

Chapter 11: A Compass After God's Own Heart

1. Focus on the mission God has put in front of you _____.

"The most radical thing you can do spiritually is to do the very next thing God tells you to do."

2. Never let _____ be your compass.

"Come, my friends, 'tis not too late to seek a newer world. For my purpose holds to sail beyond the sunset. To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

—Tennyson

3. David's third "toward" episode: straight to _____.

You are my strength; I wait for you to rescue me, for you, O God, are my place of safety. In his unfailing love, my God will come and help me. He will let me look down in triumph on all my enemies. But as for me, I will sing about your power. I will shout with joy each morning because of your unfailing love. For you have been my refuge, a place of safety in the day of distress. O my strength, to you I sing praises, for you, O God, are my refuge, the God who shows me unfailing love.

Psalms 59:9-10, 16

God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and he chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose what the world thinks is unimportant and what the world looks down on and thinks is nothing in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. God did this so that no one can brag in his presence.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

"How glorious the king of Israel looked today! He exposed himself to the servant girls like any indecent person might do!"

2 Samuel 6:20

"David retorted to Michal, 'I was dancing before the LORD, who chose me above your father and his family!'"

2 Samuel 6:21

Observations and Takeaways

1. _____ to leadership is always important.

At the place where the road passes some sheepfolds, Saul went into a cave to relieve himself. But as it happened, David and his men were hiding in that very

cave! "Now's your opportunity!" David's men whispered to him. "Today is the day the LORD was talking about when he said, 'I will certainly put Saul into your power, to do with as you wish.'" Then David crept forward and cut off a piece of Saul's robe. But then David's conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul's robe. "The LORD knows I shouldn't have done it," he said to his men. "It is a serious thing to attack the LORD's anointed one, for the LORD himself has chosen him." So David sharply rebuked his men and did not let them kill Saul.

1 Samuel 24:3-7

"You servants must submit to your masters and show them complete respect, not only to those who are kind and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. God will bless you for this, if you endure the pain of undeserved suffering because you are conscious of his will."

1 Peter 2:18-19

2. Always wait for God's _____.

- If you've got to force your way, it probably isn't.
- If you've got to form a coup, it probably isn't.
- If you've got to destroy something to get to it, it probably isn't.
- If it comes to you, esp. as a result of prolonged prayer, it probably is.
- If the counsel of wise friends warn you, it probably isn't.
- If the counsel of rash friends encourage you, it probably isn't.
- If the counsel of wise friends encourage you, it probably is.

3. Good leaders know when to _____.

Discussion Questions

1. Which of your revealed missions do you most need to focus on right now?
2. Describe a time when someone you know "ran towards" and not "ran from."
3. What questions help you discern God's timing in your life?

Teaching Script

If you're a fan of classical music, then you probably know the name "Rostropovich." Mstislav Rostropovich was a world-famous cellist until his death in 2007. Since his exile from his native Russia in 1974, he has lived in the West. He served for 17 years as music director of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington.

Rostropovich was always something of a rebel, a non-conformist. In 1970, Rostropovich sheltered Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who otherwise had nowhere else to go. In the early 1990's, when the Kremlin hard-liners pulled their August Coup, Rostropovich was in Paris. But, instead of flying back to the U.S. and to safety, he and his family flew straight home to Moscow. There, he took up his place in the Russian Federation Building that President Boris Yeltsin and his elected allies were holed up in. The situation was very tense. In the darkened corridors, someone gave him a Kalashnikov automatic rifle, but he returned it. Instead, he took out his cello and gave an impromptu recital to break the awful tension of the siege.

Have you ever known someone who surprised you, and did just the opposite of what you expected? Someone who ran into the fire instead of away from it? From the outside, you'd swear they had a backwards internal compass—running north when they should have run south. But what they really had was an uncommon courage and a moral trajectory that frequently led them down the road less traveled.

As we saw last week, Saul was a man's man. He was tall, handsome, and impressive...a likely choice for a king. He was just what Israel wanted. The problem was he was not God's man. King Saul cut corners and then pathologically rationalized everything...so God cut him out of the picture and set His sights a king who was, at the moment, singing songs and tending flocks in a nearby pasture.

This royal coronation began in the most improbable of places: the humble house of Jesse in a less than notable village called Bethlehem. We should have seen it coming. God has demonstrated a knack of showing up in the unlikeliest of places, calling the most implausible people to the most inconceivable of missions. Three chapters ago He appeared to a hiding farmer named Gideon, who responded, "My clan is the weakest in the tribe of Manassah, and I am the least in my family." Last week, He appeared to Saul, who even though he was tall and handsome, said, "Aren't I a Benjamite from the smallest tribe in Israel, and my clan the least of all the clans in Benjamin?"

And now, sure enough, Samuel the priest is sent to another obscure agricultural family—a grandson of Ruth, where once again an improbable search is coming to an end. In true "American Idol" fashion, seven of Jesse's sons were paraded before Samuel, but none were chosen. The youngest brother, David, had not been invited but was easily found among the sheep. After being summoned from the fields, the choice was immediate: David was anointed by Samuel to replace King Saul. The boy then did what any newly anointed king would do: he returned to tending his sheep.

Mark this down in your Bibles, because this is the first of three instances where David did the opposite of what you'd expect—where he mixed up the "toward" and the "from." You would think a new king would head straight to the tailors to be fitted for his royal

robes, just like you or I would head to Brooks Brothers for a hand-sewn suit for our inauguration. He'd certainly make his second call to the goldsmith to have his new crown precisely fitted. A normal person would have made one of those Disney commercials: "David! You've just been anointed King of Israel! What will you do next?"

And David replies, "I'm going to Disney World!"

Not this guy. He quietly went back to his duties, fulfilling the role God had given him right then.

This leads to point #1 on your outlines:

1. Focus on the mission God has put in front of you *right now*.

It would be tempting to take your eye off the ball and start dreaming of the next step, planning your future, setting up your cabinet, but neglect the critical work that sits right in front of you.

But David was directionally challenged from the world's point of view. As we'll see throughout this chapter, he had a *compass* after God's own heart. And time and time again, God has proven that his philosophy is anti-establishment. The world says "he who dies with the most toys wins"—God says give freely, and don't worry about the math. The world says take hold of your destiny—God says he who loses his life will find it.

Example #1 of David's "from/towards" problem is that he headed not toward immediate glory and recognition, but toward his *current* mission. And our lesson from this story is clear: never take your eye off the ball, focus first on your current assignment.

Someone once said, "*The most radical thing you can do is the very next thing God tells you to do.*" It may not seem like it, but this is what radical obedience looks like. It's not doing what God says because you can clearly see the end, or because He's revealed the entire parade route, but to do the *very next* thing He tells you, regardless of how crazy it sounds. Go do your job—go be a husband—go be a dad—go be a brother. Today, head first toward your revealed mission.

After that, for a while, life got quiet for the newly anointed boy king until he was once again called from the fields, this time to supply his brothers on the frontlines of battle against the Philistine army. When he arrived, David saw what everyone else did not: an opportunity for God's power to be displayed. Goliath had intimidated everyone. But for the 2nd time, David's "towards/from" indicator was on the fritz, and he ran *toward* the giant.

The Bible says,

*As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly **toward** the battle line to meet him.*

1 Samuel 17:48

This is the second point on your outline, also today's **Equipping Point**:

2. **Never let fear be your compass.**

How was David able to do such an improbable and ridiculous thing? He had two things: faith and practice. On the final paragraph of page 148 of *The Story*, David said to Saul...

Later today we'll be burying a friend of mine—in fact, another David—David Tomkewitz. Just as God prepared King David to face his Goliath by fighting a lion and a bear, so God prepared David for his Goliath: a slow, tortuous battle with liver cancer.

My friend David also fought a lion and a bear first. He fought the lion tenaciously for custody of his sheep—his stepsons that really, really needed a good father-figure to watch and to emulate. He fought the bear when his own father died seven years ago—the man whom he had watched and emulated, who convinced him that nothing was impossible.

So when the time came to fight his Goliath of liver cancer—he was battle-hardened. He had protected his own over and over, shepherded his family, fought tenaciously for them, and while the disease claimed his life Saturday night, it never claimed him. His giant never defined him.

One of the quotes at the funeral today will be from Tennyson: *"Come, my friends, 'tis not too late to seek a newer world. For my purpose holds to sail beyond the sunset. To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."*

David Tomkewitz's battle with cancer was an epic one, that was fought much longer than anyone thought possible, because his compass, like the compass of King David, was set the wrong direction: toward the fight, toward life, toward the threat to what he had built with his family.

Who in their right mind would run toward the giant? Two men named David...

After killing Goliath, David's days in the pastures were over. Saul brought him into the king's court and assigned him a high rank over military operations. David was well liked and successful in all his pursuits. He eventually married Saul's daughter, Michal, and became best of friends with Saul's son, Jonathan. But his success planted an irreversible seed of jealousy in Saul, to the point where he tried repeatedly to murder David.

Saul's fear and irrational behavior went berserk. But once again, David's navigational instincts got all mixed up, because while he had to run **from** Saul, in one instance he actually ran **toward** him. On one occasion, he went **toward** Saul and instead of killing his rival, chose to extend mercy and grace to his tormentor. But Saul's new lease on life was as short as his fuse, and the chase quickly resumed.

3. **David's third "toward" episode: straight to God.**

David found consolation by journaling his fears and his faith in his psalms. Listen to how he ran **toward** the God who had appointed him:

You are my strength; I wait for you to rescue me, for you, O God, are my place of safety. In his unfailing love, my God will come and help me. He will let me look down in triumph on all my enemies. But as for me, I will sing about your power. I will shout with joy each morning because of your unfailing love. For you have been my refuge, a place of safety in the day of distress. O my strength, to you I sing praises, for you, O God, are my refuge, the God who shows me unfailing love.

Psalm 59:9-10, 16

When you feel option-less, exasperated, unheard, or confused, is your response to run **away**, or to run **toward**? To flee or to worship? David not only prayed during the scary times, but he also didn't fail to worship—to run toward God—after the victories were won. David made a fool of himself dancing in front of the ark as both of them returned to Jerusalem—so much so that he embarrassed his wife.

I don't know about you, but I feel that as a dad, it is my God-given mission to publicly humiliate my children. Maybe it's the same kind of embarrassment my daughters feel when I begin speaking German very loudly in Dillard's, or try to dance with them on the escalator in the mall. The other day I made up a rap and started singing it to Tori—she laughed so hard for a while she forgot to breathe.

I personally believe that fathers are commissioned—and I'm pretty sure it's in Scripture somewhere—to flagrantly embarrass their children on a regular basis. But this isn't the kind of embarrassment Michal felt as she watched David dance in front of the ark. This was the embarrassment of someone who had never had to trust God for everything, including their next breath. This was someone who didn't get it.

Michal couldn't possibly understand the joy and salvation that David felt, because he'd been brought out of the valley of death. He had been hunted like a rabid animal. So you see that David really had no choice but to totally lose all decorum and look like an absolute fool. What's that verse in 1 Corinthians?

God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and he chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose what the world thinks is unimportant and what the world looks down on and thinks is nothing in order to destroy what the world thinks is important. God did this so that no one can brag in his presence.

1 Corinthians 1:27-29

When was the last time you ran so uncontrollably and unashamedly toward God that you looked stupid doing it? When was the last time you became so overwhelmed by the fact that He would use you—with all your flaws and imperfections and schizophrenia—that you fell to your knees in gratitude?

But Michal just didn't get it. She scoffed:

“How glorious the king of Israel looked today! He exposed himself to the servant girls like any indecent person might do!”

2 Samuel 6:20

Did she manage to shame him? Not in the least...David was too busy running toward God. David's response was not that of a self-conscious statesman. He knew where this bitter reaction came from.

"David retorted to Michal, 'I was dancing before the LORD, who chose me above your father and his family!'"

2 Samuel 6:21

Michal was much more Saul's daughter than David's wife or Jonathan's sister. Because when she became sarcastic with David it was the pride of Saul and his narcissism that drove her to pettiness, not the Spirit of God in her husband or the love that was in her brother. And verse 23 of 2 Samuel 6 says Michal remained childless throughout her life. God knew that as David's wife and Saul's daughter, any son of hers would have a strong claim to the throne. And so because of her pride, and her refusal to bow her own knee to the Lord, and celebrate with her husband, God left her womb as barren as her heart.

Anytime you see someone chastising someone else's worship, you can bet it's a pride issue.

Some final takeaways and general observations about this amazing chapter in *The Story*:

1. **Submission to leadership is always important.**

If anyone had a reason to depose a leader, having already been anointed for the position himself, it was David. But here's what happened:

At the place where the road passes some sheepfolds, Saul went into a cave to relieve himself. But as it happened, David and his men were hiding in that very cave! "Now's your opportunity!" David's men whispered to him. "Today is the day the LORD was talking about when he said, 'I will certainly put Saul into your power, to do with as you wish.'" Then David crept forward and cut off a piece of Saul's robe. But then David's conscience began bothering him because he had cut Saul's robe. "The LORD knows I shouldn't have done it," he said to his men. "It is a serious thing to attack the LORD's anointed one, for the LORD himself has chosen him." So David sharply rebuked his men and did not let them kill Saul.

1 Samuel 24:3-7

David was so sensitive to God's will, he felt guilty for cutting off a piece of Saul's robe. Why? Because it caused him status and embarrassment in front of his soldiers. The translation for us today: if you work for a bad boss, it's not enough to just grudgingly do what he or she says. You must show them respect, even when you're talking outside the office—even to people that don't know them. Listen to Peter's instruction:

"You servants must submit to your masters and show them complete respect, not only to those who are kind and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. God will bless you for this, if you endure the pain of undeserved suffering because you are conscious of his will."

1 Peter 2:18-19

It may be harsh, it may not be fair, but for as long as you work where you work, it's your responsibility to show respect to your supervisors, even when they're not around. Even when you don't think anyone's listening. You can never be a good leader unless you first become a good follower.

Which leads to #2:

2. Always wait for God's *timing*.

It's hard to know when we're jumping the gun, or running ahead of the headlights. It would have been easy for David to assume a lot of things, to push Saul out of the way after he was anointed. I don't know anyone who hasn't struggled with the question of God's timing. Do I stay? Do I go? Turn left? Turn right? What does God want me to do? But in this story, we can see some very concrete lessons and signs about when something probably *is* God's timing and when it probably *isn't*:

- If you've got to force your way, it probably isn't.
- If you've got to form a coup, it probably isn't.
- If you've got to destroy something to get to it, it probably isn't.
- If it comes *to you*, esp. as a result of prolonged prayer, it probably is.
- If the counsel of wise friends warn you, it probably isn't.
- If the counsel of rash friends encourage you, it probably isn't.
- If the counsel of wise friends encourage you, it probably is.

And then there's one takeaway from our lesson today—the really hard one:

3. Good leaders know when to *step down*.

You may have been influential at one time. You may have felt the Lord's anointing at one time in your position. But in Saul we see the dark side of leadership—a disrespect of God's direction, a deafness to His instruction, and a stubborn insistence to hold on to power as long as you can.

God's choice of Saul as king in the first place was a result of grace—not because Israel needed a king, not because it was God's will, but only because of grace. And God gave him a great head start: courage, early victories...but God in His wisdom and perfect timing also chooses to remove people from influence. Has that ever happened to you? And this morning, as tough as it is to accept, I submit to you that if we will accept His grace in appointments to leadership, we must also be willing to accept His decisions when it's time to step down.

In this incredible story, David responded to his anointing with awestruck worship and gratitude, knowing that distant generations of his own family would welcome the King whose reign would never end. Though David may not have fully recognized it at the time, he had indeed built a house for God...the temple of his heart.

The Upper Story of the Bible is in clear form in the story of David, a man of grace who submitted to the leaders over him, waited for God's timing, and, as we'll see at the end of the next chapter, knew when it was time to turn over the reins.

In the Upper Story, once again we see an Old Testament character foreshadowing the Christ: the King of Kings who submitted to the will of His Father, whose timing was perfect, and who, after His resurrection, turned over His earthly presence to the Spirit of God, so that He could live in each of our temples.