

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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Rob Singleton: Well, thank you so much. Yeah. You mentioned earlier that I had written a book and, and just a little bit of background on that. I did a series probably three or four years ago on the life of David and I really found myself comparing him a lot to King Saul, because they weren't just you know, wasn't just the first and second kings in the Bible, but they were just such polar opposites. And I'll get back to that in just a moment because that's the story I follow in the book, the story of King Saul, who's really a narcissist, and King David, who is a man after God's own heart.

But getting back to where the book kind of fits in, years ago, I was, you know, where you guys are at in Charlotte, North Carolina, pastored a church that grew pretty big, and things were going really well. But, you know, it felt like things were on cruise control as it grew large. And then, you know, just like with your own vehicle, you know, when it starts to get out of alignment, you don't really notice that at first. But when the steering wheel starts shimmying a little bit and starts pulling the one side, you know that something's wrong. We were doing everything right, the church was about 15, 16, 17 years old and you know, our way of communicating the Great Commission, the Great Commandment was said like this, we exist to reach those that are far from God, that's evangelism. To raise them up in Christ, that's discipleship, and release them for His mission. So, reach, raise, release, and that was, that was going great. We were definitely following and fulfilling the Great Commission, the Great Commandment, however, I fell victim to something that has been on my heart and as it has been kind of at DEFCON five for me for years after this. I started seeing other churches move into town. And I'm, I'm, I'm always embarrassed to say this, because it's not something I'm proud of, but I just started seeing better optics at other churches. Some were growing faster, you know, others were, were definitely cooler. And I think about that, and I just cringe. Could anything be less important than how cool you are as a church?

But the hardest part was at some pastors that you know, weren't even necessarily biblically centered or living godly and holy lives, but they seem to be the most blessed of all. And, you know, I started looking at them at times more than I was even looking at God's Word and just saying, well, what are they doing right that we're doing wrong and, and you know, a lot of people were getting saved, a lot of lives were being changed, great things were happening, so I almost don't even know how I fell victim to this where I cared more about how we looked and keeping up with the Joneses in the pastor world than I, than I did at times about fulfilling the Great Commission, the Great Commandment. So, what I did notice, as I

looked around is that some of them were a lot better at presenting the right kind of optics. You know, how they looked and how they presented, how they were marketed was just a lot better. In other words, they were playing the social game, like I'd never seen it done before, the social media game. And I was in awe, but at times it was, it was not just in awe, it kind of changed to developing a sense of envy, you know, for what they had going. And at times, it made me doubt myself, like God do you just like them better, are you using them better, more effectively, because they're their heart is better. I mean, I just started questioning everything. It was not a, it was not a great season, for me in ministry and I think for a lot of people, this is where the lines can blur between ministry and marketing. If it leans too much toward marketing, you know, we can become more concerned about being liked then, and helping people to love God and being loved by Him. It's kind of a, it's kind of a miserable space to live in.

So, I left the church in North Carolina, mutually it was it was a mutual decision. It wasn't it wasn't the greatest parting and that was a real hurtful time in my life. But I soon was ministering at other churches and things were going really good again. But where all this came to a head is my wife and kids came about two years into, into Colorado, they came to me and my kids, especially they, it was kind of like an intervention. They sat me down and said, Dad, you know, what's going on, you never laugh anymore. You're no fun to be around and I still remember that. You know, it really hurt. And all of a sudden, this is when God started me on a journey to really, to really double check what I was doing, you know. I really wanted to get the word out about God. I really wanted to see people far from God reached. I really wanted to see them, I wanted to make disciples. I wanted to see them raised up. There's nothing I love more than teaching about Jesus and helping people grow in Christ, but I had to admit that it was almost a Dr. Jekyll, Mr. Hyde, I would sometimes cross over to this other kind of person because I got jealous or envious or myself, I wanted to be liked. I wanted to be noticed. And I know that's not an uncommon journey but for a pastor, that's a really dangerous place to be.

So, I also want to say this, too, that it's not unique at all to pastors. I think this is becoming a huge problem, where we have so many platforms now with Facebook and Instagram, and on and on and on, and ways to meet friends and connect with people. And all of that is great. I'm not suggesting we go back down, back to Downton Abbey days or anything like that. But they can real subtly and sometimes quickly turn into little shrines that we set up. And, you know, instead of connecting with people and helping further the gospel and get the word out of leveraging technology, you know, we can start to say, how can I get more followers? How can I get more likes, and, and pretty soon it can turn into our own little worship shrine, or at least, at least, that was a temptation for me, and but I think no matter your age, or gender, occupation or race, Satan is incredibly adept at luring us into this trap. And social media just makes it happen bigger and faster.

So, you know, I wrote this book to kind of be, you know, help people see that this isn't a ministry thing. It isn't a politics thing only. It's an everybody thing, you know, most of the worlds on social media and if we're not careful about how we use this incredibly valuable and worthwhile tool or tools, I should say, plural, that can cross a line that's damaging. And so how do you recognize that? How do you know that

this is this might be happening? You know, you start asking questions that are they're not in and of themselves bad questions, but you know, it might be do people like me? If they do, why aren't they paying as much attention to me on my platforms or whatever, as they are this gal or this guy? And, you know, why don't they comment more? Why don't I have as many likes? Why are my followers not as high? I mean, I think we can see this now, more than ever, with the with TikTok. Because it's funny, because even Christians will, they're pretty blunt about it. This is why I do TikTok, this is what I want out of it. I want more followers. You know, everybody leave comments. And, you know, whoever asked me to do the craziest thing, no matter what it is, I'll do it. You just see all this almost nutty stuff that people are willing to do to get more followers and to get more likes, and to get a bigger audience. I mean sometimes just short of trading their soul for it. And yet, some people can't see it as any more than harmless and just funny.

So, we're kind of using this faulty matrix, it's just a, when we do this is just a short hop, skip and a jump to, you know, from do people like me to does God even like me? You know, never mind that He's, He's already answered that with a resounding yes by giving His life on the cross in our place. And the most well-known verse in the Bible, John 3:16, you know, says, "*For God so loved the world ...*" I like to put it this way, God loved the world so much that that He did what? He gave. He gave extravagant, extravagantly. He gave His one and only Son on a rescue mission. So, there's really no, there's really no legitimate way to say, you know, I wonder if God loves me or likes me. He adores us, we are the crowning achievement of all creation created in His image. And yet, when we get completely buried, I think it's social media for some of the wrong reasons, we can begin to question some of the most obvious things in the Bible. It's, it's not a secular problem only, it's a Christian problem too where if our focus is on the wrong thing, and we literally start questioning God and everything else, how can that be healthy?

Well, I notice people keep going down that path and, and they'll start saying, you know, first of all, do people like me? Does God even like me? Then, you know, why isn't this working? And by this, I mean, social media. You know, since they're they decided to make that subtle shift and get their answers of their value from likes and follows if they're not getting that the next question is why isn't this working? Which is another form of saying, why don't I feel loved? But I think that's the wrong question. You know, a better one is, like I said, focusing on God's Word, and the fact that you are loved. Sometimes I don't feel loved, but according to God's Word, I absolutely am loved, even when I don't feel like it. But when we're going as social media more than God's Word, obviously, you know, the more time we spend in God's Word, the more you know, comforted and at peace we're going to be that He loves us, and that we can get to know Him and get a closer relationship with Him. But you know, if you're spending two minutes with God in the morning and 10 hours on social media, I mean, social media is going to win, especially if your approach to it is unhealthy.

So, you know, I just noticed a lot of people even in my own church, and I pastored, three, four different churches and planted churches, helped plant other churches, and this isn't unique, you know. To The

Summit where I'm at now or to the church in North Carolina. I was finding it everywhere. In fact, it's getting worse, where people are looking at the wrong things and then when their feelings don't match, they just put more emphasis into feelings, they just try to help their feelings get there even more with all these wrong vehicles. And then they end up feeling more disconnected than ever more, lonely and more shallow and more inauthentic and small and let me just boil it down as simply as this, Scripture makes it really plain, we are who we hang out with. Proverbs 12:26 says "*the righteous choose their friends carefully, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.*" So, I'm not talking about, or this Proverb isn't talking about wicked friends, as much as the wickedness or the foolishness of spending most of our time and energy with godless people or with godless pursuits, like going after it not in the way that's healthy, or the way that God describes in His Word that we ought to go after friendships and relationships.

So yeah, it just got to be such a big problem. I preached this series, now back to that, on the life of David and the life of King Saul. And the more we got into this, it was supposed to be, I think, a six-week series three years ago. It turned into an 11-week series. It's one of the most popular series we ever did, it really helped people to see, in a real clear way how to avoid this trap. And then, from there, the series kind of turned into an idea for this book, so that I could help people. And the title came from, you know, I think, I think psychology or medically speaking, we would call this issue of being obsessed with being over-liked, we would call it narcissism. You know, just when everything's about you, and I would call, you know, a nicer way to say it is, you know, are you just over-liked? Are you oversaturated in this world where your value and your self-worth come from little thumbs ups? Or little smiley and fire and heart emojis and all that. If so, then your over-liked, you know, being liked has become a problem. It's crossed a line. And, you know, through this book I'm able to use the Word of God to show people that they're not, you know, they're not some outlier, they're not a freak. They are, they're falling into a trap that has just gotten much easier for I think Satan to pull off because of social media.

So, people in the Bible, you know, felt this way as well. There's a ton of people in the Bible that, not just King Saul and King David but really everybody, you know, even before social media they fell for this. I choose to use King Saul and King David because they are polar opposites. King Saul, his verse and in my book is Proverbs 3:7 which says, "*Be not wise in your own eyes, fear the LORD and turn away from evil.*" And you know, I just picture Saul, he literally, you know, those, there's these circles with a line through them. I don't even know what officially that's called. But, you know, if you don't want somebody's dog doing their thing on your yard, you might have a circle with a picture of a dog in it and a line drawn through it, which means no dogs allowed or forbidden or off-limits, and it just feels like Saul was so, so off on this that I just picture him with that verse in his office or in his throne room, in a circle with a line drawn through it, saying, you know, I'm not going to be, I'm not going to follow the Lord. I am going to be wise in my own eyes, I'm not going to fear God. I'm not going to turn from evil. If it gets me popular, and the people love me, I'm going to do exactly the opposite of what God says.

And then you contrast him with King David, you know, in 1 Samuel 13:14, and even again, in the book of Acts, Acts 13:22. He's just simply called a man after God's own heart. So, David was a man after

God's own heart while Saul had a heart that was never after God, they're complete opposites. And then I realized that the more that I studied this, the struggle in Scripture, you know, I was trying to find where it started, what's the issue, what gets this going. And of course, you can go back to Satan in the fall and how he was the first worshiper ever, He's, you know, the most powerful being that God created, his job was to elicit worship of God from the angels around the throne of God and somewhere that went south pretty quickly. And Satan decided I want I don't want to deflect worship to God, I want to receive it myself. And so, the more I look at this, you know, people could say, well, it all starts with pride, but I think it all comes down to worship. I really do. I mean, Satan did not like the optics of God receiving all the worship.

He thought, you know, I love worship. I want worship. Here's the problem, we were never created to carry the weight of worship. Worship is about worthiness, that the only one worthy of having, having you bow down and worship Him is God. So, if we even attempt to carry this, if we even attempt to, even subtly, you know, by making our lives all about followers and likes, and using social media wrongly, that's a that's a form of self-worship. But if we even enter that arena, and in the most small or subtle way, try to get people to put us on the throne or worship us. That is, I think, the most dangerous trap we can possibly fall into. And like I said, it's not just King Saul, it's not just David, there's a whole lot of others. It's the woman at the well. Jesus went to meet her in Samaria, they were a hated group of people, and yet Jesus reaches out to this, this woman who had had five husbands and, you know, naturally, the woman, the women in Samaria didn't like her because she was always on the take for it sounds like every husband in town, and then, but He meets her and knows that she's a hurting woman. And He knows this, because she hasn't gone to the well in the early morning when it's cool. But in the Middle East, she goes, she's there around noon, it's probably 110 degrees. Everybody is burning up and hot, she goes there alone, and it just doesn't make any sense that she would be there and carry, you know, these heavy containers of water back to the village, unless she was trying to be there when she intentionally knew people wouldn't be there because people didn't like her.

So, without getting into that, into too much detail there, Jesus gets in this conversation. And she immediately has help, has hope rather, because Jesus who's a Jew pays attention to what helps her to see that, that she's not just a complete outcast. Very quickly, she starts to believe that God loves her again. And then this worship question comes up. I mean, almost out of left field that almost seems unnatural in the conversation, but this is all in John chapter 4, but in verses 20, 19 to 23, she shifts the question to worship, and she says to Jesus, *“sir, I perceive that you're a prophet. Our fathers worshipped on this mountain but you say that in Jerusalem is the place to worship.”* Where people out of worshipers 21, Jesus said her, *“woman, believe me the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor Jerusalem, where you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know. We worship what we do know.”*

Then that whole section goes on to say it ends with, it ends with true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth for the father is seeking such people. In other words, stop worrying about worship optics, and get to the heart of worship. It's not going to matter what physical building you're in. Your

view of worship is what's off kilter. Your view of worship actually may be what got you in this bad place in the first place. And then, and then I started finding real literally everybody in the Bible who kind of, who kind of goes off can fall into a worship trap. And how many of the stories were about worship and how many of the stories were about people caught up in, in getting people to look at them or, or looking at outward appearance and stuff and putting more weight on that than we do on God.

There's Esther, where the entire book of Esther, the whole story was, in inside an optics bubble. The setting for the entire book is a Miss Universe beauty pageant and the most powerful King on earth is looking for a wife. He doesn't look for the heart, he doesn't look for personality, he's just looking for beauty. And yet Esther teaches him that there's so much more. So that whole book is about, you know, what, are you going to worship yourself and outward stuff, or God like Esther did?

You've got Paul, the apostle Paul, who many, you know, say is the, is the best Christian or the strongest Christian who ever lived. And you know, his name was changed to Paul, but when he was Saul he cared about his religious and physical pedigree, he cared about his zealousness for the, for God, that he was a Pharisee, that he knew the Law, that he persecuted Christians. So, he's on the right team. Scripture says that he was from the tribe of Benjamin, he was a Hebrew of Hebrews. In other words, Saul, before he was transformed by God, all he cared about was optics. All he cared about was, do you really like me because I'm more qualified than anybody. Look at my list of qualifications. But as soon as God got a hold of his heart, all that changed, and he started worshiping, you know, Jesus, started worshiping God, and, you know, found peace, found fulfillment, found his purpose in life, really became the most dynamic Christian ever, wrote most of the New Testament, all of that, simply because his perspective on worship and optics, you know, putting out optics that he, he thought would be favorable, optics that he thought would make people appreciate and like them, and that all shifted to, you know, caring more about putting out optics about Jesus Christ, and that people knew Him. And really, I began to see that the whole Bible from Genesis to Revelation is all about this, you know, the people trying to, you know, from Adam and Eve in the garden being convinced that, you know, worshipping themselves or running the show themselves, would be a better idea than worshipping God, that God was holding out on them. And honestly, that hasn't changed from then until now.

You know, I'm convinced you could look at any, any individual or even any group, you could look at the, the Jewish people, God's chosen people throughout the Old Testament, whose main assignment to be set aside, was to teach the world how much God loved them, and that they ought to follow and worship Him and yet, they never really did good at that. They got caught up as a people, as a whole group, just like any group does, I'm not picking on picking on the Jews, but they got caught up in how good do we look. And we're God's chosen people. And, you know, the only place that worship is here, and the only way to worship is how we worship and, but it was really about, they started carrying the weight of worship themselves, and started thinking they were better than others. You know, Christians, it's a real temptation for us to fall into the same thing. Honestly, it's a real temptation for any world religion to fall into the same thing and I think they do fall into that. So, all that to say, you know, why

did you write *Overliked*? I wrote *Overliked* as the urgency of this problem, and the understanding that it was huge, and the understanding that social media was only making it worse. And if we don't understand or use it in a godly way, we're going to fall into a trap that can literally ruin your life, or can draw you so far away from God, and leading others to God, to really a little bubble where your whole world is, you know, what do people think about me? How do I get more people to like me? How do I project an image that's not necessarily the true me, but at least it's an image that I think people will like, and that way they'll leave me alone and let me live my life?

I realized alarmingly that this problem was huge. And I didn't just want to write a book and say, here's a problem. Good luck with that. I mean, I wanted to, to write a book that could show us a path back, show us a path to John 10:10, where Jesus said, you know, I mean, the evil one, he came to kill, and to destroy and to rob you of life, the thief he's called John 10:10, Satan. But the other half of that verse says, Jesus said, "*I came that you might have life abundantly*" and overflowing. And yet I don't see a lot of Christians living that kind of life, and so *Overliked* is really to bring them back to that. You know, it's not to say don't use social media, don't become a monk and live in a cave. It's none of that. It's saying, you know, you were born for such a time as this. You know, God, obviously, you know, He wouldn't have had you born or He wouldn't have any of us alive now, if that wasn't His will. So, living in the world that we live in, that ship has sailed. It's a social media world, it's a high-tech world, learn to use it for God. Learn to lead people to worship of God and not fall into the traps of worshipping yourself and learn to get on mission. The most important mission in life is not to figure out how to get people to like you, it's to figure out how to get people to follow Jesus Christ. It's to make disciples and it's to do that in a loving way. The Great Commandment says love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and your neighbor as yourself. I like to think of it as is the Great Commission is, is the what, that's what we should be doing. The Great Commandment is how we should be doing it, how we should be doing the Great Commission, we should be doing it not, you know, matter of factly or not like a business, but we should be doing it in love. And so the whole book just teaches people how to flip the script on worship, you know, and get back to worshipping God and, and not fall in the trap of worshipping self.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, that's so, Pastor Rob, thank you so much. I think you've given our listeners a lot to think about, you know, and I love you helping us really understand that all of, starting all the way back in the garden with the fall of man, and when the devil really said, hey, hold up, I want the worship — I want. And the temptation of that for all of us right now is, and I think he even called it the worship trap, that each one of us has a propensity to fall into that worship trap and point the worship towards ourselves. And that question of is, is God's love and approval of you enough? You know, and so I would love for you to, to help our listeners, can you give us, and I know you go into this in the book, and so, I don't I don't want to give away all of the content from the book, I don't think we would have enough time just because you have a lot of pointers on this, but can you give our listeners just one pointer on, if they are realizing today that wow, I have, I've fallen into the worship trap. I am going to social media. I am maybe even going to my friends or my boss or my children to be worshiped. I'm getting, I have

fallen into the worship trap. What is one practical thing that they can do today to help them stop the spin and the spiral of that worship trap?

RS: You know, I think that when we hear, use that phrase back that I said a couple of times, and I think it sounds so extreme that people will blow it off. In other words, people will, you'll say, you know, be careful not to fall into the worship trap or self-worship. And I think here's one thing you can do. You know, hear that honestly, don't hear self-worship and blow it off and go well, I'm not worshipping myself. I mean, in fact, I'm offended. What a terrible thing to say. Because honestly, self-worship can look so subtle and so small, that you're not going to give an honest answer if you don't do an honest evaluation. So, the first thing I would say is tell the truth about your worship alignment. And listen, if you need help, if you, if you don't want to face that there's a I don't even remember how this happened, but on at least iPhones or at least on a lot of Apple products, they've got this new thing, I don't remember signing up for it. It freaks me out a little bit. But at the end of the week, it'll tell me how much time I spent online. It'll tell me how much time I spent with social media and stuff. And it says, hey, you spent an average of eight hours a day this week, to give you an example. And then it'll follow it up with, that's 25% more time than you spent last week. So, listen, if you want to argue this or you just want to believe that you don't have a problem, why don't you get that installed and it'll tell you if you have a problem. If you're spending eight hours a day online, you know, you have a problem. And now some of you might, and sometimes people might say, well, I, I spend that online, but I'm preaching. I spend that online, but I'm worshipping God. Probably not. Probably not to the tune of eight hours a day. I don't know. So, the first thing is just be honest with yourself, because then you can make a realignment, that really, that will really work. But you can't realign something if you're driving down the road, your steering wheel, shimmying, your car's pulling to the left, and you're saying I don't have an alignment problem. Okay, well, I don't know if I can help you.

KO: Yeah, yeah. Pastor Rob, that, that's so good. I love that you brought it all the way back to the beginning, because that analogy that you gave about the car is probably out of alignment before it starts going crazy down the highway, and I just wrote the words, pay attention. And I think that that is something that we can all do that so practical. And that goes back to am I, am I in God's Word? What is that telling me about what I am doing every day and how I'm living my life? Am I journaling down what I'm going through each day? What things stood out to me? What made me feel burdened today? Where did I notice those feelings of jealousy? And I like that, if we're able to, like you said, kind of keep touch on how we're doing on a daily and a weekly basis, we will notice the small ways that the enemy is trying to sneak in and steer us away from what we're really supposed to be doing and that is to give God the glory. And so, thank you so much for coming on the show today. This teaching was so helpful. And I just appreciate your honesty and vulnerability because you really just leveled the playing field and gave us all permission to just kind of, you know, recognize that this is something that we all struggle with. As long as we're on this side of eternity, we're always going to struggle with putting the glory back where it belongs and that's with God. And so friends, if you got a lot of out of today's teaching, we know that

you're going to want to purchase Pastor Rob's book called *Overliked: Finding Direction, Courage and meaningful Relationships in a Society crippled by Social Media*. We will link to that in the show notes at Proverbs31.org/listen.

Meredith Brock: Also, we want to remind you that our annual “She Speaks” conference is happening online from June 24 through the 26th this year. We really don't want you to miss it so, hop on over to shespeaksconference.com to get registered. We really want you to join us and thank you all so much for being with us today. We pray that this episode helped you know the Truth and live the Truth of God's Word because we believe that when you do, it changes everything.