forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the LORD's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the LORD." With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way."

How easily David or one of his men could have killed Saul. But, instead, here is what happens next. 1 Samuel 24:8-12 says, "Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'? This day you have seen with your own eyes how the LORD delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lay my hand on my lord, because he is the LORD's anointed.' See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life. May the LORD judge between you and me. And may the LORD avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you." (Consider Romans 12:17-21) David was a leader who trusted in God's sovereignty. He left matters in God's hands. After King Saul realizes that David has spared his life, he and David make a peace agreement. Saul says in 1 Samuel 24:20-22, "I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands. Now swear to me by the LORD that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family." So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold."

when David was playing his lyre for King Saul in his home. 1 Samuel 19:10 tells us, “Saul tried to **pin him to the wall with his spear**, but David eluded him as Saul drove the spear into the wall...” Abishai now offers to kill King Saul for David and it must have been awfully tempting. But, once again, David won’t allow it. Rather, he puts his trust in God’s sovereign control. 1 Samuel 26:9-10 goes on to tell us, “But David said to Abishai, “Don’t destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the LORD’s anointed and be guiltless? As surely as the LORD lives,” he said, “the LORD himself will strike him, or his time will come and he will die, or he will go into battle and perish.” David holds on to this perspective that God is going to work things out in His own time and in His own way. Now again, this stands in contrast to David’s actions with Nabal and Abigail, but perhaps the experience with Nabal was the LORD’s way of reminding David to trust in God’s sovereignty and His ultimate justice. David entrusted his cause to the Lord.

Interestingly enough, David’s words “or he will go into battle and perish” are almost prophetic. In 1 Samuel 31 we read about King Saul being critically wounded by archers in another war with the Philistines. Saul dies in this war, by falling on his own sword. Once again, much like with Nabal, David trusts God’s sovereign plan in his dealings with King Saul. So, how about you and me? Let’s each ask ourselves, “In my leadership, am I trusting God’s sovereignty? Am I waiting on His timing and His plan or am I rushing ahead with my own plans?”

David’s life not only teaches us to trust in God’s sovereignty but it also teaches us that **Godly Leaders... 3. ...follow the LORD as their Shepherd**. David viewed leadership through the lens of shepherding.<sup>6</sup> David took good care of his father Jesse’s sheep, and God then entrusted David with His own sheep, the people of Israel.<sup>7</sup> Whatever leadership role we find ourselves in, we would do well to keep in mind that the people following us, don’t belong to us, they belong to God. If we have been entrusted to lead and shepherd others, let’s do it in such a way that it honors the LORD, who is the Shepherd of us all. You see, even though David was a king, with great power and influence, he never lost sight of who was really in charge. Jehovah God, the LORD, was the real king of Israel and David viewed himself as an under-shepherd in His service.<sup>8</sup> We see this demonstrated throughout David’s life in the way he led. He trusted in God’s sovereign rule and he inquired of the LORD for direction, in how to lead God’s people.

We also see this under-shepherd perspective demonstrated in another way: David loved God’s Law.<sup>9</sup> David writes in Psalm 19:7, “The law of the LORD is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.” Later in Psalm 40:8 David says, “I desire to do your will, my God; your law is within my heart.” Loving God’s Law means not only knowing it, but also deeply desiring to live according to it. Now, as king, it’s possible to abuse one’s power. In fact, ancient kings often had the power to make laws and change laws, so that their word was the law. But King David didn’t do this because he loved God’s Law.

Now, I imagine that some of you may be thinking what I’m thinking. But what about David’s failures as a leader? What about his sin with Bathsheba and his sin of taking a census? How do these sins end up in the life of someone who proclaims to love God’s Law? Or, how do we reconcile these sins with the classic summary of David’s life that we find in Acts 13:22, “...God testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’”<sup>10</sup> A man after God’s own heart? Can we really take this seriously, after reading David’s story in its entirety? The reality is, that even though David loved God’s Law, he still failed to follow it at times. He was human and he didn’t always get it right. But, whenever the LORD convicted his conscience, David never failed to repent and turn back to God in sincerity of heart.<sup>11</sup> Apparently, David’s heart

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<sup>6</sup> Consider 2 Samuel 24:17 and context.

<sup>7</sup> Getz, Gene A., *David: God's Man in Faith and Failure*, Ventura, CA, Regal Books, 1983, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Contrast this with 1 Samuel 8:6-8.

<sup>9</sup> Consider Romans 3:31 and Titus 2:11-12, which urge us toward loving obedience.

<sup>10</sup> See 1 Samuel 13:14.

<sup>11</sup> Consider 2 Samuel 12:13 and 24:10.

attitude, was one that God was willing to work with. Now, this is hugely significant for all of us to realize as leaders.<sup>12</sup>

Being a godly leader does not mean we will never fail. At times, David failed as a leader. Jerry Johnson has failed as a leader. Bill Hybels may very well have failed as a leader. And, I'm guessing, that you've failed as a leader at some point in your life as well. But admitting that failure, and making things right, and then continuing to follow the LORD is the only way to continue being a godly leader. We all like sheep have gone astray, but through Jesus, our Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for His sheep, we have the hope of forgiveness, restoration, and moving forward, even AFTER our failures.<sup>13</sup> David understood the LORD's grace and forgiveness. This is what enabled him to be a life-long leader. His leadership lasted, not because he lived a perfect life, but rather because he kept his hope in the LORD.<sup>14</sup> David failed at times as a leader, but he never failed to return to the LORD with his whole heart.

When David was shepherding his father's sheep, he used a rod and a staff. These "tools of the trade" were used for guiding and directing the sheep but also, from time to time, for smacking the sheep on the back end when they got headed the wrong direction. These tools are designed to help LEAD the sheep in the right direction. In Psalm 23, David says to the Lord, "Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Here is one of the most important leadership lessons out there: **Until you learn to let yourself be led, you can't be an effective leader to others.**<sup>15</sup> As a leader, you can't be a source for others, if you don't have your source in God. Godly leaders find their source in following the LORD as their shepherd.

As someone who desires to be a Godly Leader, honor the LORD as your Shepherd. Read Psalm 23 out loud:

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.

He restores my soul;

He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me;

Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;

You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life;

and I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever."

Romans 12:8 says that those who lead should do it diligently. **Let's go forth as diligent, godly leaders!**

This sermon was preached at the Evangelical Free Church of Bemidji  
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<sup>12</sup> One of my saddest days on the mission's field was one day in El Mezquital, MX when a group of us tried to restore a young, local pastor, who had fallen into sexual sin. He could not forgive himself and he refused to talk with us. That day, we were unable to help him begin a reconciliation and restoration process.

<sup>13</sup> See Isaiah 53:6.

<sup>14</sup> Consider David's decision in 2 Samuel 24:13-14.

<sup>15</sup> **Rich Mullins** writes in his song, Hard to Get, "I can't see how You're leading me unless You've led me here, where I'm lost enough to let myself be led." *The Jesus Record*, 1998 - Liturgy Legacy Music / Word Music. Myrrh.