



Community Group Discussion Guide

November 24, 2024

1 Samuel 16: 1-13 | Our Eyes, God's Heart

MOTIVATE

⇒ *Starter question: Describe a time in your life when you expected one thing, but God delivered something totally different.*

DISCUSS

The book of 1 Samuel is the story of Israel's search for a king (see [1 Samuel Overview](#) for more information). Even though only God could be Israel's true King, He allowed them to have an earthly king to mirror His reign.¹ Saul, son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, was chosen as the first king of Israel. Unfortunately, he was more concerned with his own glory than he was leading the people in a godly way. 1 Samuel 15 represents the final and official rejection of Saul as Israel's anointed king—something that deeply grieved Samuel.

In 1 Samuel 16:1-13, God sent Samuel on the risky mission of anointing a successor to Saul. This task turned out to be the most important one of Samuel's career as prophet. He was directed to the family of Jesse of the tribe of Judah to designate one of his sons as God's choice to be Israel's next king. This marks a turning point in 1 Samuel. Prior to Saul's rejection, he and Samuel were central figures in the book. From now on, David is central even though he does not become king until early in 2 Samuel. As foretold in 1 Samuel 13:14, we finally meet the man after God's own heart.

- ⇒ *Describe what has happened in Israel's leadership up to this point.*
- ⇒ *Why did God reject Saul as king, and what does this tell us about God's values?*

1 Samuel 16:1-3: *The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." 2 And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' 3 And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you."*

Samuel had anointed Saul as king and Saul's failure hurt the prophet deeply. God had rejected Saul's leadership because Saul had rejected the word of the Lord (1 Samuel 15:23). God told Samuel it was time to stop mourning because He had a very important task for Samuel to do. He was going to set apart the person through whom the Messiah would eventually come.

- ⇒ *Just as Samuel grieved over Saul's rejection, we sometimes grieve losses or changes we don't fully understand. How can we bring these feelings to God and move forward in trust?*
- ⇒ *When has the LORD told you to move on?*

Samuel was commanded to fill his horn with oil and go to Bethlehem. This oil was usually precious olive oil and was used as a way to set apart leaders for a special work. God also gave Samuel an additional task that would help mask his journey to Bethlehem and not raise undue suspicions. Samuel would officiate a ritual sacrifice in the city and use this occasion for the anointing of the next king.

Samuel's response to God's request shows how far the divide had become between Samuel and Saul. Saul no longer sought God's will but his own. Even though God had rejected him, Saul was still the most powerful man in Israelite society. Samuel was afraid Saul would kill him. Samuel had legitimate concerns about how Saul would interpret his anointing one of Jesse's sons as king. While Samuel

¹ Heath Thomas & J.D. Greear, Christ-Centered Exposition, Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel, Holman, 2016.

might have divine authority, Saul had the political will and the armed power to act if he knew about Samuel taking action to replace him.

- ⇒ **Describe Samuel's feelings about anointing a new king while Saul is still on the throne. How does God guide Samuel through his fears and uncertainties?**
- ⇒ **Can you describe a time when God has done the same for you?**

1 Samuel 16:4-5 *Samuel did what the LORD commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?"* **5** *And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.*

When Samuel obediently arrived at Bethlehem the elders trembled to meet him. Samuel assured them that he had come in peace. Then he commanded them to get ready for the sacrifice by consecrating themselves before the Lord. "Consecrate" refers to becoming ritually clean. The specific guidelines are uncertain, but presumably involved bathing, putting on clean garments, abstaining from sexual activity, and avoiding contact with unclean objects (such as a corpse).

Being fully obedient to God, Samuel also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. Jesse, from the tribe of Judah, was the grandson of Ruth and Boaz. From this time forward, the name of Jesse, the city of Bethlehem, and the tribe of Judah will always be linked to Israel's Messiah.²

- ⇒ **What can we learn from Samuel's example of obedience, even when he doesn't fully understand God's plans?**

1 Samuel 16:6-10: *When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is before him."* **7** *But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."* **8** *Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."* **9** *Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."* **10** *And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen these."*

The first of Jesse's sons to be considered was Eliab, the eldest. He must have been tall and handsome because Samuel was impressed and was sure this was the LORD's anointed. But Samuel was wrong. God was not concerned with height or appearance. What God said to Samuel is one of the most important statements in all of Scripture: *"For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."*

- ⇒ **Why did Samuel initially think Eliab, David's older brother, would be the chosen one?**

God does not value or judge the same things that man does. Man judges by what he can see, the outward appearance. He cannot see the thoughts, emotions, and intents of another. Only God has the ability to observe and judge these things because He looks at the heart. Despite the benefits of God-given favors, such as natural good looks, there is no substitute for a God-pleasing heart.³

The Hebrew word "heart" in the Old Testament is "leb." This term stands for the inner part of a person and refers to our will, mind, consciousness, emotions, and understanding. It also refers to a person's moral character and determination. God's words were not what Samuel expected. External appearance does not qualify an individual to govern. Even though Eliab looked the part, God had not chosen him. In fact, God's response regarding Eliab is linked to Saul—"I have rejected him."

² Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 229). Zondervan.

³ Arnold, B. T. (2003). [1 & 2 Samuel](#) (p. 230). Zondervan.

One by one Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel. But none of them had the right kind of heart. The Lord rejected each one. This was certainly confusing since God had clearly stated that He had chosen one of Jesse's sons to be king (1 Samuel 16:1). But Samuel knew that God's word to him was true, so there had to be another son.

- ⇒ ***Does the fact that God looks at the heart bring you comfort or a challenge? Why?***
- ⇒ ***What does God's emphasis on "the heart" over appearances teach us about God's values?***
- ⇒ ***If we believe that the LORD looks at the heart, why are we consumed by outward appearance?***

1 Samuel 16:11-13: *Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." 12 And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he." 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.*

Samuel asked Jesse if all of his sons were present. It seems strange that Jesse had not thought about sending for David who was the youngest and a shepherd. Possibly was overlooked because keeping the sheep was not a coveted position in Israel. This job was usually given to slaves or social rejects. David also may have been excluded because he was too young for military service—a key part of an Israelite king's responsibility (1 Samuel 8:20).

Whatever the reason, Jesse also made assumptions regarding appearances and decided not to include his youngest son. But he was sent for, and the sacrifice did not continue until he was present. Once presented, God quickly confirmed him as His choice. It is not until verse 13 that we are told Jesse's youngest son's name was David. Samuel anointed David and the Spirit rushed upon him—and stayed with him from that day forward.

- ⇒ ***What might it have felt like for David to be anointed by Samuel in front of his family?***

Throughout the Old Testament narratives, God showed His tendency to "color outside the lines" of human expectations. Ancient biblical societies gave special privileges—especially leadership roles—to firstborn sons. However, God regularly chose people who were overlooked and ignored by others to do His most special work. In the events of 1 Samuel 16, David joined a long line of individuals who were honored by God, even though they had been disqualified by people because of their birth order (Abraham, Isaac, Ephraim, and Moses were all younger brothers).

David's anointing was an external symbol of an inward work of God. The presence of the Spirit was God's supernatural empowerment for service. Oil on the head symbolized the Spirit in his heart. The operation of the Holy Spirit in this case was not for regeneration, but to empower David to perform his role in God's design for Israel.

- ⇒ ***From this day on how did the political landscape of Israel change forever?***
- ⇒ ***How did David pave the way for Jesus to come as Messiah and King?***

The young man David, considered so unlikely that it had not been deemed necessary to call him from the sheep, was the Lord's choice. His selection was entirely the Lord's doing and was to fulfill a special purpose. His anointing was unexplained, but the rushing of the Spirit of the Lord upon him ensured that he was being divinely equipped, whatever the future might hold.

From the actions of David, Jesse, and David's brothers after this incident, we can assume that only God and Samuel knew exactly what happened here. David went back to tending sheep and did not take the throne for many years. He spent the next fifteen years in obscurity. His brothers did not seem to understand the meaning of this anointing as they continued to treat him as the young brother who watched after the sheep. Having completed the God-given assignment, Samuel returned to his home in Ramah.

- ⇒ *How might David have felt during his anointing, knowing he was chosen but not yet in power?*
- ⇒ *How can David's story encourage you to trust that God sees your potential, even when others overlook you?*

TRANSFORM

1. Make personal application: David's anointing was a turning point in the books of 1 and 2 Samuel. Israel's first king, Saul, failed because he refused to accept God's authority. David will succeed and become an ideal figure for all future generations because he will embrace God's authority. He was an example for us of a servant, a warrior, and an ambassador for God's goodness and greatness.

- ⇒ *David was faithful in caring for his father's sheep before he was called to be king. What small responsibilities has God given you, and how can you approach them with a heart of service?*
- ⇒ *David was anointed but didn't become king immediately. How can you learn to trust God's timing in your life, even when it involves waiting?*
- ⇒ *How does God's choice of David encourage you in your current stage of life or career?*

2. Pray: Pray for our newly elected leaders both in our church and in our nation. Ask God to make us aware of those times we judge with our eyes and not our hearts. Ask God to help us to wait on Him to direct our steps. Pray He will make us faithful wherever He has placed us.

STUDY

Resources used, compiled from, and quoted:

- *Bergen, R. D. (1996). 1, 2 Samuel (Vol. 7, pp. 176–180). Broadman & Holman Publishers.*
- *Baldwin, J. G. (1988). 1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary (Vol. 8, pp. 129–131). InterVarsity Press.*
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- *Thomas, Heath., & Greear J.D. (2016) Christ Centered Exposition, Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel, (pp.118-126).*
- *Arnold, B.T. (2003), 1 & 2 Samuel NIV Application Commentary, Zondervan (pp.228-238).*