

# KNOW YOUR MISSION +++

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That guy's excited. I hope you're excited as we dive into God's Word. It's amazing when you look at Jesus, the ability in which he had to connect cultural things to help people get a new glimpse into what the kingdom of God looked like. He was a master at using ordinary things, things like coins and sheep and weddings and vineyards and bread and fish—all of these to kind of give a spiritual truth or principle, but in a new way.

And why did he do this? Because at the heart of the gospel is transformation and a transformed heart often comes when we hear about things that are relevant in our lives and maybe even things that intersect with how we live, work, learn, and even play. And so I'm really pumped about our second installment of our game on sermon series.

Video games, like them or not, are a massive thing going on in our world today. Here's a couple of statistics just to help you kind of frame how big this industry is. There are more than 3 billion—billion with a B—gamers in the world, 213 million Americans. That's more than 60% of Americans. In 2018, the League of Legends World Championships, which is like the Super Bowl for video games, online streaming had 100 million people watching it, which happened to be more than the Super Bowl that year. Crazy!

And there may be some hidden ones, but 49% of baby boomers are gamers. Just saying, whether you're a diehard gamer, a casual app player, or have never picked up a remote controller, you can't deny that video games are one of our culture's biggest and most powerful storytelling machines.

And I can acknowledge, because I've heard, that there are some in the church that aren't sure what to think about video games or maybe even negative towards video games as an industry. And I understand, I get it. It's hard. It's confusing to know what to think of some things in this world.

But my take on it, and maybe it's too simplistic, but I'm a pretty simple guy, is just like you can have content in books, movies, or music—some content that's good and appropriate, some content that's bad and inappropriate—I think the same can be true of video games. And like any of those things, combine onto them hobbies or sports or wine or clothing or work, any of them have potential to become an idol in your life. And many of them have potential to become an unhealthy addiction, but all of them are meant to be underneath the pursuit of following Jesus.

So I get it. It's challenging. It's hard. And how you parent your child with video games, add onto that technology and smartphones and this growing beast called artificial intelligence—it is hard to know what to do. And I think what we need more for each other is more grace. Because for some of us, this is the first generation to ever experience some of these problems and some of these issues, and it's really hard.

And so I just want to, like upfront, be clear on this sermon series and what it is. By us doing a series talking about a few video games here and there, this is not a blanket endorsement to say the video game industry is perfect and have at it and no restrictions and just do whatever you want. That would certainly be inappropriate. But it's also not here to demonize this entire industry either. Because like many things, in moderation, video games can be a great blessing and a fun source of entertainment.

And Jesus, again, as we looked at him as our example, he wasn't afraid to talk about things that have a good and a bad piece to them. Jesus talked about farming—you can grow healthy food and you can grow illegal drugs. Jesus talked about using money—you can use money in good ways and you can use money in evil ways. Jesus talked about wine and vineyards—you can drink wine appropriately and you can drink wine inappropriately.

And so along that, I've seen a trend in a lot of American churches. They'll have a sermon series about movies where they help you engage or see a biblical truth. And that is essentially what we're doing with video games—through these pixelated worlds, helping you see a spiritual biblical truth in a way that maybe is different, that maybe just maybe you'll catch it for the first time or in a new way that might actually make a difference in your life.

So here's where we're going this month. This week, we're talking about knowing your mission. Future weeks, we're going to talk about how to choose your weapon, how to stay in the fight, and when to press start again.

But this series again is not about video games. We're actually anchoring this sermon series in the life and times of a character in the Bible and the Old Testament named David. We're going to learn about how this young shepherd boy leveled up to become a legendary King.

And you may never be a shepherd and you might not ever be a King, but I do believe that God has called you to level up, to progress in life and to live life on purpose. And that's what this series is about. So it's time to press start. Come on. Let me see you press start all campuses. I don't know if that's—probably not—you just go like this, but anyway, it's not as game on.

Here we go. Our first video game we're going to explore today—let me, if you've heard about this video game or seen it before, let me hear a shout. It's called Super Mario Brothers. Super Mario Brothers. Yeah.

At the core of it, it's really an interesting, ordinary kind of crazy story. This hero is very ordinary. It's about a mustachioed plumber named Mario who's not a mighty warrior. He doesn't have superpowers. He lives in the Mushroom Kingdom as a plumber, working on pipes. And yet this ordinary, unglamorous man takes on an extraordinary mission.

If it were a movie trailer, it might sound a little bit like this: In a world where evil lurks in every castle and darkness spreads across Mushroom Kingdom, a princess is kidnapped, and one ordinary plumber gets the call to unclog this extraordinary mess—with a pair of overalls, a killer mustache, and a heart that refuses to quit. He goes through pipes and pitfalls, castle after castle, mushrooms and monsters, but keeps moving forward because he knows the mission is worth it. This is Mario.

What's amazing is how unimpressive that was and how unimpressive Mario is at the start. He's not the guy. He's not the guy anyone would choose to rescue a princess or save the kingdom. Yet he's the one. And his story played out through these pixelated worlds has transcended generations.

In fact, in 2023, there was an animated movie made about Mario. And at the time, do you know it was the third highest-grossing movie of any animated movie ever? Crazy.

And I think in many ways, Mario's story is like David's story, is like your story, where God often calls the most unexpected, ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Like David, the forgotten shepherd, or Mario the plumber, your mission doesn't start when you feel ready or qualified. It begins when you show up and say yes to the calling God places in front of you. And if and when you do that, friends, like David and like Mario, I do believe that your life and the decisions you make can transcend generations. Amen.

Today's message is specifically though for those who may have felt cast aside, overlooked, marginalized, forgotten. If you've ever felt that way, ever been that way, you're going to really love today's message—to know that God sees you and God has a mission for you.

So again, as I mentioned, today's sermon is "Know Your Mission." Do you know your mission?

Before we read from 1 Samuel 16 today, let me paint the scene a little bit for you. God's people, the Israelites, wanted a new King. They had a King. His name was Saul. And Saul started out to be a really good King, but over time his power grew into some unhealthy things. He became evil. He was stubborn. He was self-righteous. He was proud. And so God intervened through a prophet named Samuel and said, "Let's get the next King ready. Go to Bethlehem to Jesse's house. And there you'll find the next King that you can anoint."

And so in 1 Samuel 16 verse 6, when they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord." Samuel, this aging prophet, goes with anointing oil to anoint a future King. And you got to imagine that he's a little bit trembling. As great and as powerful as he is, like anointing a King while another King whose evil is still on the throne is a pretty scary thing to do. But at least he could do it in this kind of nobody, nothing, nowhere town called Bethlehem—in obscurity.

And so he's going with oil in his hand and a word in his heart. And Samuel may have questioned it at first, "Really Bethlehem?" But the moment he sees Eliab, he's like, "Okay, I get it. Now I know why I came to Bethlehem. This is the dude, the firstborn, the handsome big time, Jesse's big dog, double portion boy. Got to be him. I get it now."

And here's the thing about Samuel: Samuel is a stud prophet. The Bible talks about him—when he speaks, not a word falls to the ground, and people trembled at his words. And my point is he doesn't make mistakes very often, but even the great prophet Samuel needed to be taught and learn an important lesson that you and I need to remember as well.

The lesson comes through verse 7, which says this: The Lord said to Samuel, maybe you've heard this verse before, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not

look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

And some of you think that you can't have a mission, an important mission, because maybe you don't look the part. Maybe you're too young. Maybe you're too old. You feel too broken, too plain—from the wrong side of the tracks. Maybe you've been told that you can't have an important mission because of things that you've done or sins that you've committed. Maybe you're not gifted enough. You feel that way.

But the truth that God needed Samuel to know and wants us to know today is that God often selects who the world rejects. If we were picking video game characters to rescue a princess, nobody would pick Mario. We'd pick the flashy, the big dog, the Alaya double portion person. But God loves an underdog with the right heart and the right character.

In our day, the world often crowns talent, but God crowns character. And more important than all of those things on the outside, God is telling Samuel and us, we've got to stop looking at all the outer stuff from a human perspective. What's more important for your mission is actually what's going on on the inside.

And I really do believe that today might be the day where God is going to pull the curtain back on some of you who have hidden talents and gifts. And many of those hidden talents and gifts might have even been fastened in times of hardship and toil and frustration and suffering, and maybe even obscurity—behind the scenes, marginalized and forgotten.

And the moment God pulls the curtain back is not even necessarily the moment to say, "Hey, look at me," but when you get the calling, if you will, and you've got the character, you can shine a light on how great this God is.

And one of the greatest tragedies in our day today with the way that people can build a platform and gain a calling is that there are far too many people that haven't fastened and grown in their character, and they get the calling before they got the character. And it ends up resulting in a lot of people, a lot of leaders, a lot of public people falling and abusing their calling. And that's really sad for the Christian church when that happens.

The story continues. Then Jesse called Abinadab—and had him pass in front of Samuel, but Samuel said, "The Lord has not chosen this one either." Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel says, "Nor has the Lord chosen this one." Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The Lord has not chosen these."

Something's not right.

And so Samuel asks, I think in an octave a little bit higher than his normal voice, "Are these all the sons you have? Is this everybody? What's going on?" Because he sees this really impressive lineup. Eliab comes out, and God says, "I don't like his heart, no." Abinadab, nope. Shammah, nada. Number four, number five, number six, not going to happen. Number seven, did I stutter? It's a no.

"Are these all the sons you have? Bethlehem's a small place, God. There's only one Jesse here. I know I'm at the right place. Something's not adding up."

And so, "Are these all the sons you have?"

And then we get the line from Jesse: "There is still the youngest. He's tending the sheep." And you can read below the lines, between the lines, "Well, prophet, these are all the ones that I thought might qualify. These are the ones that I feel like could be up to the task. These are the ones that I've selected—seven of them. Got to be one of them that works, right? I mean, in the Bible, the number seven represents the word complete. And God says it's a complete no."

And then Jesse said, "Oh yeah, there's one more." Number eight.

Number eight's out in the field tending sheep.

I once heard a pastor preach on this passage in a sermon titled, I love it, "I Am Number Eight." I am number eight.

And I think it's beautiful imagery to think that David probably did feel like number eight. He's so overlooked that he didn't even get invited to the family meeting. You ever been there? Feel like you have a chance? You ever been there? Feel like you have a chance or a place at the table, whatever the table is, and everyone else is there, but you're not.

David knows what that's like.

But never forget that sometimes your mission starts well before others see you. Sometimes it starts in really humble places—in sheep fields.

Maybe in our context, corn fields. Obscure places. Behind the scenes. Uncelebrated areas.

David is so insignificant in his father's eyes that he didn't even get thought of. True story.

I know a different guy named David, and he's not the firstborn. I'm sorry, he's not the eighth born. He's the firstborn of eight.

And I met David Douglas in my 11-year chapter in Florida, and he became a big part of our church that we planted there.

And when I met him in 2012, David Douglas was a U.S. Postal delivery man, and he'd been doing it for decades. And it's not that that call was wrong, it all of a sudden though in his life didn't feel right for him.

God was starting to stir his heart in different ways, and he wasn't sure exactly what that meant.

But finally, one Sunday came and he knew it. This was the Sunday that he changed his commitment to God.

And on that Sunday, he committed to retiring early and sacrificing financially because he felt like God placed a call on his life to start a recovery ministry in our county for men, because there was not one in that area for men at the time.

And so he bought the first home for his ministry, hand in hand, in 2014, 2015. And it was one home for six men.

And you fast forward 10 years, and now they have four homes that impact more than 50 men, women, and children at the same time. Pretty awesome.

Check it out.

A few years after Hand in Hand opened, David, he was adopted and he never knew his birth mom and dad.

And so somebody bought him an ancestry or 23andMe thing—that's a really dangerous thing to do, by the way—and maybe you've heard some shocking results.

But I bet it pales in comparison to what David Douglas found out.

In his sixties, he thought, "I'll just do this and that way I can learn a little bit more about my birth mom and dad who I never met."

He was expecting them, of course, in his early sixties that they were probably passed away at that point.

But the moment you take the test, you know that your relatives, whether you know it or not, get notified.

And all of a sudden, all these people started coming out of the woodwork. And he found out that not only does he have seven brothers and sisters, but that his parents had been happily married for more than 60 years and were still alive.

And in his mom's heart, she said, "David, you know, I don't know..."

(The transcript then continues with many repetitions of "I don't know," which seems like a filler or glitch in the transcript.)

The number six represents man or sin. In the Bible, the number seven represents complete or perfect. Do you know what the number eight means? Eight all throughout the Bible is used for new beginnings.

New beginnings.

It's the number we associate with circumcision in the Old Testament where they dedicated the child. It's the number we associate with baptism. The number eight is the number of new beginnings.

And I just came to remind some of you that I've had a pretty tough first six chapters. That because God wrote a seventh chapter, you've got opportunity to be number eight and write an eighth chapter with the power of the Holy Spirit working in you.

And so some of you need to embrace and flip that mindset and say, "I am number eight. I am number eight."

Come on, let's say it together. "I am number eight."

Come on, say it again. "I am number eight."

Come on, Northwest. "I am number eight."

Come on, Fremont. "I am number eight."

And that's an okay number to be because that means I've got a new beginning.

And I believe that just like David walked from the shepherd field pasture into that home, he never once walked without an anointing after that.

And just like David Douglas in Mount Dora walked into church on a particular Sunday, he never once walked out without a clear call on his life.

There may be a few of you here today that you don't know how hard it was for the angels to have gotten your car safely here today—that as you walked into this space today, you had no idea that you could have a new beginning.

And today is that day where you embrace the fact that, "I am number eight," and God loves to do great things through all the number eights.

Amen.

Will you stand and let me pray for you?

God, we thank you that our story is never over because of you. We can have fun all month talking about these fictional pixelated characters, but may we make no mistake about it in this place, you are our God, and we deeply need you, and we deeply love you.

So, Lord, awaken or reawaken eighth chapters in this church across all campuses that give more glory to your Son, Jesus.

Amen.