

2025 CC Charlotte Men's Conference - Session 2

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Preacher: Aaron Rivers

[0:00] Gentlemen, good morning. Good morning. All right, so how many of y'all have already met somebody else from another church here? Good, I got, okay, good. Y'all are awake. I see a whole bunch of hands then.

Good. I like the interaction, so I appreciate it. My name is Aaron. I'm part of leadership for Calvary Riverbend, so a little bit further up and out the road here. So I get to follow up Pastor Jared here. He came in. He was talking about follow me as I follow Christ, right? He was talking about following the Lord, and so now I get to pick up the next part of that then, right?

So what does it look like then to lead others, right? Paul was saying there, hey, follow me as I follow Christ, following the Lord, right? There's a whole, there's a swath of us who would say, you know, man, I love Jesus.

I love him. I follow hard after him. Isn't that, isn't that enough, right? I just get to love on him. Well, no, that's not where it ends, and hence the reason for the, hey, follow, follow, follow me as I follow Christ, right?

[1:06] This is the way that the gospel has been handed down since the beginning, since Jesus came. This is how the church has been birthed, how it continues to grow. Pastor Tim from Riverbend is fond of saying, hey, the church is one generation from going extinct, right?

It depends on, well, I would almost say it depends on us to do that, but you and I both know it's the spirit of God that does that, right? He's the one who opens the heart, who draws the others, but he wants to partner with us, and it's as we live our lives and we follow him, we open our mouths, the gospel is shared, it's passed on, and lo and behold, the church keeps moving and going, right?

This is just the pattern that was set. You even think about what Jesus said when he was here on earth. When he was here, he said in John 5, 19, he says, verily, verily, I say unto you, the son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the father do.

For what things he sees, for whatsoever he does, the son does likewise, right? The father was following the lead of, I'm sorry, I said that backwards. The son was following the lead of the father, right?

And then from there, Jesus was saying to his disciples too, John 13, 13, he says, you call me master at the last supper there as he's beginning to wash the feet. Y'all know this one.

[2:21] He says, you call me master and Lord, and you say, well, for so I am. But if I then, your Lord and master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you, right?

Jesus set the example. Right? For us to follow, for the disciples to follow. And now Paul is, again, he's calling us to an example, to be an example, and then to also to speak it as well.

The other example that came to mind there is going to be Matthew 28 then, the Great Commission. And he says, Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Go ye therefore and teach all nations. Make disciples, right? Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Right? This is how it's been passed down. The Father was the example. The Son followed what the Father was doing.

[3:27] The Son became the example for the disciples. The disciples followed what he was doing. Paul then, as one of the apostles then, is calling us, hey, follow me as I follow Christ.

And then it's now, he's telling us, hey, pick up this mantle again. Be that example and call others to follow and hand this off, hand the baton off one more time, right?

That's the call for you and me as men. And so I know that many of us would sit in here and go, well, Aaron, hey, I'm not the professional.

I'm not the pastor. I don't have that behind my name. I'm just a student. I'm just a worker. I'm just a guy, right? Well, the call is still the same. That call was to you as a Christian.

You as a Christian man. And me as a Christian man to go ahead and do it, he says, he's telling us, be an example and make disciples. Teach them.

[4 : 25] Use your mouth. Live that life that's worthy of being followed after. Imitate me as I imitate Christ. Imitate my imitating, right?

And then open your mouth. Lead. Be that part. And so even in that, where it's like, hey, I'm not in this role as a shepherd of a flock, right?

Well, just know. Let me let you know then. Let me let you in on a secret here. There's always two things that are happening. At all times in your life and in my life, in the professional Christians and the other folks who aren't, the Lord is always working on you and preparing you to be the leader that he's going to need you to be later on.

And at the same time, you are leading, whether you realize it or not. Why is that? Well, because people are watching. People see. They know you, right? And so I tell you what, today, as we jump in, I want us to look at the life of David.

So we're going to grab a couple spots from him. Go ahead and open your Bibles to 1 Samuel 24. And if you can, stick your thumb over in Psalm 63.

[5 : 45] And so as you're doing that, I'll just tell you a little bit about myself. My name is Aaron. I'm just a dude, right? Not a pastor. I'm part of leadership. I just love the Lord. I've always had a heart for the Lord, even when I was not, my younger years, when I wasn't following him very well, you know?

But I'm a guy. Married. I've been married 17 years. I got three sons. Two of them are here with me today. The other one's a little too young for it. So my house is a war zone at all times, right?

You know, it might be a music studio at one point. Then a grenade drops in. There's shrapnel going. You got to be ready to duck and cover as, you know, Nerf darts start flying or whatever it might be. It's a wild spot, right?

I married Latin. Nobody warned me. Come on, guys. Y'all are with me here. Be with me. All right.

These are the jokes. All right. I'm expecting to be a little bit of involvement there.

Hey, there you go. Oh, yeah. You know, didn't get warned, right? I'm still a dude, though. I breathe the same air as you guys, right? My house is not always the most put together.

[6 : 54] It looks like a hot mess half the time, right? My kids love the Lord. Do they look like they got it all together all the time? No. Do me and my wife act like we got it together all the time? No. We call it strong fellowship, right?

Y'all know what I'm talking about? Okay. Those things happen. This is part of life. And even in that, you know, I still get those times and questions where I'm feeling like, Lord, who am I to be worthy of following?

Who am I to be able to? Who am I that you would want to use me, right? I'm a hot mess. My house is a mess. You know, whatever. I lead it. I work a job like you guys.

I run a small business. I got guys who, you know, follow me in there. And there's plenty of times I'm like, this is just messy. Like, are you kidding? What are we doing here? Right?

Am I the only one? You don't actually have to raise your hand. It's okay. Right? God, how could you really use me to affect others? Let me answer it.

[7 : 55] It's by his grace, right? It is by him, by his Holy Spirit. And it's honestly, he works so much more in our weakness and in our failings.

And the fact that we aren't a mess. If I look like I had it all together, if I look like I could pull myself up by the bootstraps and do it myself, what do I need the Lord for? Right? That's one of the things here. Before we actually dive into the scripture, let me lay this out real good.

Because you come to a men's conference, and I know I am pretty notorious for feeling like, okay, I'm going to take down. There's a couple of things here that I do really good. I've already got that down pat.

Check, check, check. Right? Oh, okay, there's this handful of other things that, boy, I need to really knuckle down. And I need to do this. I need to read the word more. I need to study harder. I need to be this man. I need to lead.

I need to charge. But it's my flesh normally that pops up at that point in time and is like, I've got this. We're going to do this. And I'm going to try harder, be better, do more.

[8 : 55] That's the flesh though, right? No flesh or glory in the Lord. Right? God says, I will not share my glory with another. He's going to... He's going to...

Oh. Because y'all know what underlies that too? There's that side of like, he'll use me when. When I've got this part together.

When I do this better, then he'll be pleased with me. Then I'll be the man that he can use, that he would want to use, that he's proud of. Right? Do y'all hear the lie that's sitting underneath of that? Right? No. Let me just tell you, you don't get anything else from me today. Hear this part then. He's already as pleased with you. If you are in Christ, if Christ is yours, you have trusted him to be your Lord and Savior, then he sees you as he sees his one and only son that he is crazy about.

He loves his son. And because you are in him now, he loves you that way. He's so thrilled that he gets to be your dad, that he gets to have a relationship with you, that he gets to be the one to fill you with joy, to use you to do all of this.

[10 : 10] And it's not because you did a thing. And so you don't have to say, I'm going to get myself together.

I'm going to do this. I'm going to knuckle up and be the leader that he wants me to be. No, he's going to do it despite that. And he loves you already now. And he wants to use you and he wants to use you in your weakness.

And he's already, he's preparing you for the next thing that he's got for you. But in the meantime, you are still leading others. And don't forget that then. But it's going to be by him and it's going to be by his grace.

As we behold him as in a mirror, he will take us from glory to glory. Then we're going to start reading here. So we're going to go into 1 Samuel 24 verses 1 to 3 here.

We'll get that far first. So it came to pass when Saul was returned from following the Philistines, that it was told him saying, behold, David is in the wilderness of En Gedi. Then Saul took 3,000 chosen men out of all Israel and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats.

[11 : 16] And he came to the sheep coat, by the way, where was a cave. And Saul went in to cover his feet. And David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. So just give you background here.

If you didn't know, Israel was a nation back then. The king at the time was King Saul. He was the first king of Israel. And David was just a little shepherd boy, right?

He had been called. The Lord had called him by God. Samuel, the prophet, went and anointed him. He's gone. At this point in time, he's gone ahead and he's slain Goliath. He became, after that, the head of the army there.

You know, Saul was just kind of like, wow, you know, pretty impressed with this kid. And the Lord was just behind him the whole way. I mean, he had victory upon victory upon victory. Folks were singing songs about him.

At one point there, he married the king's daughter. He became part of the royal family. I mean, David had gone from this little unknown shepherd boy, the least of his family, risen up to, I mean, this place of status of, you know, everybody.

[12 : 24] You know, he's following. He has the whole army behind him of Israel. And he's just leading the charge, right? His trajectory for his career, for his life, for everything was just, oh, it was on the way up.

And then all of a sudden, everything started to change. And it took this sharp tumble way back down. And he got run out of town. He lost his position as commander of the army.

In fact, King Saul started to come after him, tried to kill him, had to run him out of town. He's out now at this point, hiding for his life because the king is coming after him to kill him, hiding.

His family had to leave their town. They're coming out to him in the wilderness. He's trying to figure out how to protect them, right? David, who had been so high, had such status.

And now he's wandering around in the desert. I mean, not the desert, out in the wilderness, just trying to stay alive for himself. Doesn't have a house.

[13 : 27] Doesn't have a bed that he can sleep in. I mean, what kind of sharp tumble that had to feel like, right? And it's in this time that Saul, King Saul, hears, oh, okay.

I heard where he's at. He's over in En Gedi. He's over in part of the wilderness of Judah. All right, guys, 3,000 of you, let's go. We're going to go hunt for him, right? And so David, he knew that area. He's hiding out in these caves. And so he's in one of these caves. And it says that King Saul went into the cave, verse 3, and went in to cover his feet.

So I'm glad this is a men's conference. You know, Pastor Jared already brought up dung. So we're in the right lane. If y'all don't know what this is saying, this is saying that he's going to, in your margin, it might say, attend to his needs, is what the editors say here.

He was going to relieve himself. He needed to go to the bathroom. This is him going number two. So you can think about the big robe. He's kind of squatting down and therefore covering his feet. So he's in this cave.

[14:33] I don't know what kind of cave this had to be. That David and his, you know, David's got like 400 to somewhere between four and 700 men with him. I don't know if all of them were in this cave as well. What kind of cave this is that Saul can go in, think he's used the restroom by himself.

And you've got this whole slew of guys, it says, that are in the sides of the cave, right? This is quite a sight. I mean, this, I can't wait to see the replay on this one personally, like get to watch this. But so he comes in and is using his bathroom and it says, David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. So they're somewhere, somehow, I don't know, this probably had to have a couple different cavern portions to it, man.

That's the best thing my imagination can pull together here. But he's looking at the man that has caused him so much pain and heartache, right?

He's looking at the man right there. And that guy has no idea that he's there. He's as vulnerable, that is as vulnerable of a spot.

[15:42] I mean, come on, right? That is about as vulnerable as you are going to be. What would be running through your mind at that point in time? I mean, David, when we look at the life of David and the Psalms and the things that he wrote during that time, just to kind of help put you in there.

I mean, the heartache, the pain, the hurt, the betrayal, all of that that he's been carrying, the tears that he shed while he was out there in that wilderness during that time, right? And now he's looking and seeing that man right there.

I know what would be going through my mind. It's the same thing that was going through the mind of the other four 700 men that were there, right? As we read the next verse, it says, They're saying exactly what the rest of us would be thinking.

Like, David, here you go. This is the ticket, right? We can solve all these problems and go home today. Like, right here, right now.

Take him out. Let's do this, right? How many of that? That's what I'd be thinking. If that's the guy, Oh, yeah, I'm not as spiritual.

[17:07] I'd have took him out, right? And even here, they're even couching it as spiritual. I mean, even the more so. This is what the guys are saying. Like, the Lord has set this up for you. Now, the Lord did set this up.

Y'all know that, right? But not for that reason. And so what does David do? Well, the back end of that verse, it says, Then David arose and slew him.

No, that's not what it says. It says that, Are y'all with me? Come on. That should have brought a smirk, something. All right, come on. Come on, guys. We're staying engaged here. All right? So it says, Then David arose, and he cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.

So he did it secretly, right? He did it sly. Now, what's the point of cutting off the edge of the robe, right? On the edge of the robe, that's the hem of the garment. In Israel, that's where you had the signs of authority.

The priest, they wore the pomegranates and the bells on the edge of the robe, right? You kind of think of the military or the police force, right? Where you wear your authority, the signs of your authority are here on the chest and on the shoulder, right?

[18:16] Here in our context. That's kind of what is going on there. The hem of the garment is where that was shown. So what's David doing? He's cutting off the sign of King Saul's authority, right?

In essence, he's going, You're a terrible king. You're getting cut off, right? Who are you? You're an awful king. And he goes and he cuts that off, right? And what happens?

Does David feel better about himself after that one? Boy, I showed him, right? I told him a piece of my mind. I cut this thing off. He's no king. He's no real king. Well, as you keep reading, you get to hear what does happen then.

It says, verse 5, And it came to pass afterward that David's heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt. He had cut off the hem of his garment.

What's happening here? David's heart smote him. His conscience convicted him. It was the spirit of God that is talking to his heart.

[19 : 20] He's being led by the Lord, right? And then you get to hear what is really in his heart and what's going on here as the next verse then.

It says, verse 6, It says, And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth my hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.

And so David stayed his servants with these words. So David, as he's in here, right? He's with these guys, these guys that are following him.

These guys are a strange bunch, by the way. Y'all realize that? Like, it was one thing when he was the commander of the army. He had the king's backing. You listened to David because he had the position.

He had the authority. And you wanted to keep, well, your life. You listened to David. But now, well, he's off, he's off boo-hoo crying in the wilderness, singing these depressing songs.

[20 : 20] And yet there's still 400 at one point. We're probably, we're in the middle of that before it rattles off that there's 700. These guys are following him. Well, why are they following him now?

Because they want to. Because they see something. And so David here, at this point in time, right, the Lord spoke to his heart and he goes ahead.

Again, this is like happening in the cave. So I'm still kind of wondering what kind of cave this is, right? He snuck out, was able to cut off a robe, get back out, and not get seen by Saul.

But he tells them, so I don't know, I guess he can have a conversation in here, at least whisper, and tell these folks, hey, this is what the Lord just said to me. This is what's happening in my heart right now. And he's leading them.

And it stayed them, it said. Because you got to know, these are 400. These aren't just dudes. These are warriors. These are guys who want to defend themselves.

[21 : 16] I bet they're ready to go home and sleep in their bed too. And they're ready to take out Saul and take on the next 3,000 that are behind him. But David said, no, no, no.

This is what the Lord just told me. I messed up. This was not the way to go. And he stays them. And then he does something unbelievable. He jumps up and he runs out of the cave.

It says in verse, well, there you go, the back end of verse 7, it said, but Saul arose up out of the cave and went on his way. David also arose afterwards and went out of the cave and cried after Saul.

Can you imagine these guys? They were sitting there ready to pat. Sorry, I'm going to be too, I told you I was going to knock this mic. Like the guys are crouched. They're ready to take them on.

And then all of a sudden, you know, I mean, you got to think the adrenaline's probably going like, man, this is our time. We're going to take him out. I get to go home. I get to see my wife. This is going to be great. And then he goes, no, I can't do that.

[22 : 14] No, no, no, don't, don't, don't. What do you mean don't? And then all of a sudden you watch your leader, David, jump up and run out, expose himself to the one who's been hunting and chasing him.

Can you imagine what the rest of those guys are doing? Like, what are you doing? Get back here. Like, come back. But David, what does he do?

He comes out and he cries out after Saul, saying, my Lord, the King. Saul was the one who was vulnerable.

Saul was the one who was so in the wrong, too. And now you watch this thing, this whole scenario just completely flip-flop itself. All of a sudden, David's now the one bowing down right in front of him, exposed himself.

He's out there. He was the one being hunted and now he's bowing himself down in front of the hunter. Now, I want us to put a pin in it right here for a minute.

[23 : 20] I want to stop back, stop, ask the big question. Why are we looking at David in light of all of this? In light of following and all this kind of stuff, leading, why are we talking about David?

Well, because he was chosen, right? Why was he the one chosen? Because of his heart. Absolutely.

It was because of his heart. It said, boy, I ran way too far on my notes. Sorry. No, I didn't. Here we are. When you look back, even in 1 Samuel 13, when the kingdom is being, when Samuel is telling King Saul that the king was being torn from you, he even says there, I'm going to give it to a man after my heart.

This is why David was always known then as a man after God's heart. And then in Psalm 16, I'm sorry, I keep saying Psalm 16, in 1 Samuel 16, when he's anointed, right, he's anointed there, and it just signifies the fact that, yeah, he had that heart.

He had that heart all along. What was he doing before that, before that anointing? That anointing was there in front of his family, right? What was he doing before that? Well, he was hanging out with the sheep. He was the shepherd.

[24 : 41] He was out there. He was the lowliest of them. There were seven other brothers that his dad, Jesse, when the prophet comes, he's like, well, it's got to be one of these seven. These are the ones I'm proud of, right?

No, it was the eighth one that was sitting out there, the outcast, the redhead, you know, stepchild, whatever, you know, not really, y'all know what I mean. But what was David doing? Well, he's been the outcast beat down, out there with the sheep.

What did he have out there when he was with the sheep? He had a rod, a staff, a sling, and probably a harp, right? Had a whole lot of time on his hands. He became a sharpshooter while he was out there and then he became the sweet psalmist of Israel while he was out there too because his heart was for the Lord.

Now, I'm sure there's, you know, he had a lot of time to be out there, to be there, to spend that time with the Lord, but I'm sure there's plenty of other shepherds who had just as much time on their hands whose hearts were not bent towards the Lord that same way.

But David's was, right? And you get to hear through and through the depth of a relationship that he did have with the Lord.

[25 : 46] If you still got your finger in Psalm 63, I wanted to pull that up real quick. David's heart was just bent towards the Lord.

And this is that time where I get to look at you and go, hey, what's your heart bent towards? You've got that time, right? You're not sitting out with a sheep, but you're sitting out at any other time, right? How many of us can just sit on that phone and scroll, right? You know, you know you're burning time. Where's your heart's at? Where's your affections at? Right? If I was to say to you today, you know, if the Lord wanted to stop everything, put a pin in your life right now, stop it, and call you home, would you say, woohoo?

Or is it going to go, you know what, uh, but can you just, just wait just a little bit? My team, my team's in the playoffs. I really want to see what happened, right? Or, I mean, Trump just got elected. I kind of wanted to see what he's going to do. He's already made, you know, he's already lit a fire for the last week. I'd love to see what kind of comes over the next, you know, month, two months, three months. Like, can you just pump for a minute?

[27 : 01] Or my career is like, man, it's really starting, I saw it take this turn. Like, I really, I'd like to see what happens or I want to get married.

I want to have kids, you know? I mean, if you answer it in that way, that's kind of that heart check, right?

Where's my affections? Right? In first, first nothing, in Colossians 3, it would say, if ye then being risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, set your affection on things above, not on the things of this earth, for you are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.

When Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory. Set your affections on him. Because what that always says is, hey, I'm going to be satisfied when, right? When my career takes, when I'm loved the way that a spouse would love me, when I feel needed the way that kids would and I get that, right? That's when I'll be satisfied.

[28 : 09] Any of y'all that have ever like, you know, you got kids, you got a spouse, you got like, are you completely satisfied? Don't raise your hand. All right, I'm just kidding. Right? Nothing on this side will satisfy.

He is the one that will satisfy. When you hit, so Psalm 63 then, as David's talking, you get to hear this in him.

He has already hit this depth of relationship with the Lord. And he says, he said, verse one, oh God, thou art my God. Early will I seek thee. My soul thirsteth for thee.

My flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water. Have you been parched like that? Y'all been playing, playing soccer, basketball, something like that, out on a hike, whatever, and you realize, oh snap, I'm out of water.

And that thirst and that drive and you get, keep going and you're just like, that's all I can think about. I can't, I can't keep going where I'm going. I need a drink. David here, thirst for the Lord that way.

[29 : 14] He knows his source of joy, of satisfaction, of salvation, of all of this. It only will come from him and he's saying, my whole being desires you.

How many of y'all have ever had like, I remember, I remember early on in my Christian walk, going to a Chris Tomlin concert, right?

Louis Giglio was the speaker at the time. If that dates any of y'all, man, it hits home, like, come on now. But I remember like, just being in that worship time and by the time I came out, I felt like I had been peeled like an onion.

Like, I just felt washed and I just remember going like, I want more. Like, I need more of him, right? And there's that side of like, have you tasted and seen that he is good?

He calls me and you, he calls each of us to a deep relationship. This is what, this is what's happening here. This is what, what David is describing as you go on in, in that Psalm here.

[30 : 25] He says, I desire, yeah, I desire my soul thirst and my flesh longs to see thy power, verse two, to see thy power and thy glory. So as I have seen thee in the sanctuary because thy loving kindness is better than life.

Like, who says that? One who knows. My loving kindness is better than life. My lips shall praise thee.

Thus will I bless thee while I live. I will lift up my hands in thy name. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness.

My mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips. When I remember thee upon my bed and meditate on thee in the night watches. It's going to be on my mind night and day because you are so good to me.

It spoke all the while of David's just deep relationship with the Lord. I don't know how better to say it, but I know that that's the call.

[31 : 29] And that's the call to each and every one of us. He's calling you deeper. And so, from this deep relationship then that David had, now when we're back in the story that we were just reading, as David goes and cuts off the hymn, his heart smites him, his conscience convicts him, well, it's the spirit of the living God.

It's this one that he knows that he loves that he's going, I don't want to offend you. I love being in such close fellowship with you. Well, then it shows up, right?

He hears the Lord because, well, that's the good shepherd and he knows his voice. And so, he heard, David heard, so he acted on it, right?

He had already gone through. He had already cut it off. But what does he do? Well, he says, ah, all right, guys. Nah, I messed up. I can't do this, right?

Now, you think from a leadership standpoint too, right? Hmm, I'm going to get to that point in a minute. I'm sorry. This is who David was though because he heard from the Lord and he acted on it.

[32 : 56] This brings up the idea of integrity now. This is who David heard and he obeyed. This is who he says he is.

He says that he's a man after the Lord's own heart. Well, when the Lord challenges his him, what does he do? Well, he obeys then, right?

Do your words and your actions line up? This is the idea of integrity, right? I'm the same person behind closed doors that I am in front of everybody else, right?

I'm the same person up here in front of you guys as I am when I'm out at the dealerships working, you know? Do I sound the same, look the same, act the same? Is it still me or do I put on a show?

Proverbs 11, 3, it says, the integrity of the upright will guide them, but the perversity of the unfaithful will destroy them. You know, the Lord, he is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and as we get to follow after him, I pray that we would be that reflection.

[34 : 01] I mean, he's the definition of what integrity is, of truth, of faithfulness, of those characteristics, and I pray that would be us, right? And this is part of the reason that the Lord chose David.

When you're reading Psalm 78, verse 70, it says, he chose David his servant and took him from the sheepfolds, from following the ewes that had young, he brought him, to shepherd Jacob his people and Israel his inheritance.

So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart and guided them with the skillfulness of his hands. God even relates David's integrity as to why he chose him and plucked him out of when he was just a shepherd.

Had David displayed mighty works of leading at that point in time? Well, he did with the sheep, I suppose, but he hadn't with the rest of any of people at that point in time.

He was the despised one at that point, remember? But it was his integrity. And y'all know the first place, ooh, actually let me hit that one, that's a really important one.

[35 : 17] He says, hmm, when he made that call in the cave and he tells, he tells everybody, hey, don't take him out.

y'all know he had already made that decision long ago, even back in the sheepfold. That decision to follow the Lord no matter the cost, that happened way back then.

This was just an outflow of who the Lord had already told him to be. He was going to be a man of integrity. He was going to be a man who followed after the Lord and followed and heeded the voice of his master. That decision got made long ago.

That wasn't made right in that moment. Okay, now I hear you, Lord, maybe I'll follow or not. No, that was made long before. And this is that side where in the Bible it says, Proverbs 4.23, it says, keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it flow the issues of life.

David already had made the decision, I'm following the Lord. Us as men, we are called to have that same integrity.

[36 : 37] And today, this is the day I'm going to follow after the Lord. I want to hear his voice. I want to hear him. I want to have that deep relationship with him. I don't want to offend him. So when he calls me, I'm going to do it.

I'm going to obey then. This is what David walked with. And then, where did his calling start then? David, as we're still talking about David, where did his calling start? Well, he was anointed three times.

First time was in front of his family, right there with him, right? Where does our calling start for men? Starts with those that are closest, right?

It starts first in the heart. Did the Lord light a fire in there? Is there a fire in that heart that burns? Well, the warmth and everything, it happens here, but what does that fire produce?

It produces light. And that light, well, it shines. We're called to be the light of the world, right? It goes to the next circle out. The next circle out should be those that are closest to you. So the family, the ones that are in the household with you, that see you day in, day out, again, that kind of brings you back to that integrity.

[37 : 41] If I got to nail down your wife and go, hey, see the same here and there? You know, what's she going to tell me?

Y'all are not allowed to ask mine. All right, I'm just putting that out front. But it started there. It starts there.

I don't know if it's been that way in y'all's life, but pretty much every lesson that I've needed to learn and then have later used in ministry most of those started in the house.

Most all of those I had to learn, just me and my wife. I remember when I was getting married, just before getting married, one of my best friends back in South Florida at the time, he looks at me and he goes, Aaron, buckle up, you are about to find out just how selfish you are.

Anybody else? Does that ring true? Yeah, amen, right? And I went, you know, young 27-year-old, I'm like, ah, ha, ha, yeah, no, whatever, man, I hear you, all right.

[38 : 53] I had no idea. Young men, yes, believe you me. And then, you know, fast forward, we went through a lot of bumps and bruises and a lot of strong fellowship, right?

And then later on, I remember coming back and telling everybody, like, hey, we're pregnant, you know, gonna have our first son here. And I remember that same fellow, he looked at me, he goes, Aaron, you remember what I told you when you were getting married? I said, yeah, he goes, yeah, that was the 101 class.

Prepare for the graduate level courses. God's favorite tool for sanctification is typically your marriage.

Just know that, believe that. But he uses it. And it's in those moments of refining where he wants to teach you those. What does it mean to lay down your life?

What does it mean to humble yourself? What does it mean to just hear what they're saying and not how they're saying it? Right? To get underneath and actually get to the heart of what is being said so you can minister to that one.

[40 : 00] That one has served me well through all of my life, but boy, we had to learn that one earlier on then, right? Y'all aren't allowed to tell my wife this. This is just us, right?

Okay? But, man, this is where it starts. It starts there. Right? Don't despise the day of small things. There's a principle in the Word of God that talks about, hey, if you are faithful with the little, more will be added to you. But he who is unjust with the little, well, he'll be unjust with much too. Right? And so, this is where it starts, is there.

And it all starts from that fire and it moves outward. And then it moves even further outward from past the family. Then that third stage then ends up being what we see with David now, where he has so much relationship with the Lord and he's walking with the Lord moment by moment.

Even when he steps outside of it, the Lord is there in the next moment to go, mm-mm-mm, you messed that one up. And David is willing and humble enough to go, ooh, okay, then I need to go ahead and correct it, right?

[41 : 06] And, you know, when he was, I mean, you rewind back to 1 Samuel 17, when David comes, he's checking on his brothers there and he sees the whole army of Israel cowering in front of Goliath, turning tail and running, right?

he hears Goliath spewing defiance and the whole army is spinelessly turning the other way. You watch the spirit of God in David begin to embolden him.

He has a conversation and then he has another conversation and another conversation. Then he's in front of King Saul and you just watch this boldness as he is now ready and prepared to stand in front of this evil and to stand for the Lord, right?

And what happens? Well, the Lord comes through and from there on, boy, they're looking as this fellow who's as tall as the ceiling gets taken down by some little five-foot tall shepherd boy with a sling, no armor, no nothing, right?

And a whole, the whole Israeli army and the whole Philistine army has to go, the Lord is on him. There's no getting around it.

[42 : 28] And it makes it easy for David to lead from there. But y'all remember the up and down here. We've already discussed that. But at that point in time, right, David had, Ephesians 6, 3 actually describes it, well, I'm sorry, Ephesians 6, 13, it says, therefore, take up the whole armor of God that you may be able to withstand in the evil day and having done all to stand.

David was ready to go ahead now and do the battle and stand. And now up and down in all of this stuff that he's going through, now all of a sudden there's another moment here where he needs to stand.

But this one isn't the grand and glorious one like being with Goliath, right? That one, he was in front of everybody showing off the bravery that everything, you know, follow me, you know, as he'd go and take them, right?

This one now, well, he's in a cave. He's in the secret. There are folks who are watching who know, but this isn't the grand and glorious one. In fact, this one looks like, as far as a leader, right?

It looks like, well, you just made a decision. Now, all of a sudden, you're backtracking on the decision and you look like you're flip-flopping, wishy-washy type of a leader now. You were going for this. I thought we were all going to take him out. Now, all of a sudden, you're saying, no, don't.

[43 : 47] And look, and now you're running out here to bow down in front of him. I thought we were about to take him out. Like, what is this, right? What kind of leader is that one? It's one who's chasing after God's heart.

And these guys, you got to know this made an impression on them. These are the same guys that end up later on becoming the mighty men of David, right? These are the same ones that go on that take out the other four brothers of Goliath.

They go on from these times to do mighty things. But it was in this moment then where not only did David hear the Lord, but he also spoke it out.

He told these guys, he was transparent with them. He told them, hey, this is what's happening. He didn't care that it made him look bad, because it made him look bad. I can guarantee you that was not the popular thing to say right there at that moment.

Those 400 plus guys, they didn't want to hear no hold, wait, don't kill him, oh, watch me as I go and humble myself before him. Right? That was not the popular thing.

[44 : 52] They didn't want that. But again, Proverbs 11.3 says the integrity of the upright will guide them. And so even in those moments when it was hard, when it's rough, when it's easy to take, when it would make so much sense, when the rest of the world would say, oh, you get a pass, look at how rough your life is, look at how terrible it is, right?

You can take a shortcut. Did he? No, it was his integrity that still led him. And in that, he was leading others, saying, hey, follow me again as I would follow Christ, right?

We're in that same vein. And so as I think about how the Lord uses us to lead, it starts first, here, leading your own heart, being in here.

Did he set that fire in here? Is there a fire? Is there a thirst, a hunger for that deep relationship with the Lord? Do you hear the Lord? Does he speak to you? And are you willing to heed to him?

Do you have that kind of relationship? If he tells you stop, you go, okay. Or do you fight him on it and argue about it? I've done that too. Don't worry about it. We all do. But then it grows and it moves into that, right?

[46 : 08] And it goes from there and it goes to the next circle to those who are closest to you. And if you're faithful in that, the Lord will use you for the more. And this is the way that leadership ends up looking because it all rolls back to, are you following him?

Do you love him? Do you really want to? Even in the book of Ephesians it would kind of look that way. You've got the initial first half of the book about sitting in the heavenlies with the Lord. The next one, chapters four, five, end up being walking, walking out this relationship with the Lord and being with the, and how to handle the relationships that are around you.

And then finally it comes to putting on the armor of God that you may stand, stand against the evil one, right? And so guys, I just pray that for us, the Lord would call you.

There's people that he's put in front of you that you're to lead. Open your mouth, be transparent in it. Let them know, where are we going? What are we doing? This is what the Lord's doing in my heart.

Do I got everything all together? No, but I know this is what he said. There's a conviction about it. I know what he said. I know what he's done. This is what we are doing. Come on, guys, let's go do it. But it starts first right in here.

[47 : 19] Lord, light that fire here. And so, guys, let me pray for us here. So, Father, we love you. Father, I pray that this would be a time that we would, like Jeremiah, it's a fire shot up in my bones.

I can't contain it. That it would be you. It would be a hunger and a thirst for you as in a dry place.

Father, I pray that it would be, I pray that you would, I pray we would hear that call.

Come, come deeper. Come deeper with me. And I pray that we would call, we would call others to follow us as we follow after you, Father. I pray for the men here, Lord, I pray that you would, you would bring them to that place.

I pray that they would yield to you, that they would taste and see you are good and that they would call others to it, Father. And I pray that here in the Charlotte area, this would be the beginning of, ooh, a movement that you're doing, Father.

We do pray for revival, Lord. Lord, I really pray you'd go ahead and just come back, interrupt it all, take us all home, Lord. But in the meantime, if you're not taking us home today, then Lord, I pray there would be revival starting out.

[48 : 32] And Lord, I pray it would start with us, I pray it would start with me, I pray it would start right here in my own heart, Lord. And I pray for each of us that you would put that heart in us to follow you, know you, love you, that you would use us, Dad.

Not because we're perfect, not because we got this together, not that we'll do it in our own strength, but it'll be by you and by your spirit and by your power and by your might. Say it, the Lord. And all God's people said, Amen.
Amen. All right. Thank you, guys.