

Episode 20, Got Your Six, Part 1

Amy: This is episode 20 of Untangled Faith. On this episode, we're talking about the infamous "got your six" Ramsey solutions team meeting that was held after my husband, Nathan, and his team leader resigned. You'll also get to hear Dave sharing accounts of friends of his who faced allegations and how Dave defended them.

Dave: I got your six. It's a problem when people don't have it.

Melissa: So another thing you hear is this empathy is reserved for the accused.

Dave: Mark had a mouth on him, rough and tumble in your face, said stuff he shouldn't say, did things you shouldn't do, but didn't really do anything wrong except just melt a whole bunch of little liberal snowflakes.

Amy: This is Amy Fritz, and you're listening to Untangled Faith, a podcast for anyone who has found themselves confused or disillusioned in their faith journey. If you want to hold onto your faith while untangling it from all the things that are not good and true, this is the place for you.

Not long after Nathan's resignation in the spring of 2019, I stumbled across an article credited to Dave on the Ramsey Solutions website. It was entitled "I got your six." As I read through the article, I stopped short when I got to this portion. This is what it said. "It's hard to find coworkers, employers, employees, friends, or even family that got your six. These days, people are guilty as soon as they are charged. And social media makes that even worse. If someone is accused of something, most people's first reaction is to believe the accusation."

It seemed awfully coincidental that Dave would talk about loyalty and the problem with employees who weren't loyal.

I wondered if this had anything to do with Nathan leaving. Later, when I heard the audio of a meeting that happened just weeks after my husband resigned and it had the exact same words in it, it seemed pretty clear that this article was written based on that meeting. I've never asked Dave, but unless someone else had recently resigned because they disagreed with how they were handling this specific situation, he was discussing my husband.

There's so much more to this meeting though, than the comments about Nathan. Melissa Hogan is joining me to walk with me through some of the segments of the audio from that meeting. You need to know that this episode contains content that is not suitable for small children and the subject matter and details we discuss regarding abuse could be triggering.

There's a link in the show notes to a transcript of this conversation. For some of you, reading this episode may be less traumatic than listening.

Make yourself comfortable. We're about to visit a Ramsey Solutions team meeting. Melissa Hogan and I share a few thoughts about the meeting and the people listening before we dive in.

Melissa: There is a lot going on in this entire audio, but even in this first section, there's a lot going on, but it really gives me a lot of empathy for people who were in that meeting, because it's hard for your brain to dissect everything that's going on here. You just take it in because it's through storytelling and impressions.

I have empathy for people who did not realize how bad and un-Christ-like, toxic, this speech is.

Amy: When you're a good person, you are going to assume other people you're working with, your leaders, your CEO, is also a good person. So you're not going to come into a team meeting thinking I need to listen really closely and I should think about whether it's true or whether it's not.

That's just too much energy for most people to have to expend. So if somebody was sitting in this meeting and they're listening to this now, and they come away with something very different than when they were in it originally, it's not that you aren't a smart person.

Melissa: No. A practice that I've always engaged in, and I think in many cases can be good, is to give people the benefit of the doubt, especially if they have represented themselves to you and publicly as a fellow believer. But on the other hand, God calls us to use discernment. And when you look at something and the evidence is there that something is really, really wrong, God calls us to notice that. And he calls us to ask questions in order to live out our testimony and to make wise decisions.

Amy: There are some people that are listening that have a real personal connection to this particular meeting and the situation, but there are other people listening that have been involved in abusive environments. Going through and listening and making sense of the things have been told or said, or written is a helpful exercise for anybody. I think some of these principles are going to apply to other people.

This meeting that we're going to listen to today comes from the audio that was in the RNS article in January of 2021. And to put this in context, this is the very first all team meeting that was held after my husband and his leader resigned.

I've cut out a few things because of time constraints, but you can hear the entire audio in the RNS SoundCloud link that I will put in the show notes. Today, Melissa and I are going to listen to this meeting along with you and we're going to listen to one section at a time, and then we're going to talk about what we just heard. Breaking this meeting up into sections should make this whole thing more manageable.

So this is the first time the whole team was together and the first time that Dave had an opportunity to address everybody. I think the previous week they were gone at an entre leadership event. So this would have been maybe a little over a week later, sometime in May of 2019.

Dave: About 10 years ago, maybe a little more, maybe a little less. I, my timeframes get messed up.

We had a team member here, go to another team member and say, "Our boss is having an affair with so-and-so."

Well, that doesn't go well around here, in case y'all didn't know. So we gather up these two, finally, it makes it into my office. Nobody brought it to leadership. They just all talked about it, which of course is called gossip.

And so we bring the two little gossips in and we sat down and said, "Okay, pray tell where did you get this information?"

"From my hairdresser."

"Your hairdresser told you someone here..."

“Yeah. Cause she was making fun of Ramsey because we're not really Christians. And we don't really do what we say we're going to do and we tolerate everything just like the world does and dah, dah, dah, dah, dah.”

And I'm like, oh, so we call the hairdresser. If you didn't know, there's a great ethics book on hairdresser ethics on not revealing your sources. And we're like, “Pray tell, where did you hear this?” And she wasn't gonna tell us. So there was quite a little dust up.

And finally she found wisdom and decided to tell us who told her that someone here was having an affair with their assistant. And because we bring in the two accused, right? And confronted them. And they're like, “No.” That's just, I mean, their reaction was kind of like passing the lie detector test, you know?

So we're like, “No, I don't think so.” So somebody's just spreading gossip, this is just rumor mill. Right? So finally she reveals her source. Guess what? It's another team member who we're already working with cause she's a little nutty. And so we bring in this girl and we said, “Uh, did you tell your hairdresser that so-and-so is having an affair?”

“No.”

“Yeah, you did.”

“Okay. I did.”

“What on God's green earth possesses you to take information like this that you might think is true outside the building to mess up our reputation with your freaking hairdresser of all things. Why do you think they're having an affair? We've confronted them. They say they're not, and we believe them.

Why do you think they're having an affair?”

“Oh, well maybe they're not. I just thought they looked at each other a lot.”

We fired her right then, not with anger, but I did not want people with that much brainpower working here. This is a teeny tiny little crazy brain. In a teeny, tiny, crazy little head and she will slit your throat from behind, won't she? And mine, and this place, and certainly that poor guy and gal who got accused of something they weren't doing. By the way, it's 10 years later and it has been

proven without a doubt that this was a false accusation. They were not having an affair.

Amy: Let's talk about the first story that Dave tells. He starts out 10 years ago, somebody's hairdresser,

Melissa: I think you and I would say that's a stylist. Hairdresser is kind of a boomer expression.

Amy: What's your impression of what happened here?

Melissa: I think something that runs through this whole section, obviously, and then the entire speech, are very derogatory terms for people and situations, most notably for women. I think God calls us not to speak of people in derogatory terms. And we've got things like two little gossips and very mocking tones.

Amy: Yes.

Melissa: “Pray, tell.” And “she found wisdom” and “she's a little nutty,” “crazy little brain.” These are all very derogatory. And most notably, far as I can tell, they all talk about women.

Amy: We don't know who the “two little gossips” were. Our inference from this is, it sounds like all these negative comments are referring to women.

Melissa: And that's consistent with the rest of the speech.

You know, that's something you hear here a lot. And so starting at the beginning about the hairdresser, the stylist, he says—well we went to her and she wasn't going to tell us. But she (quote) “found wisdom.” So let's break that down. This hairstylist is a third party, not apparently employed by, related to, or in any way connected with the company other than she's the stylist to several people who work there.

The idea that a influential, wealthy, large employer in the area can go to a third party and bully them into something should disturb everybody.

Amy: In Dave's own words. It says there was quite a little dust up.

Melissa: Yeah. Imagine if you were that person, where you make a living in the community where this person has lots of influence and money and power and

connections, and they are trying to get you to do something. That is a bully if I have ever heard of one.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: And he characterizes it as “boundaries are bad.” And I think we've seen that theme in other places that you're slowly groomed to not have good boundaries, that if you have boundaries, that that is a problem. And that is your problem.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: So same here, that it was her “wisdom” was that she did not hold her boundaries in being bullied by a powerful community person.

Amy: There is this technique that Dave employs throughout all of this. And it is this assumption that everyone listening is—obviously agrees with him. He does this thing where he keeps saying, “Right?” Like, you’re with me, right?

Melissa: His answer is always the right answer. Of course, people are gonna sit there and be like, yeah, yeah.

Amy: Meanwhile, these people sitting in this meeting have no idea where he's going with this or why he's telling this.

Melissa: And that's why I continue to have empathy for people who, if you go back and listen to it multiple times and still say, oh no, he's completely right. Yeah. That's where I might have a bone to pick with you.

But I don't for people who were sitting in there and had no idea what he was doing.

Amy: Yeah. I have a couple of questions about it as well. My first question is if nobody went to their leader, how did Dave ever find out about this? If the only people were these two little gossips, they are the only people talking and saying things they shouldn't have said, how did it get to him?

I also was looking at some of the image repair techniques. And one of those is to reduce the offensiveness of what somebody is asserting by attacking the accuser.

Melissa: DARVO.

Amy: According to Wikipedia, DARVO is an acronym for deny, attack and reverse victim and offender. It is a common manipulation strategy where the abuser denies that the abuse ever took place, attacks the victim for attempting to hold the abuser accountable and claims that they, the abuser are actually the victim in the situation, thus reversing the reality of the victim and the offender.

So somebody is bringing some concerns here and instead of the problem being "Oh my goodness. We should figure out if something is really wrong." I think what we're hearing from Dave is the real issue here is that the reputation of the company must be protected. And the real villain isn't that there may be something bad going on.

The real problem they're trying to solve is who is saying these things.

Melissa: The real problem is any accusation.

Amy: Accusation.

So these are the things that Dave says about the accusers. Nobody brought it to leadership. He mentioned gossips, two little gossips. He also is very sure to frame this stylist as making fun of Ramsey.

So now we know also, this is another...

Melissa: She's bad, the stylist is bad. Her decisions are bad.

Amy: She's bad too. Mocks her desire to keep confidence of her clients, uses the word "nutty," uses the word "girl." Here we are talking about women like they are children.

Melissa: And I think we'll hear that in some of the later clips, the infantilizing of women.

Amy: And he talks about brain power, teeny tiny, little crazy brain, teeny, tiny, crazy little head.

And then of course he is sure to tell you, in the end, she is dangerous. She's trying to hurt you.

Melissa: Slit your throat.

Amy: She's a threat to you.

Melissa: Throughout this audio we'll hear him characterize finding out the truth or the search for truth or any kind of accusations, as dangerous.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: That it's information, the truth, accusations, those are the problem. Not something that might have actually been done. And you know what? We should search for the truth in a way that's a little more in depth than asking them if they did the wrong thing.

Amy: How did Dave get to the bottom of it? Let's talk about Dave's way of investigating allegations of wrongdoing.

Melissa: Yes. "We've confronted them. They say they're not. And we believe them." His entire search for the truth here apparently was to ask the accused if they're doing the wrong thing. Now, I don't know about you. Have you ever watched Dateline?

Amy: Did you do the thing? No. Okay.

Melissa: So even in the general world, it's unlikely that someone who's accused of something is going to just fess up and say they did it, but let's get down to brass tacks for the situations Dave himself has been involved in.

I can personally say I was involved in situations where it seems like they asked the accused party if they had done the thing and the person says, "No, I haven't," only to find out, whether it's two years later or 10 years later, the person, indeed, had done the thing. So he has actual personal experience with the fact that asking someone if they've done the wrong thing is not reliable whatsoever.

Amy: When Dave approaches the person that actually said it to the hairstylist, which is interesting.

Melissa: Not only does he not believe her denial, he engages in a tactic that is very psychologically abusive. And that is to tell that person what they did or what they think. That's a common practice of somebody who doesn't have

boundaries and who is a bully is, "I'm gonna tell you what you think. I'm going to tell you what you did." Incredibly unhealthy and inappropriate.

Amy: And the other thing we have here is, as Dave is telling the story, we see and I've listened to some other people call this sort of thing, leakage.

Melissa: Yes.

Amy: we are hearing a real emotion from Dave here. We're hearing real emotion. When he says, "What on God's green earth possesses you to take information like this that you might think is true outside the building to mess up our reputation."

He has a real anger in that. And then later on, he says, we fired her on the spot, but we weren't angry. "Not with anger." I don't know. I am having a hard time believing there wasn't anger.

Melissa: Believe the action. Believe what you actually see and hear in the emotion. That is way more trustworthy than somebody saying, no.

Amy: And not only does he put her on the spot, tells her what she's thinking, but he says, and before she even gets a chance to say what she's thinking and why she believes that her fears are founded, he tells her he's already decided that it doesn't matter what she says.

He's already made up his mind.

Melissa: Before you can even say, "Here's my evidence. Here is what I know." He's going to already tell you, I'm basically not going to believe you, because I already believe them. I experienced that personally.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: It was: I already believe them. So there's not much you can do to make your case, because you're already wrong to begin with.

Amy: Yeah. And then Dave minimizes it at the very end of this, by saying, "Ten years later, we've proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that it absolutely wasn't true."

Melissa: He might be the first person that has proved a negative. That's, that's really hard to do. So another thing you hear here is this empathy is reserved for the accused.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: Empathy or the characterization of empathy. He's telling people that the real issue is we should feel for the people who are accused. There is no empathy for the hairdresser having boundaries. There's no empathy for the awkward position that the people were put in that believed that these people were having an affair.

Empathy is for the accused. This is certainly “the poor guy and gal.” We've got another one there. They got accused of something they weren't doing. The assumption is when you're accused, you didn't do it. And how you find out is you ask them. And the empathy is really for the people who were accused, not for anybody else.

Amy: And he does that tactic again, that you must be with me by saying, “and she will slit your throat from behind, won't she?” And she is a threat because he says, not only is she a threat to that person, he says, “and mine.” So it's a threat to Dave. “And this place.” So this isn't just somebody bringing a concern. This is somebody that's going to hurt you.

She's going to hurt me. And it's such a violent characterization of it like to “slit your throat.”

Melissa: So what that does to the listeners, then, it preloads into them, accusations about anyone here, they're a threat to your job. You better not accuse anybody of anything. Two, you better ignore any accusations and three, you better actually shut down and maybe even report any allegations.

Cause they're a threat to your job. Nobody wants to feel like their livelihood is threatened. And by aligning himself with the Bible and Christ, it's a threat to your faith for people to accuse other people. Not—we should actually search for the truth. And Jesus is the embodiment of truth.

Amy: Yes.

Melissa: And calls us to have discernment, which is to look at evidence.

And look at what is before us and patterns and compare that to the Word. That's what God calls us to do, not to close our eyes, close our ears, believe everything that comes out of somebody's mouth and accusations are the threat.

Amy: I don't think this is a typical thing to be in a meeting and have the leader sort of bring up the idea that people are trying to destroy them.

I would say that would be a red flag. I would press pause and ask the question. Is this true? Are people, why would this be true? Are people really trying to destroy us? What is the real problem here? It sounds like hyperbole to me.

At this point, Dave transitions into three minutes of talking about the origins of the phrase, "I've got your six." I'm not including it in this episode due to time constraints, but I'll link the entire audio in the show notes. In summary, Dave shares that this phrase is a military term, "six" refers to the six o'clock position. In reference to a clock, 12 o'clock would be directly in front of you. Six o'clock is directly behind you. To have someone's six means you're in a position to defend someone.

Dave: I got your six, it's a big deal. It's um, it's a problem when people don't have it and don't understand it. See, I'm lucky I grew up in this hillbilly culture, like I'm talking about. And one of the things hillbillies have is this sick level of loyalty. We, by my upbringing, we stand with our friends. We got your six, we stand with our family, we got your six.

We stand with our church and don't run them down. I got your six pastor. We are so prone to this level of loyalty, we carry it to a toxic extreme all the way over into stupid. Like when the family is wrong and completely misbehaving, we still stand with them because we're just stupid. You shouldn't do that at that point, but this is seared into me and into this place from our upbringing. In my upbringing, we don't do Switzerland.

There is no neutral. You're either fer me or you're agin me.

Amy: He's told us all about the origins of the, got your six. And now he is rounding it out with a callback to what he said earlier about the person that they fired by saying, "the enemy is not going to come in from behind you and slit your throat."

Melissa: Who is the enemy?

The enemy is an accuser. Any type of an accuser is an enemy. And by the way, they're probably wrong. And here's your CEO telling you—loyalty is one of the highest qualities you can have, right? And accusers are bad. Accusers slit the throat.

Amy: Did Dave actually grew up a hillbilly?

Melissa: My understanding is he grew up in Antioch, which I've lived in Antioch. And that's not really...

Amy: Didn't he grow up in sort of like a middle-class family that was like real estate agents?

Melissa: That's my understanding.

Amy: I'm confused about what he's saying about loyalty though. If I was sitting in that meeting, I think I would hear them, the prevalent theme more than the little aside that he said. So mostly he's saying—loyalty is good. This is what we do. We are, we got your six, we've got it for you, our pastor, we've got it for our church. We got it for our family. We've got it for our friends. And then he says this thing that people think is funny. They're laughing about it, right? Like, “We take it to an extreme,” he said, “and you shouldn't.”

Melissa: That's some leakage right there.

This toxic level. He says: We have this sick level of loyalty. We're prone to this level of loyalty. We carry it to a toxic extreme all the way over into stupid. So he's admitting that he exhibits toxic loyalty. And then telling people that's really good.

Amy: “People who are completely misbehaving, we will stand with them because we're just stupid.”

Melissa: That's some leakage right there. But let's go to our call as believers. Loyalty is not a fruit of the spirit. Blind loyalty, which is what he's describing here is the opposite of discernment.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: I don't see how anyone should advise that this is how we act in any way, other than the opposite of Christ.

Amy: Yeah.

Dave: So when pastor Perry Noble was drop-kicked to the curb and fired a few years ago down in his church in South Carolina, huge, booming church. Perry and I known each other for years at that point. The first thing I did, while all of social media was ripping him to shreds: "I knew there was something wrong with that guy. I knew that guy was horrible."

The first thing I did was contact him and say, "Dude, I got your back. I got your six. Until I have information that is different than given to me by a purple egg on Twitter. I got your back." It came out over time through Perry's own mouth to me and to others that he had a drinking problem.

And he was belligerent as crud as a leader. And he really did need to be fired. And he went into rehab and has come out and is doing a lot better these days. But until I know different, I'm not piling on. Cause I don't want people to do that to me.

Amy: At this point in the speech, Dave is transitioning into giving some examples of people whose six he has. And the first example he gives us is pastor Perry Noble.

Melissa: The first thing I want to do is go to Dave's conclusion, which summarizes his whole point here. And the last thing he says in this anecdote is, "Cause I don't want people to do that to me."

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: So the point of this is: Don't believe accusers. Don't accuse anyone, because I don't want people to do that to me.

Amy: Yeah.

Perry Noble is a friend of his. Talks about how Perry Noble had been fired from his church.

Melissa: And if you go read about the things that Perry Noble admitted to personally at the time he was fired. So at the time Dave was apparently calling

him and saying he had his back, it says he has “a compulsive need to have control over relationships.”

And that is a huge red flag.

Amy: Yes.

Melissa: If you have read anything about domestic abuse, coercive control, The idea that someone has a compulsive need to have control over relationships is a huge red flag. His church said his “posture towards marriage” was a problem. So I look at those two things and put them together and say he was a very unhealthy and unsafe person for his spouse who eventually did take advantage of God's rescue of divorce.

It says that he chose not to address those, that he was abusing alcohol and other behaviors. And he went through rehab and, almost immediately started preaching again, running a consultancy business and all of this in the interim. And I think what you find is that people who recognize their unhealthy behaviors and who are truly repentant, aren't so quick to jump back in to doing the exact same thing. They take some time to contemplate and repair and own their behavior. This is completely inconsistent with someone who has owned their harm and seeks to do differently.

Amy: I don't know how Dave first heard that Perry Noble was let go from his church, but I read the reporting on it. I read the statement from the church. They also released a statement from Perry Noble at the same time who says, yeah, he corroborated what they said. “I should be fired.” I put that next to how Dave is characterizing this and I wonder, how could both of those things be true?

Melissa: That's what we see in other parts of the speech, this either exaggeration or manipulation of the truth in order to meet the ends he has by the speech, or in order to make himself seem to be the good guy.

He's a good guy in this story.

Amy: Yeah, he is the hero. He's like, first thing I did was contact him and tell him, dude, I've got your back, I've got your six. And then he says, it came out over time through Perry's own mouth that he had a drinking problem and so on and so forth.

Melissa: So it sounds to me, like in the other story, until that person looks at Dave and admits the allegations, he is not going to believe them no matter what type of evidence you have, because again...

Amy: He's already admitted it with his own mouth, but he, maybe he didn't admit it in that phone call with Dave. Dave could have known the truth if he had looked—the day, if they had looked at that messages from the church and from Perry Noble himself. I just don't understand like how he leaves this impression that it was a while later that came out.

That is absolutely not true.

Melissa: This highlights the characterization, that the highest value is loyalty.

Amy: It also paints Perry Noble as the victim in this, when you forget that the huge number of people that were hurt by Perry Noble's actions, but Dave represents the problem as “drop-kicked to the curb.”

Melissa: It's the same theme from the first anecdote, which is empathy is reserved for the accused.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: There's no empathy for the people harmed by Perry's actions, including his wife, which again, that's consistent with my own experience.

Amy: I don't understand how he could have assumed a false accusation here when out of Perry's own mouth, immediately says I deserve to be fired.

Melissa: It's a lack of wisdom and discernment.

Amy: We, now we have several examples of Dave saying that he doesn't really do the minimum level of due diligence before he decides what he should believe.

Melissa: Yeah.

The assumption is the accusation is false and I am going to have loyalty, even in spite of overwhelming evidence, even evidence from your own mouth at the time.

Amy: And why does Perry Noble need somebody to have his six, to have his back? For what reason?

Melissa: The conclusion is at the very end, the leakage, “Cause I don't want people to do that to me.”

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: And if he has Perry Noble's back, or he has these other influential, powerful, wealthy, connected people's back then they're going to have his back.

Amy: Now there's a bit of bolstering happening in this as well. All of the once again, positive words we have, “huge booming church.” The assumption is that Perry must've been doing something right cause he has a huge booming church. Dave refers to himself as the hero again: “First thing I did was contact him.”

And then we hear him saying again, that Perry Noble is doing a lot better these days. When I do want to point out when he went back in to start a church, again, his initial church that had fired him, made a statement that said, we do not believe that he is ready to be back in ministry.

Melissa: And I think they in fact said he is disqualified from ministry.

Amy: I think they did as well. And I'll put links to that in the show notes. The next story Dave tells is about Mark Driscoll.

Dave: There was a guy named Mark Driscoll. Had a huge church up in Seattle. Mark's daddy was a longshoreman. Mark had a mouth on him. Rough and tumble, in your face. Said stuff he shouldn't say. Did things you shouldn't do, but didn't really do anything wrong except just melt a whole bunch of little liberal snowflakes, right there in Seattle. They couldn't take it. And so he became under attack from his own staff members. And then there was this social media pile on and vicious people going after him. Some of the same ones that had been going after me at the same period of time, because they want to knock him off because he's evangelical.

And he was a bold male white voice, which you are not allowed to be in our culture according to those people anymore. I called him, it was four o'clock in the afternoon. I got him on the phone. I said, “Hey dude, I'm sorry, man. I know

it all hell's breaking loose over there.” Cause it was all over the media. New York times picked it up.

Everybody picked it up. The lynch mob finally got him. And I said, “Hey, I'm going to, when I get done with the event, I'm going to have some time. If you want to get together and just sit and talk to somebody, a friendly voice for a change. He goes, “I can't, I have to get my family out of the city. There are liberals standing in my front lawn, throwing rocks at my house, breaking my windows. I have to get my family out of here. I'm scared.” These people had gone nuts.

Now Mark, as it unfolded later, had not done anything immoral, but he was an over the top, brash crazy leader. Said a bunch of things, wrote a bunch of things that are over the line. All of that eventually caught up to him, but he did nothing to justify biblically elders firing him.

I got his six—really unpopular to take the back of someone like that.

Amy: There's so much in this Mark Driscoll one.

Melissa: If you've read any more, listened to any more, about what actually happened at Mars Hill, you would hear this description and go, “Wow, that sounds all sorts of wrong.”

Amy: I'm going to put some links in the show notes because there's lots of documentation out there for what was happening at the time and who was speaking up and who the actual accusers were in this case.

Melissa: The theme you see throughout this anecdote is he aligns Mark with him and aligns Mark with conservatism. Dave knows that his audience of his employees for this speech are vastly more likely to be conservative. So multiple times in here, he aligns Mark with him by saying, “his daddy was a longshoreman.” “He had a mouth,” which is hearkens back to Dave's characterization of himself as a hillbilly.

And then he basically creates a very black and white scenario. If you've studied psychological health, black and white things like this are really unhealthy. Life is full of nuance, but he basically splits this into: Mark and me, and conservatives versus everybody against him was a liberal. So he knows that would resonate with his audience.

The liberals are after us! So he says it multiple times. He didn't do anything wrong except melt liberal snowflakes. And then he said, because he's an evangelical, the New York Times was against him. The lynch mob was against him. There's liberals standing on my front lawn, throwing rocks at my house. So he very much creates this black and white, "Hey, I would expect you audience, employees are with me and Mark on this because we're with the evangelical conservatives and we're against all these liberals that are the accusers here."

Amy: He makes it into a package deal. He's sending this message that says: "Conservative people like you guys here, you understand this. You can relate to this guy because you know how terrible these liberals are," as if defending somebody like Mark is part of being a conservative, when in reality, that makes absolutely no sense.

Melissa: And that totally mis-characterizes what happened. He slips in there: he came under attack from his own staff members.

So if these people were staff members at his church, do you think they were the liberals?

Amy: No. No.

Melissa: What they realized is that Mark was engaging in deceptive things, bullying, and you can read more about it and listen to the Rise and Fall of Mars Hill. This was not a conservative versus liberal scenario at all.

Amy: Were there liberals that didn't like Mark Driscoll? Absolutely. But that's not what cost him his job.

Melissa: Mark himself costs him his job.

Amy: He cost him his job and it was his elder team that held him accountable. Which I would say, if you go and look, these are a bunch of white male conservatives.

Melissa: And it wasn't because Mark was a bold male, white voice. Where are you going to find one of those?

Amy: It's real hard.

Melissa: But also, if you've read any updates on Mark. Mark is engaging in the same behavior at his current church. It's very controlling and bullying and to block family members of his children's spouses and bar people from campus and to call out people, any accusers....

Amy: Surveillance on people.

Melissa: Surveillance on people. He's clearly engaging in a lot of these same behaviors now.

Amy: Yeah. This meeting was in May of 2019, but what we knew, what the world knew or anybody that had paid any attention to Mark Driscoll would know some facts about Mark Driscoll. And particularly if you're going to defend him and say he didn't do anything that deserved to be fired over, you should probably know what the facts were.

Either Dave had not looked at the facts or he just chose to not mention that.

Melissa: Right. And so if you look at here, Dave says multiple times, "He really didn't do anything wrong" except liberals. "He had not done anything immoral." So let's talk about that. Let's talk about—what is your definition of morality? It seems here that Dave has a category for what is immorality and a category for wrong, but not immoral?

Amy: He said, he said things he shouldn't have said, and he did things he shouldn't have done.

Melissa: And he wrote a bunch of things that are over the line. If your morality allows for all of those things....

Amy: But I also want to point out that he also does this distancing, that it says that it came out later. He's still doubling down on defending him by saying, "But he did nothing to justify biblically elders firing him."

Here is a non-exhaustive list of things that were public knowledge about Driscoll at the time that Dave was leading this meeting: issues with plagiarism, the Acts 29 church planting network asked him to resign, and they cited ungodly and disqualifying behavior. His elders said he was guilty of arrogance, a quick temper and harsh speech, and that he led the staff and elders in a domineering manner.

He used church funds to partner with ResultSource, the company that partners with authors and publishers. They use that money then to buy up books and ensure that the books make their way onto the bestseller list. Also asserted that Mark had threatened to tear down a former elder's church plant. And they also said there were credible reports of inappropriate, sexually oriented comments that Driscoll made about other men's wives.

Melissa: What we're seeing come through as a theme is basically the number one thing that Dave thinks can get you fired is sleeping with someone who's not your spouse. I think he's saying here in a coded way is Mark didn't have an affair, an affair based in intercourse.

Amy: Well, Mark hasn't told him that he's had intercourse with somebody that wasn't his wife.

Melissa: Right. Even though he'd done all these things that were wrong, and that Dave admits are wrong, he didn't deserve to be fired. It just creates this really strange categorization of sin.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: Cause the reality is we are all sinners. We all do things that are wrong, which I would say is the same as not moral. And a realization that we are and an ownership of the fact that we commit sin and have to look at that and examine ourselves every day is part of who we are as believers.

So to create some false dichotomy that this isn't immoral, even though it's wrong, we can go back and forth about what should and shouldn't get you fired.

Amy: Right.

Melissa: It's really inconsistent with the Word.

Amy: If you think about the people that are sitting in that room, I don't know how many of them even know who Mark Driscoll is.

Because he really hasn't been on the scene for awhile during this meeting. I'm going to guess many of them don't know who Mark Driscoll is. Many of them don't know who Perry Noble is. Those people that are listening are just going to

take Dave's word for it. They don't realize that there is a lot more to what he said and what he has not said that does not make sense

Melissa: And what he knew or should have known that he is completely mis-characterizing here.

And again, we've got, the accusers are bad, whether they're liberals, whether they're his own staff members who clearly probably were not liberals. The accusers are wrong and the empathy is reserved for the accused.

Amy: Again, we are attacking the people that are saying anything negative about Mark and that is calling them liberal snowflakes, referring to this as a social media pile on, vicious people who want to knock him down, using the term lynch mob, which is completely inappropriate.

Melissa: When you're using lynch mob and saying he's a bold male, white voice. There is some racial undertones here that are really disturbing.

Amy: Yeah and then talking about them as liberals, people who had gone nuts, talked about liberals on his frontline, throwing rocks at his house, breaking his windows. Now we did see that there were police reports from Driscoll who had called and said that people had thrown rocks into his backyard while they were there camping.

Melissa: And he didn't even say "people" like he doesn't know whoever was behind a fence and he was camping in a tent with one of his kids. And some rocks ended up on his back lawn.

Amy: That was alleged by Mark Driscoll.

Melissa: And he also called the police when a reporter had come to his door, but both of those events were well before when he was fired.

Amy: Yes.

Melissa: It doesn't seem like Mark had a problem calling the police.

Amy: And we didn't see any evidence of a police report that they were liberals outside his house, throwing bricks at his house or breaking his windows. I mean, if that's out there, I would be glad to put that in the show notes, but we did not see any evidence. It appears that this is additional hyperbole that's

happening. Whether Mark said this to Dave and it was hyperbole or Dave is just using this as a way to illustrate as part of his story.

Melissa: What we see consistently in a lot of these stories is lots of exaggeration. If we are to be people of the truth, the truth is the truth and you don't have to embellish it.

So the fact that a 50-something year old CEO, that claims the name of Christ is engaging in repetitive exaggeration with influence over the approximately a thousand people he's speaking to, that's really disturbing.

Amy: And the other thing here, if you're paying attention, Dave was wrong about Perry Noble and he was wrong about Mark Driscoll.

He says, in both cases, like he initially comes to their defense. He has their six. And he tells you later that he found out more information.

Melissa: So we're two for two here, on Dave having really terrible discernment and not in a good way. We're called to have discernment. It's not like, "Oh, I had bad discernment but man, I was loyal and that's what God..." No, that's not what God would have us do.

Amy: And Dave's loyalty has been to people that have hurt people. We're seeing a theme here. These people are friends of Dave's. They're people he can relate to.

Melissa: He has their back.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: And he's expecting. I think we'll hear that later. He's expecting the reciprocation that they will have his back and that's who he's loyal to.

Dave: Bill Hybels was on this stage being interviewed. A month and a half after he was here, all "me too" hell breaks loose. Apparently he had a glass of wine with one lady 16 years ago, 15 years ago, kissed a lady, 14 years ago, had a lady come to his hotel room, make suggestions, but nothing physical happened. And his former co-pastor, uh, Ortberg's wife and a couple of others were on the war path to get Bill Hybels.

They went to the elders at Willow. Willow did an investigation. The quality of the investigation did not suit the people outside the organization. And so they did what all good Christians do. They turned their files over to the Chicago Tribune. And so all hell breaks loose in Bill's life. Bill was scheduled to speak at Entre Summit this year. I called him. I said, "Dude, I got your six."

"You want to cancel me?"

I said, "May have to, if all this comes out to be true, brother, but if it's not true and it's just people after you because of the spiritual warfare for the cause of Christ. I got your six."

As we got further down into it, it appears there was a bunch of misbehavior, no actual full sexual affairs, but a bunch of misbehavior that a leader shouldn't have done.

And most of all, he was not really repentant. And so I can't cover his back at that point and be consistent with me following scripture. I can love him as a guy who fell because we all have the capability of doing that. And I do, but he didn't speak at Summit this year. Obviously you see the difference?

Amy: This is the third example that Dave shares of a friend of his whose back he has, whose six he has. Here he shares his version of what happened with Bill Hybels.

Melissa: And I think you've got to emphasize "his" version because this is completely disconnected with the truth of what came out of an independent assessment by evangelical leaders in 2018.

Amy: And that was before this meeting happened.

Melissa: This was a year before this meeting. His characterization here, I find to be with very low connection to the truth.

Amy: One of the first things that jumps out to me is his referring to "me too" hell. The "me too hell breaks loose."

Melissa: He creates a black and white scenario where he and his friend, and presumably I expect that you, the audience also, we are on one side. And the accusers are "me too," people on the war path, the media. And I would expect

that you're on the side with me and my friend here, who we should have empathy for.

Amy: I can't even imagine though women sitting in there and hearing him characterize “me too” as “hell breaking loose” in a way that makes it seem like it was a bad thing that people, women, were speaking up about how they had been abused and...

Melissa: sexually harassed

Amy: criminal things,

Melissa: including, you know, Weinstein. And I mean, these were women who were raped, who were date raped, who were given drugs and raped.

Amy: These are women regaining their voices to say, “This happened to me,” and it resulted in justice being brought, Dave calls that “all hell breaking loose.”

Melissa: So the idea that Dave considers that a very bad thing,

Amy: Yeah, that's a threat.

Melissa: That women have a voice and that women tell the truth about sexual harassment or sexual assault. If telling the truth about harassment and assault is wrong, that means he wants it to be covered up.

Amy: I also see some minimizing happening here. He says, 14 years ago, or 16 years ago, 15 years ago, nothing physical happened, he says.

Melissa: And the reality is what we have here, even, even if you bent over backwards to give Dave's characterization of this, the benefit of the doubt.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: Which again, I find it very 10% connected to the truth of what has come out. What you see here is a pattern. You have a pastor of a very large influential church, friends with Dave, who has a pattern of sexual mistreatment of women. Even at that baseline, what he's doing here is characterizing the accusers as bad. And the speaking up as bad.

Amy: Even at the end, Dave says he found out more information later, but it says it was just a bunch of misbehavior, no actual full sexual affairs—that is minimizing what happened again.

Melissa: Right. This was a pastor of a large influential mega church. And you're saying the fact that he sexually harassed women in a pattern of behavior, the fact that he engaged in accused sexual assault, I guess Dave's "full sexual affair" is if you have intercourse. Now there was an accusation there, that someone then retracted, which I think we've seen in a lot of cases that for someone to speak up and then retract often can be because they are afraid or they have been bullied.

Um, so that's not to say that whether that was true or not true, but note here that Dave draws a line between intercourse sexual affairs and even sexual affairs that are not intercourse. Because there were accusations here of forced oral sex.

Amy: That's rape.

Melissa: Yeah. And, you know, cupping breasts. And again, that's sexual assault, if that is unwanted touching.

Amy: But what does Dave say the biggest problem here is?

Melissa: He characterized the biggest problem as the accusers, who you see him say, "they were on the warpath, "me too hell." He's mocking here by saying "the quality of the investigation did not suit the people outside the organization." These were women within the organization, very well-respected women. That's a false statement right there. And in fact, by 2018 an independent, Christian evangelical assessment by Christian leaders had said that they found specifically that these were not lies and that they did not believe these women were colluding in order to make these statements. So that was known by here.

He's saying the real problem is that they spoke up and that they went to the media. He's equating speaking up and going to the media or probably things like this podcast as—that's the real problem. Not the fact that this highly influential Christian leader of a large church had been sexually harassing and assaulting women for many years.

And the reality is these women tried to get the church to listen, and they were characterized as bitter, as liars, as false accusers. It was after multiple repeated

attempts that this was covered up by the church and that they were characterized as all these horrible things that they went to the media.

Amy: And he's like, basically, "Oh, poor Bill. All hell breaks loose in Bill's life."

As if it's their fault.

Melissa: Empathy is reserved for Bill. Not only no empathy for the women that he did this to in a longstanding pattern of behavior, what we hear is they are the problem. Them speaking up is the problem. If they had not gone to the media, the likelihood is that we would have never heard about this and he would still be pastoring, still abusing people under his care. Not only is that sexual abuse and sexual harassment, that is spiritual abuse on a level that is just,

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: It, and that, that is what breaks the heart of Jesus.

Amy: Yeah. And if we were to follow Dave's advice to have the six of Bill Hybels, women would still be being hurt. Most likely we would be misled by this person who was using his power to sexually assault people.

Melissa: And do you know how that warps the testimony of Christ to the people in that church, and to those women? I have a lot of respect for any of those women that held onto their faith when their pastor, who was supposed to be the person that is teaching them about Christ and modeling Christlike behavior to them, when his goal is to use them for his own gratification, that damages the church a thousand times more.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: Women speaking up helps purify the church. God calls us in Corinthians or Paul, the writer calls us to have nothing to do with these people. And instead to expose them. That's in Ephesians. And to expel them from the church. And not only is that not a bad thing, we're called to do that.

Amy: Absolutely. The other thing that's sticking out to me here is how Dave characterizes the investigation. I would love to ask Dave what he sees as being a

quality investigation of allegations, but what have we heard about Dave and how he investigates?

Melissa: He asks the people if they did it.

Amy: Yeah. And clearly the investigation that Willow did was incomplete because when there was additional investigation that was not done by Willow, they found more than enough corroboration for these allegations to be true.

Melissa: And I think we'll find at later points in this speech Dave's perspective on investigations or knowing what needs to be known in order to make a sound judgment is very, very low. That's not at all what God calls us to do when he calls us to use wisdom and discernment.

Amy: This is the fourth example and it's another one I'm not including due to time constraints. Dave tells the story of his neighbor, Flip Jones, and how Flip's house burned down. It's another account of Dave having the back or six of a friend. The police came to question Flip because there was evidence of arson and Dave interferes and attempts to block the authorities from questioning Flip. In the conclusion of Dave's account of this story, Dave shares that part of the overwhelming evidence against Flip was that he bought gas cans on a credit card.

If you're keeping track, Dave has shared four examples of people he rushed to defend. And in all four cases, the allegations against Dave's friends were found to be true.

Dave: I have been publicly embarrassed by taking somebody's back too far, too long when I didn't have all the information. But that's my default button rather than a default button of I don't got your six. It's hard to find employers, employees, friends, family, that got your six.

These days, people are guilty as soon as social media says, they're guilty. Even though there's no signs of anything, the rats leave the ship because the alarm went off and there's no water. The ship's not sinking. And you know, I'm so naive since I've got your six that when you're here and you talk about us negatively, it always catches me off guard.

It doesn't compute in my hillbilly brain that anybody would do that. And when you leave here even, and then you talk negatively about me or about this place

or about someone that works here. It doesn't compute in my hillbilly brain. I don't, I don't know. I don't understand it. So why am I telling you all this?

Because you need to know I got your six, until proven otherwise. Until you look at me and say, I did the deed, I did the problem. That's the day that, that we'll still be friends, but you won't work here, but I understand. But I, on rumor, on innuendo, on ironclad information from your hairdresser, I got your six. This place, the leadership team here has got your back.

We all need to learn to do better on that. To not stab people in the back, to not automatically assume a pastor, a public figure, a friend is guilty as charged because somebody ran their mouth with a false accusation. Henry Cloud says, "I don't understand people who run down the company and the leadership that pays them money to raise their family and feed their kids. It's like peeing in your cereal and then griping cause it tastes bad."

You ruining the very place that you work in when you don't take your coworker's back. And yet we have to measure. And once we have facts, actual facts, we have to act on those. Does that make sense?

Amy: Dave is now talking about how he has been publicly embarrassed by taking somebody's back for too far, for too long, when he didn't have all the information.

Melissa: And I would call that some more leakage right there. Cause he's saying, yeah, I have been wrong and I've been wrong a lot. He walked through four out of four examples of where he was loyal to people who had harmed other people extensively. He characterizes the best quality as the fact that he was loyal to them.

Amy: Yeah. He says, "When I didn't have all the information."

Melissa: Really the examples he gives are him either hiding his head in the sand, ignoring information that was out there, ignoring even information that person had said or ignoring information that any reasonable person would have said this person's not trustworthy. This person has engaged in a harmful pattern of behavior.

Dave still says, "Well, I'm going to be loyal in spite of all of that." That is a complete lack of discernment.

Amy: There's a theme throughout this. Dave doesn't like social media. He really doesn't like it when people say negative things on social media. So here again, he says, "These days people are guilty as soon as social media says they're guilty."

Do you want to talk about rats?

Melissa: Let's place this in context again.

Amy: Sure.

Melissa: This meeting is within about a week of your husband and his leader,

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: Other friends of ours.

Amy: Maybe a couple of weeks.

Melissa: And they resigned over learning that the company had completely mis-characterized what was going on with my ex-husband in multiple meetings internally at the company. That they had not told the truth to employees.

Amy: Yeah. Some of that evidence we found was on social media.

Melissa: Your husband and his leader had resigned. And this was the meeting after that. It's very reasonable to assume his allusion here is to men that had resigned when they learned this information.

Amy: Isn't it funny to say that, "the rats were leaving the ship, but there's no sign of water and the ship isn't sinking." I don't know. I think God created these little animals to see and sense what is happening. You can say the ship isn't sinking as much as you want, but if all of the rats are running out of the ship,

Melissa: That should tell you something

Amy: I would get off.

Melissa: That might be a good idea.

Amy: I would. I would just be like, “You know, Imma step off for awhile.”

And he goes back into his, “I’m just a hillbilly. Aww shucks.” You know,

Melissa: From Antioch.

He really sums up what he has alluded to in a lot of the previous stories, by saying, “Until you look at me and say, I did the deed. I did the problem.” That's the day where we, we're still friends, but you won't work here yet. So what he's saying is, in spite of mountains of evidence, but until you admit it, I am going to hide my head in the sand. And I've experienced this. There could be evidence. There could be documentation. There could be witnesses. There could also be a long-standing pattern of deception by that person. So in other words, that person doesn't, you're really, actually not smart to believe them saying they didn't do it. But until that person finally says, “I did it,” I'm going to stick my head in the sand.

That is a lack of wisdom.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: That is a complete lack of discernment that usually aligns with, “I'm not going to believe the terrible thing about a person that in some way benefits me.”

Amy: Yeah. I'm going to default to believing the thing that isn't going to cost me very much.

Melissa: Right. Because you see here, these were three of his friends. Three fellow influential people in Christian society, Christian marketplace, and his neighbor. What he's doing by hiding his head in the sand, he's also sacrificing anybody that person has harmed. I'm gonna use my money, my influence, my power, my authority to stand by this person that has possibly harmed many, many people. That's sacrificing the people that person has likely harmed.

Amy: Right.

Melissa: And who found the strength in some place to come forward. And you're like, “Nope, I'm going to stand by this person and use all of my power, authority, wealth, and influence.”

Amy: If I, I knew nothing else about Dave Ramsey and I only knew what was in this meeting, how his default seems to be, to defend powerful men.

If I had an experience of being hurt by one of Dave's friends, or somebody close to Dave, I would not feel like I would be safe or believed even if I brought a mountain of evidence to Dave. Like what bad dude is going to say, "I did it?"

Melissa: This is one of the biggest red flags to anyone who has been harmed by someone else—that this is not a safe place. And he is not a safe person. And if the CEO is not a safe person, they are going to reward and influence that behavior to the people below them.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: This is not a safe situation for people to come forward because the reality is not only not safety for anyone who has been harmed, the likelihood of active, incredible, additional damage to that person is great.

Amy: When he finishes out there by saying, "On rumor on innuendo on iron clad information from your hairdresser."

Melissa: He's undercutting any type of evidence or...

Amy: He gets to define what is rumor and what is innuendo. What can you bring to him? Right? What will he believe?

Melissa: He will only believe the person admitting it.

Amy: You're going to have to bring a video of whatever happened for him to, and then even then, I think he would accuse you of it not being true.

Melissa: And the strange part is he circles back and tries to reassure at the end, by saying, "and once we have facts, actual facts, we have to act on those."

Amy: What's fact to him?

Melissa: Right? Because earlier he has said that basically he characterized everything other than the person admitting it, as rumor and innuendo and, a mocking way, "ironclad information from your hairdresser."

Amy: Right. At this point he's 20 minutes into this meeting. He started with talking about an employee that was, he said was gossiping and spreading things that weren't true.

Then he talks about during the war. And when they started using the term, got your six. And then he transitioned, he tells us a story about four of his friends that were accused of things and how he defended them. And he was wrong pretty much all—

Melissa: Four out of four.

Amy: Right, all of them. And I don't know, if I'm in there, if I don't know what I'm hearing in this, but I'm hearing a lot of: loyalty is good, standing with your friends is good, social media is bad.

Melissa: Accusations are bad and accusations are most likely wrong, except I've actually been wrong four times.

Amy: Whether they're processing that or not is a whole other thing. And there's just no way for them to actually be breaking down all of us in real time.

Melissa: Nobody had any idea what he was leading up to here.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: The people in the audience did not know that he was lying about some of this stuff. If they didn't know who these men were, they didn't know he was completely mis-characterizing, exaggerating, and really manipulating information in order to create an impression in the audience and to elicit certain emotions about loyalty and negative emotions toward any kind of accusations.

Amy: Thanks for listening to the Untangled Faith podcast. This podcast is supported by listeners like you. You can support this work by joining our membership community on Patreon. There you can find bonus interviews, transcripts, and access to live streams and replays of live streams. To check this out, go to UntangledFaithpodcast.com and click on members.

Today's episode was the first of two episodes that break down the Got Your Six team meeting. I made the decision to make part two available immediately. It should be waiting for you in your favorite podcast app. Part two is episode 21.

On the next episode of Untangled Faith.

Dave: If there are facts, not purple egg rumors, not threats, “I’m going to expose you Dave Ramsey.” Have at it. Expose me.

Amy: So you’re not worried about asserting, like emphatically, definitively that Dave lied in this.

Melissa: No. He lied, multiple times.