

“Be Led to Lead”
Part 6, Final
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One of the things that gets me fired up not just as a pastor, but as a Christian, is to see someone start living according to the truth about themselves, about God, about the world and about others instead of living according to the lies they have come to believe about themselves, about God, about the world, and about others. I love it when that breakthrough happens! I love it when someone has finally cried out to Jesus – because I know that he will help them in a way that no one else can!

Today as we conclude this sermon series on *Being Led to Lead*, which has been all about the influence we have on others (hopefully as those leading them towards choosing the leadership of Jesus in their own lives), I have felt compelled to lift up some examples from the life of King David. You might not wonder why he would be part of a sermon series on leadership, I mean, he was the king of Israel for 40 years – 7 years in Hebron and 33 in Jerusalem. He was so important in the overall story of our history as God’s people that he made it onto one of our stained-glass windows! He was the guy (as a young shepherd boy) who was chosen by God to take over the reign of the kingdom of Israel from Saul, the first king, when Saul had started disobeying God in his position as king. David was the guy who killed the giant Goliath with one smooth stone thrown just right by a sling shot! David was the guy everyone sang about because of his impressive military victories! And lest we forget, Jesus came from the line of King David. So, it makes perfect sense that we would use David as a leadership example. Except, that’s not exactly where we’re going today.

Far too often I find my brothers and sisters in the faith living defeated lives, living lives that are less than the lives God has laid before them. Far too often I find my brothers and sisters believing the lies of the devil that tell them they are not qualified to be a good influence for Christ in the lives of others. They are not qualified to lead. They are not qualified to speak hope and healing into the lives of others around them. Far too often I find my brothers and sisters choosing disqualification, choosing rejection, over choosing the empowering grace, mercy, forgiveness, and ever-equipping leadership of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

I’ve been reading 1st and 2nd Samuel all summer, studying those early years when Israel cried out for the leadership of a king. Do you remember how that happened? Samuel is listed in Acts 13 as the last of the judges and the first of the prophets, but in spite of his godly leadership, the elders of the people got together and asked him to appoint a king to lead them. Other nations had kings, and they decided they wanted one too. Samuel prayed to the LORD and the LORD said to him (1 Sam. 8:7) *“Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you.”* Why were there kings in Israel? Because 1) the people wanted what everyone else had; 2) the people rejected God as their king. But even though the people rejected God, he did not reject them. He did not turn away from them. Even in the mess-ups and mistakes that they made, God worked it all together for good. Because that’s what God does. Even for King David.

David royally messed up one day when he took another man’s wife, Bathsheba, into his bed. That started a line of lies and deceptions that broke the hearts of many people who surrounded David in his kingdom, and also broke David’s heart. He knew he had sinned against God and he fell on his face before him confessing, repenting, and choosing once again to worship God by living a life that was pleasing to him. And as you read through 1st and 2nd Samuel, you will read over and over how David was pursued by others unjustly and how there were power grabs for the kingdom, but David remained faithful, he remained humbled by God’s mercy in his life after he had messed up so badly, and he remained submitted to God’s will. For example, when his son Absalom was trying to take over the kingdom and the hearts of the people had

turned towards Absalom away from David, he fled the palace (2 Sam. 15). He said this to Zadok the priest, *“If I find favor in the LORD’s eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling place again. But if he says, ‘I am not pleased with you,’ then I am ready; let him do to me whatever seems good to him.”* After his ‘royal’ mess-up with Bathsheba and all the deceptive & manipulative games he had played, David found a place of peace and influence as a leader fully submitted to God.

This is what God wants for you & me. No matter where you’ve been or what you’ve done that you know goes against God’s instructions for your life, God wants you to lead you into a place of peace. A place of peace. No matter what hardship or heartache you’ve caused or you’ve endured, God wants you to live in a place of peace knowing that you are forgiven, knowing that his grace is enough, knowing that his mercy is like healing rain, knowing that he can and will use your mess-ups and your mistakes to bring hope and healing into the lives of others. He can and he will if we would just submit it all to him, stop hiding from our mistakes, and start living in the truth of who we’ve been and who we are now in Christ.

This doesn’t mean that we just blatantly keep on disobeying him, knowing that his grace is always sufficient. That’s like being rescued from drowning, then jumping right back into the water. That’s not submission. That’s not what the life of David exemplifies for us. David fell on his face in confession, in repentance, and then chose to change. He chose to live a worshipping life – showing God how grateful he was that he did not reject him, but still loved him, still accepted him, and still had a good plan for his life! David never forgot that, and God used him powerfully in the lives of the people in his kingdom, and even today in our lives through the reign and rule of the One from his line – our Savior, The Savior of all the world, Jesus Christ!

Often we don’t realize that we are believing the lie that we have been disqualified from being used by God - which of course is one of Satan’s tactics – to keep us ‘in the dark’ about what we are truly believing. Maybe you believe you’re too small or too young. Maybe you have come to believe you’re too rough around the edges. Maybe you think you’ve just gone and done too much that doesn’t line up with God’s Word. Maybe you think you are just too sad, or too depressed, or too anxious, or too confused, or too impulsive, or too ho-hum, or too old or too frail physically, or just too broken for God to use you to lead someone else to a place of hope and healing in their lives. Here’s what I know (1 Corinthians 1:26-31):

(NIV) *“Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. ²⁷But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. ²⁸God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, ²⁹so that no one may boast before him. ³⁰It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. ³¹Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”* (NIV)

(The Message) *“Take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don’t see many of “the brightest and the best” among you, not many influential, not many from high-society families. Isn’t it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these “nobodies” to expose the hollow pretensions of the “somebodies”? That makes it quite clear that none of you can get by with blowing your own horn before God. Everything that we have—right thinking and right living, a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ. That’s why we have the saying, “If you’re going to blow a horn, blow a trumpet for God.”*

One young man who blew a trumpet for God for as long as was physically possible was Tyler Trent. Maybe you heard about him last year during the college football season as he was the Purdue Boilermaker’s fan of fans. Tyler was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, an aggressive form of bone cancer when he was 15 years old. I read his book The Upset last month in about a week. The book is written by Tyler, by his parents, and by some of the people who were closest to him. It is a hard story to read in that we don’t like to think about teenagers being diagnosed with cancer and having so much of what we consider ‘normal’ about life being stolen from them. It’s hard because you can feel the depth of the pain of his family as they walk alongside him in

his journey. It's hard because it is raw and truthful. But, it's so good. Just because something is hard doesn't mean it's not good. Tyler's story is so hard, but so good – primarily because it is a story filled with victories – filled with hope – filled with faith in Jesus Christ as the only way to true peace and healing in this life and the next. It is filled with unbelievable courage and perseverance from a young man who was determined to make his life, to make his suffering count for all eternity. And here's why I bring this up today: Because a really important part of Tyler's story is how he learned and grew and found himself strengthened and equipped by what he saw as a real failure in his life.

When Tyler was first diagnosed with osteosarcoma and was going through chemotherapy treatments, a young man who had always had a smile on his face and who was positive about anything and everything became someone who pushed people away, who became angry and reclusive. He wrote the following: *"When everything feels like an attack, everyone can feel like an enemy. I didn't understand what I was feeling, so I didn't understand how to control my words. Even so, I don't think I ever anticipated that people would react negatively toward me when I acted negatively toward them. I had a strange sense of narcissism. Even though I hated it, it felt like everything revolved around me – or more accurately, my cancer. Everyone was still moving ahead with their lives. Everyone was not, in fact, revolving around my cancer. Even though I wanted to hurt my friends because I had become disillusioned with them, I still somehow felt justifiably hurt when they reacted to my hurtfulness. Yes, you would think I would have understood, but I didn't. And though I try to avoid clichés, sometimes something is a common saying because it is actually true, as is the case with this expression: "Hurting people hurt people."*

Tyler went into remission after the first treatment. During that time he wrote this, *"It would be easy to sum things up and say that my bout with cancer had changed me, but I think this would be too simple a summation. The truth is, it was God who changed me through the process of living through cancer. Again, cancer deserves no credit and will not get any from me. My outlook on life after my battle with cancer changed so drastically that I really don't think a simple "coming of age as you face your mortality" description suffices. I was not just coming of age . . . it was during this time that I was truly coming to faith. My relationship with Christ began changing from adolescent study and theory into a real relationship, complete with real conversations, real disappointments, real disagreements, and real trust." "Grace changed me, not cancer. Grace never turned its back on me, even when I didn't deserve it. Instead, God poured out his patient love on me in greater amounts, even as I doubted him and wondered if he remembered or cared about me." "I am completely known, yet I am completely loved." (pp. 102-105)*

And then another tumor was discovered and another intense round of chemotherapy began. But this time was different because Tyler was different. He wrote, *"We often talk about the ways that God uses difficulty to make us stronger, but we often miss one of the purposes for gaining more strength: to use it in the next difficult situation. In the military, greater strength better equips soldiers to handle tougher situations and enemies. In football, greater strength means better chances that a player will be put onto the field when the team's back is against the wall and the game is on the line. I believe that we shouldn't believe any differently when we survive something difficult and come out stronger on the other side. While we don't go looking for more trouble, if and when it does come, we will find that the strength we gained back then wasn't forged in us for just that moment of difficulty, but also for the next moment of difficulty. What a difference two years makes." "My first battle against cancer helped me to see that everyone has a battle, so I shouldn't make my own the center of the universe. Even if it feels like it is because it consumes all my time, energy, and hopes for the future, it is not. Thinking or feeling something does not make it so. I should use my own battle to help others in theirs." "I know it might sound strange, but I began to think of my second cancer diagnosis as a second chance. No, it was not a chance that I would have wanted, but since it was here anyway, I found a certain joy in knowing that I could do things differently this time around." "Above all else – and this is the reason you are reading these words – I not only asked God to help me not waste any opportunity, but I also asked him to use my life, suffering, and story for his purposes – to help and inspire others."*

And that is exactly what he did. In spite of increasing weakness and pain, Tyler used the rest of his life to tell people about Jesus, to point them to the hope and healing that Jesus alone

can give. He came to a place of peace and influence as a leader submitted to God. His life and his faith inspired so many people because he was determined to use his experiences, his mistakes, his mess-ups, to help others in their times of trial and trouble. He overcame incredible obstacles to take advantage of every public opportunity given to him to speak of his faith in Christ. He ended up on Purdue's campus as a freshman, living in the dorms, even though he was going through chemo. He ended up with a feature story on ESPN. When asked about it he said, "It always goes back to that simple prayer I offered up when I was diagnosed for the second time, asking God to use my story and suffering for something higher and bigger than myself. I asked him to help me not waste any opportunity in my life, including cancer." Tyler was the one who predicted and totally believed that unranked Purdue was going to beat top-five ranked Ohio State last year – and they did! That got him even more attention that he then turned towards Jesus! He said that being on countless media outlets to talk about his passion for cancer research and the hope he had in Jesus were incredible blessings. He was awarded the highest civilian honor in the state of Indiana by the governor of the state, he was awarded the Disney Spirit award, the highest honor presented to college football's most inspirational player, coach, team or figure, and he was selected as the Honorary Captain for both the Purdue Boilermakers and the Auburn Tigers at the Music City Bowl last December 28th. He was so very sick at that time, but he insisted on taking full advantage of the opportunities he had been given. Four days later on January 1, 2019 he received the greatest award ever – entrance into Heaven – completely healed, body, mind, and spirit.

I share all of that about King David and Tyler Trent today to say this: The ways of God have not changed throughout the centuries. People mess up. People go the wrong way. People buy into the lie that they can't be fully known by God and still fully loved by God. But it's a lie. In other words, it's not the truth. Psalm 139 assures us that God knows everything about us. Everything. He knows the words we are going to speak before they come out our mouths. He knows every hair on our heads. He knows when we sit down and when we rise up. He knows the depth of our sin. He knows it all. He knows we are desperate and cannot save or help ourselves. That's why he sent Jesus to help us, to save us, to tell us the truth that we are fully loved, and to make us new as we begin to live in that truth! Don't go out these doors today giving the devil the satisfaction that his lie of your disqualification for God's good purposes is more convincing than God's truth that through Jesus you've been forgiven, you've been accepted (because through him you are acceptable), and you've been commissioned by God to use whatever has happened in your life to lead others to that place of hope, of healing, and of peace that only comes from Jesus. Cry out to Jesus, right now, in your heart. Cry out to him. You have not been disqualified, friends. I have not, you have not. We are loved and we are called to go out into the world, as led by Jesus, to lead others to him because he is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And no one comes to the Father except through him. Let us pray:

Thank you that we are loved and accepted and charged to go and make disciples of all nations. Thank you for the influence you have given us as your children. Thank you that we don't go alone, and we don't go unequipped. You have promised to be with us always, even to the end of the age. Grant us that which is most needed this day which you alone know so that we leave changed, charged, and ready to make our lives count for your kingdom of love and light. This we pray in Jesus' name, Amen.

**Tyler Trent was posthumously given the Stuart Scott ENspire award at ESPN's 2019 Sports Humanitarian Awards in July 2019.*

***Purdue University dedicated a student gate in his memory as the Tyler Trent Student Entrance in September 2019.*

****In his memory, millions of dollars have been raised for cancer research and care of patients and their families.*