

This guide is an invitation to follow Jesus with greater purpose and hope. It will help you to explore the scriptures and challenge you to live out your faith. Each week we'd love for you to think about how you relate: **Up** (with God), **In** (with church) and **Out** (with neighbors).



### Weekly Questions:

- How is God getting my attention? For help, think about these areas:
- How are you living up with God?
- How are you living in community with other followers of Jesus?
- How are you living out on mission with your neighbors?
- What are you going to do about it?

### From Garden to Garden: Calling 3

#### 1 Samuel 16:1-13

**The Reluctant Truth-Teller: Awkward Transitions** In Act 3 of our journey, we discover that God's transitions and new invitations are rarely accompanied by clean, friction-free narratives. When God rejects Saul's compromise-laden leadership, He commands the prophet Samuel to anoint a replacement. Samuel responds with a highly valid, self-protective excuse: if the current king hears of this treasonous act, he will kill me. Our callings do not exist in an easy vacuum; they are often catalyzed by reluctant truth-tellers—individuals in our community who feel burdened to deliver costly, uncomfortable words that cut directly across our relational or environmental dynamics.

- Who are the reluctant truth-tellers in your life right now who are bringing a costly, uncomfortable word that you might be hesitant to hear?
- How do you distinguish between an unhelpful distraction and a legitimate "costly transition" that God is using to reshape your path?
- In what areas of your current life or work are you holding onto a broken situation out of fear of the awkwardness or danger of change?

**Character Over Influence: Looking Beneath the Surface** When paraded before Jesse's eldest son Eliab, Samuel immediately makes a tragic, classic human miscalculation: evaluating leadership potential entirely on outward appearance, height, and charisma. Yet, God delivers a definitive counter-cultural rebuke: human beings look at the outside of things, but God looks directly into the heart. Discerning our divine calling relies strictly on internal character over visible influence, status, or external power. True biblical character does not equate to flawless performance; the king God chooses would eventually fail drastically through deception, abuse, and violence. The key variance, however, lies under the surface. Authentic character is demonstrated by how we respond to adversity and failure—possessing a heart that breaks in repentance, actively owns shortcomings, and seeks transparent restoration before God.

- In what ways do you find yourself over-prioritizing external metrics (influence, income, charm, status) when evaluating your own success or calling?
- How does reframing character as "the capacity to repent and live with integrity after failure" change your perspective on your past mistakes?
- What would it look like for you to look past the surface level of a difficult relationship or work

- environment to see what is happening at a heart level?

**The Patient Process: Chose Last and Least** God's selection process intentionally ignores human efficiency and cultural timelines. Jesse walks seven of his prominent sons before the prophet, entirely overlooking David, the youngest, who was left behind to tend sheep in the fields. God's patient call operates as a pure, unearned gift rather than a competitive achievement or high-pedigree marker. You do not have to be the brightest, the oldest, or the gold standard of your environment to be invited into His movement. In fact, relying on self-made metrics often makes it profoundly difficult to walk with humility. As highlighted in Romans 5, our callings leverage the messy terrain of our lives—transforming our shared sufferings into perseverance, perseverance into tested character, and character into a resilient, unshakeable hope in God's restorative work.

- How does knowing that calling is a gift rather than an achievement relieve the exhausting
  - internal pressure to be the "highest achiever" in the room?
  - Where do you feel like the "last and least" in your current community or family, and how might
  - God be meeting you in that exact hidden space?
  - How have your seasons of suffering or hidden labor "in the fields" actively formed your current
  - endurance, character, and hope?
- **Practice: Guarding the Heart**  
To align with the calling of David means stepping away from superficial comparison and cultivating internal integrity. Intentionally engage with God's patient shaping through these weekly rhythms:
    - **The Under-the-Surface Heart Check:** Before accepting a new assignment, purchasing an item, or making a relational choice this week, audit your internal motivation. Ask yourself: "Am I doing this to satisfy outward appearance and influence, or is this genuinely serving the long-term character and goodness God is building?"
    - **Proactive Hidden Faithfulness:** Identify a task or space in your "In" or "Out" circle that is completely thankless, unnoticed, or equivalent to "tending the sheep in the field." Complete this work with absolute excellence and devotion, focusing entirely on sensing the quiet pleasure of God rather than human praise.
    - **The Repentance Audit:** Unlike Saul, who hid behind religious escape clauses, David owned his failures. Identify one breakdown in your relationships caused by your own action or inaction. Go to that person, drop your defensive armor, name the separation clearly, and offer a sincere apology to begin the work of repair.
    - **Where is God asking you to look past outward appearance and trust God with the character of your heart?**