

Anointed

Samuel obeyed God by anointing David as the next king of Israel.

1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity. Life brings grief, disappointment, and failure that can leave us discouraged and stuck. Yet God meets us in the struggle, calling us forward. As we obey Him, He helps us see beyond circumstances, shaping our hearts to see through His eyes and fulfill His purposes.

Can you remember a time when a difficult situation left you feeling overwhelmed or stuck? What helped you take the next step?

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UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

1 SAMUEL 16:1-23

God called Samuel to lead Israel during a time of national instability and spiritual decline. Religious leaders were corrupt. A misplaced trust in the ark led to a false sense of invincibility. When the Philistines captured the ark of the covenant, confidence collapsed and defeat followed. Samuel urged the people to abandon foreign gods, devote their hearts to God, and worship Him alone.

As Samuel aged and his sons strayed from the Lord, the people demanded a king. Samuel felt rejected, but God reminded him that they were rejecting His leadership, just as they had since leaving Egypt (1 Sam. 8:6-8).

The reign of Saul, the first king, began with promise. The Spirit of God came upon him, and he led Israel to victory over the Ammonites (chap. 11). Yet decline soon followed.

In Samuel's final speech before the people, he reassured them that God would not abandon them if they worshiped the Lord with all their hearts (12:20-22).

But Saul stepped outside God's will, assuming both priestly and kingly authority (13:8-12). Samuel mourned Saul's failure. God declared that Saul was not a man after His own heart and had chosen another who truly pursued His heart. From the moment Saul learned the kingdom was taken from him, his rule unraveled, culminating in the battle with King Agag and the Amalekites (15:1-8). Saul's victory might have been complete, but disobedience marred it. Instead of fully obeying, he chose partial obedience—yet partial obedience is disobedience. After Samuel's rebuke, Saul's failure was sealed. Samuel grieved deeply, unable to move forward, weighed down by sorrow and unsure of himself in the face of God's new plan.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13. What does this passage reveal about God's criteria for leadership?

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EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

LOOKING FORWARD (1 SAM. 16:1-3)

[1] The LORD said to Samuel, "How long are you going to mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go. I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem because I have selected for myself a king from his sons." [2] Samuel asked, "How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me!" The LORD answered, "Take a young cow with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' [3] Then invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will let you know what you are to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate to you."

VERSE 1

God is a God of action. In the aftermath of Saul's failures and Samuel's grief over Saul's inability to lead Israel faithfully, God came to Samuel to move him forward. Samuel was stuck in disappointment. God called him to fill his ***horn with oil and go***. Priests used animal horns, mostly ram's horns, to carry their oil for anointing (Ex. 30:30; 1 Kings 1:39). Anointing with oil, often olive oil, symbolized the empowerment of God's Spirit (1 Sam. 16:13).

Samuel already performed this act over Saul (10:1). But now God said, ***I have selected for myself a king***. God had allowed Israel to choose from themselves a king. Saul represented the fickle hearts of the people, but God looked ahead to a man after His own heart. God was not only looking ahead to Jesse's son but also toward redemptive prophecy and the Messiah who would come through David's lineage.

While Samuel looked at the past and the failure of Saul's leadership, God looked forward. God looked for Israel to be led by a king who pursued His heart. He challenged Samuel to trust Him. The Lord would move them forward to a brighter future.

VERSES 2-3

Samuel faced another distraction. He feared the many spies in Saul's service. God's mission was dangerous. Samuel occupied the last seat held by the judicial prophets before the monarchy. Saul would have kept close tabs on Samuel. Any deviation to Samuel's route would be looked at with suspicion and a potential threat to Saul's throne.

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Samuel may have had another motive to question God's plan. He was hesitant to get back into the king-making business after the failure of his first appointment. Samuel knew the heart of Saul—a heart bound in selfish ambition. The Lord countered Samuel's reluctance with a plan. God's plan involved performing a sacrificial offering. Samuel would be able to perform this sacrifice as a levitical judge without raising Saul's suspicions. At the sacrificial ceremony in Bethlehem, God told Samuel to invite •***Jesse,*** and there the Lord would indicate the one He had chosen as the next king.

The entire town would be present at the sacrificial ceremony. God's plan gave Samuel the perfect opportunity to inspect the sons of Jesse. This was the first step to move Samuel forward rather than allowing him to wallow in his self-pity over past mistakes. We can move past our grief and disappointments that often keep us stuck, and we can move forward when we know that God's plan is to secure our future in His will.

How can we move past disappointments and move forward with God?

LOOKING OUTSIDE (1 SAM. 16:4-10)

4 Samuel did what the Lord directed and went to Bethlehem. When the elders of the town met him, they trembled and asked, "Do you come in peace?" 5 "In peace," he replied. "I've come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. 6 When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and said, "Certainly the Lord's anointed one is here before him." 7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or his stature because I have rejected him. Humans do not see what the Lord sees, for humans see what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart." 8 Jesse called Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. "The Lord hasn't chosen this one either," Samuel said. 9 Then Jesse presented Shammah, but Samuel said, "The Lord hasn't chosen this one either." 10 After Jesse presented seven of his sons to him, Samuel told Jesse, "The Lord hasn't chosen any of these."

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VERSES 4-6

Samuel ***did what the LORD directed him to do and went to Bethlehem***. Fresh off Samuel's brutal judgment of the Amalekite king, Agag (1 Sam. 15:33), the Bethlehemites did not know if Samuel was coming in peace or to execute judgment. Trembling, the elders asked, ***Do you come in peace?*** Samuel replied that he had ***come to sacrifice to the LORD.*** Relieved by this response, the people moved on with preparations for the ceremony.

In the process of consecrating the people for the ceremony and inviting them to the sacrifice, Samuel ***consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice***. With anticipation building within Samuel, he looked for the sons of Jesse as the guests arrived. When he saw Jesse's oldest son, •***Eliab***, he was certain he was beholding the Lord's anointed. Eliab looked the part, but Samuel had already seen someone who looked the part and failed miserably. Could it be that God looked at things differently?

VERSES 7-10

By all accounts, Eliab looked like he could be the next king. If God was going to use anyone to lead His people before the other nations, certainly God would use someone of Eliab's ***appearance*** and ***stature***. Samuel's vision focused on everything outside. The Lord spoke quickly and directly to Samuel: ***Do not look at his appearance or his stature because I have rejected him.*** God did not explain why he rejected Eliab. As the Sovereign Lord, He answered to no one. But in His response, the Lord made one thing clear: ***Humans do not see what the LORD sees, for humans see what is visible, but the LORD sees the heart.***

If Israel had wanted to be like all the other nations in choosing an earthly king, they stayed consistent in looking for kings through a worldly lens. Samuel, Israel's representative, looked for outward evidence, assuming that God also looked for such things. He was wrong. God made it clear that He looked inward. God wanted the heart to be the showcase for national leadership, not arbitrary physical attributes. God was not impressed with Eliab's height or physique. God looked for something much deeper.

Society tends to set the standards for acceptance and dictates the values we should place on others. People who can draw a crowd with riveting oratory are given instant credibility. Leaders who speak with authority and lead large organizations are valued higher than others. Social media influencers receive millions of dollars for building a following of potential consumers. Culture values people's

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image and sometimes ignores what lies beneath. However, God does not examine human résumés against another. The Lord is not impressed by what impresses us. He goes beneath the surface of our outward appearance. He looks at a person's heart.

The Lord is not impressed by what impresses us.

Samuel struggled to see this, even as God's man for the moment. How often can we see through the lens of the world? How often do we believe appearances and abilities—or the lack of—hold the key to God using us for His purposes? The Lord shut the door on Eliab and all seven of Jesse's sons present at the sacrifice. What was God up to? Samuel thought at least one of Jesse's sons would fit the glass slipper of Israel's kingship (as one writer compared this to a scene from *Cinderella* where all the daughters clamored to see if they fit the glass slipper).

How can basing our evaluation of a person on physical appearance lead to problems?

LOOKING INSIDE (1 SAM. 16:11-13)

[11] Samuel asked him, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," he answered, "but right now he's tending the sheep." Samuel told Jesse, "Send for him. We won't sit down to eat until he gets here." [12] So Jesse sent for him. He had beautiful eyes and a healthy, handsome appearance. Then the LORD said, "Anoint him, for he is the one." [13] So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully on David from that day forward. Then Samuel set out and went to Ramah.

VERSE 11

Samuel asked Jesse, ***Are these all the sons you have?*** We are not told why, but Jesse did not include David at the sacrifice. He told Samuel that his youngest was tending sheep. To the average onlooker, Jesse was justified in not considering David to be king-worthy. Even though shepherding could be a dangerous

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profession, it did not require intellectual prowess or intense leadership skills.

Jesse described David as the ***youngest,*** which could simply refer to his age. But it also could mean that David was the smallest of his brothers, making him the runt. Jesse did not remember that God often used younger sons over older ones in Scripture, which was contrary to traditional and cultural norms (Gen. 4:25; 37:5-11). Jesse also had not yet mastered the lesson Samuel was still learning—that God looks not on the outward appearance but on the heart. God did not choose His leaders based on age or appearance but their internal character. God had chosen a person in whose heart He found delight, and one who delighted in the Lord. Samuel did not allow anyone to sit until David walked through the door.

VERSES 12-13

David's description seemed complimentary with mention of his ***beautiful eyes and a healthy, handsome appearance***. Eliab, David's older brother, was also handsome and tall. He had a warrior quality, but David was described as childlike in appearance. His description was meant as a negative feature, but God did not see it that way. He told Samuel to anoint David as the one who would serve as Israel's second king.

Samuel took his horn of oil and anointed David in front of his brothers. He demonstrated the sovereign choice of God over human expectations. From the moment Samuel anointed David, ***the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully on David*** for the rest of his life.

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service. (See John 14:16-17; 16:7-14.)

Samuel returned to his home, but David entered God's preparatory school. David did not walk into Saul's court and demand abdication of his throne. Like Moses, God did not immediately give David the keys to the kingdom. David was God's anointed, but he needed time for God to prepare him for the position of king.

God would do extraordinary things in David's life, but in this moment, David was an ordinary young man. He needed to learn from the Master and use this time to cultivate his heart toward greater submission for the more difficult tasks ahead.

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Using ordinary people is God's specialty. God does not need outward abilities or socially gratifying appearances to do significant things. God is most glorified when he uses ordinary people, empowered by the Spirit of God and willing to obey His will without reservation.

What made David a better choice than his brothers?

Why is character more important than physical qualities?

BIBLE SKILL: *Use Bible study tools to learn more about a major biblical character.*

The books of 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings cover the entire period of the kings of Judah and Israel. These four books consist of 102 chapters. Of these, the story of David takes up forty chapters, from 1 Samuel 16—1 Kings 1. The remaining forty kings of Judah and Israel (cover only forty-six chapters. Obviously, David is a central figure in the Old Testament history of Israel. Read the article "David" in a Bible dictionary. What do you learn about David that you didn't already know? Why do you think he is so central in the history of Judaism and essential in Christianity?

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APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers can remove distractions and move forward with God.
- We're called to focus on internal character rather than physical appearance.
- We can be assured that God always selects the perfect person to fulfill His plans.

In what areas of life can we easily feel stuck? What are specific ways your group could encourage others to trust God in helping them move forward?

Why is looking at a person's internal character better than looking primarily at their outward appearance or abilities? What could be missed by looking only outwardly? How can God's perspective positively influence the way you view His plans and provide confidence if He chooses you for a task?

Memorize 1 Samuel 16:7b.

Prayer Needs

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