

Week 3: David Is Chosen as King

Hook



Main Point: God judges the heart and empowers His leaders with His Spirit.

Today's lesson will examine the difference between the heart and the outward appearance of a leader. Teacher, purchase the game BeanBoozled (<https://www.walmart.com/ip/Jelly-Belly-BeanBoozled-Jelly-Beans-20-Assorted-Flavors-3-5-oz-Theater-Box/24875629>). Split your LifeGroup into two teams and bring a representative from each group to the front of the room. Using a spoon, choose a jellybean. Provide each of the two players with a bean and share with the class what the options for the flavor are; for instance, "This white jellybean is either coconut or spoiled milk flavored." The player eating the bean must try to fool the opposite team. Each team must try to read the player's facial expression from the other team and attempt to decipher which flavor the player ate.

Transition: Today's lesson will distinguish between what is visible to men and what is hidden, what only the Lord knows.

RECAP: In week 1, we looked at the Old Testament law to see God's design for a king and how that differed from the type of kings the world typically values. In week 2, we looked at Saul's time as king, and his leading out of fear rather than trust of the Lord led to his downfall. This background set the stage for seeing how David was God's kind of leader.

Week 3: *David Is Chosen as King*

Book

Main Point: God judges the heart and empowers His leaders with His Spirit.

1 Samuel 16:1–12 [Read]

Talking Point 1: The Lord looks at the heart, not the outward appearance.

Q: What is the difference between the way the world sees us, and the way God does?

This is the climax of all we have discussed so far, the difference between God's definition of a great leader and the world's definition. In verse 7, God specifically differentiated between the outward appearance of strength and the inward character of a person. "Height and appearance" represent strength, not necessarily that the world always wants tall leaders. But "height" does specifically point us back to the character of Saul in contrast. When Saul was chosen as king, the text emphasizes his unusual height (1 Samuel 9:2). It also points ahead to contrast David with Goliath. Goliath's unusual height was also emphasized (1 Samuel 17:4).

The word Jesse used to describe David translated as "youngest" in the ESV literally means "least," which can mean the least important, the youngest, the smallest or all three.¹ This combination of the focus on David's being the least (16:11) with God's telling Samuel not to look at his height (16:7) makes an intentional contrast between Saul, the leader God had rejected, and David, the leader He was now choosing (v. 1). But it's not just about height specifically. It's about anything the world thinks of as exceptional in "outward appearance," whether it's great physical strength, success, charisma, fame, intelligence or anything else that makes us think a person has something special that would make a great leader. God says He doesn't look at those outward qualities; He looks at the heart.²

If we contrast David and Saul in their external qualities, they are relatively similar. Saul was taller, but both men were described as handsome (1 Samuel 9:2; 16:12), and both were strong and successful in battle. In fact, David's great military success made him more popular in the people's eyes than Saul (1 Samuel 18:7, 30). David was strong on the outside, too, but God was saying the heart was more important. That's what God was looking for and what we should look for in our leaders, too.

However, this story occurred before David had won any battles, even before he had conquered Goliath.³ If we hadn't grown up hearing stories about David and were reading Samuel through for the first time, we wouldn't know at this point that David became a strong military leader. We are introduced to him as a shepherd boy (probably 10 to 15 years old), the least important in his family – so unimportant that when Samuel asked Jesse to present his sons, Jesse didn't even call David in from the fields. The text

emphasizes the fact that David was “least” in the eyes of everyone in the story except God.⁴

We must read the rest of the story to learn what God saw in David’s heart; it isn’t explained here. It’s just implied that it’s something deeper than what we see in someone’s “outward appearance.” In Hebrew, the word “heart” refers to more than just our emotions. It encompasses the entire inner person – the mind, the will and the emotions. It is better translated “inner person,” which makes more sense grammatically and helps us see the contrast more clearly. God wasn’t looking for a leader who was more emotional, loving or compassionate. He was making a contrast between the “outward appearance” (who we look like on the outside) and the “inner person” (who we really are on the inside). God was looking for someone whose inner person was committed to trusting in Him and following Him.⁵

The Psalms reveal this kind of heart in David. He is a man who feels fear and anxiety, yet chooses to put his trust in the Lord (Psalm 56:1–4). He understands that suffering helps us grow (Psalm 119:71). He not only follows God’s law, he delights in it (Psalm 119:92–104; 40:8). When he sins, he confesses openly and honestly, then repents and turns back to the Lord (Psalm 51). David takes refuge in the Lord (Psalm 71:1). The Lord is his hope, his strength, and his portion (Psalm 71:5; 59:17; 16:5). Perhaps most meaningful of all for David personally, the Lord is his Shepherd, who tenderly cares for him and guides him in the way everlasting (Psalm 23).

Theologians have long applied this statement about God’s looking at the heart, not just to what He looks for in a king but to how He looks at all of us. God looks beyond the exterior to the inner person. No matter what we say or what masks we wear, He knows who we really are. God can see beyond the people’s great outside appearance, as Jesus said about the Pharisees being whitewashed tombs (Matthew 23:27). On the other hand, it also means God can see past what the world sees as unimportant or subpar, to see the true beauty and value inside, as Jesus did with the “sinful woman” who anointed His feet (Luke 7:36–50). This is why only the Lord can judge us, because only the Lord can see past our exterior to who we really are.

Throughout the remainder of 1 Samuel, we will see contrasts between Saul and David’s actions. Saul took matters into his own hands; David trusted in the Lord. Saul attacked David when he had done nothing wrong, while David refrained from attacking Saul even when he might have deserved it. The list goes on. The difference in their actions comes from this difference in their hearts. As Jesus told His disciples, our actions flow out of our hearts (Luke 6:45; Matthew 15). God asked Samuel to trust Him in rejecting Saul and choosing David because God knew who David really was on the inside. This didn’t mean David would do everything perfectly as king. He made huge mistakes and committed grave sins. But he was a man after God’s own heart.

Q: How does it make you feel that God can see beyond your exterior to your heart?

Q: Describe people you know whose inner beauty radiates clearly to the world. How do they make other people feel? How do they contribute to the world around them?

Q: Recognizing that only the Lord can *really* see into the heart, what can we do to choose leaders based on their inner person instead of outward appearance?

1 Samuel 16:13–14 [Read]

Talking Point 2: The Holy Spirit is what empowers a leader, not his own strength.

Q: What happened when Samuel anointed David? How did this change David?

God gave His people the rite of anointing as a tangible sign of His choosing leaders. When Samuel anointed David, the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon him. Though God said David was a man after His own heart, it wasn't David's heart that empowered him to be a godly king but God's Spirit. We see the Holy Spirit empowering people in the Old Testament with supernatural strength, like Samson (Judges 13–16), or wisdom, like Solomon (1 Kings 4), or even the ability to create beautiful artwork (Exodus 35:30–35). The Spirit empowered ordinary people to do extraordinary things.

The text tells us that the Holy Spirit left Saul and came upon David. This doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit could only be on one leader at a time or only work through one person at a time. Moses and Aaron were empowered by the Holy Spirit at the same time, and many of the prophets' ministries overlapped with each other.

In the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit came upon someone but then also left that person, as with Samson and Saul (Judges 16:20; 1 Samuel 16:14). But in the new covenant, the way the Holy Spirit relates to us is distinctly different. Jeremiah explicitly says the new covenant will not be like the old. Instead of just teaching His people the law, God will put the law within them and write it on their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33–34). God will replace our hearts and put His Spirit *within* us (Ezekiel 37:14). The covenant will no longer be external but internal, the power of the Spirit changing our "inner person" into a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). Because Christ's death tore the veil of the Holy of Holies where the Spirit dwelled in the temple, we now have full access to the Spirit with no separation (Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 10:20). In the new covenant, the Spirit doesn't just come upon us, He dwells in us all the time and will never leave (Romans 8:9–11). Our bodies are the temples of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

The Spirit guides us in all truth and speaks supernatural wisdom to our hearts (John 15:26–16:15; 1 Corinthians 2:6–16). He sanctifies us and grows His fruit in us (Galatians 5:22–25). He empowers us to be His witnesses (Acts 1:8) and provides us with spiritual gifts to edify the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:1–11). In the new covenant, every

believer is empowered by the Spirit to do extraordinary things, not just a special anointed few.

Q: What are the qualities of a Spirit-led leader?

Q: In what ways are you currently using your spiritual gifts?

1 Samuel 16:15–23 [Read]

Talking Point 3: The contrast begins: David had the Holy Spirit; Saul had an evil spirit.

Q: Why is it ironic that David was the only one who could soothe Saul?

From this point forward, the story consistently contrasts Saul and David. In this first instance, David had the Holy Spirit, and Saul was tormented by a harmful spirit “from the Lord” (v. 14). This is a difficult verse for many of us, but we see a similar story in 1 Kings, when the prophet Micaiah described a vision of the Lord asking “the multitudes of heaven” before His throne who would entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth-Gilead, which would send him to his death. One volunteered to be a “deceiving spirit” in the mouths of Ahab’s prophets (1 Kings 22:19–23). A similar vision of God’s throne is described in the book of Job, where God offered Job to Satan to be tempted (Job 1:6–12). Yet Scripture tells us that God “cannot be tempted by evil, and He himself tempts no one” (James 1:13), and the book of Job also says that God does not act wickedly or treat anyone unjustly (Job 34:12). We have to trust that this act of God was not unjust but a righteous judgment brought on by Saul’s disobedience.⁶ God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The contrast here is not only that the Spirit had left Saul and come to David, but also that of all the people in all of Israel, David was the one with the unique ability to soothe Saul’s spirit. In Hebrew, there is a play on words between “spirit” and “relief” that is untranslatable to English but creates a poetic parallel between the two men. This story paints David as a man uniquely gifted of God.

The fact that it was David’s music that calmed the spirit points ahead to the fact that David would write many of the psalms and would consolidate worship at Jerusalem. The description of David as “a brave man and a warrior” points ahead to his future military prowess, even before he had conquered Goliath. And the simple “the Lord is with him” points to the presence of the Spirit upon him (16:18).⁷

At this point in the story, Saul was very pleased with David and even made David one of his armor bearers. This was a great honor and kept David physically close to Saul and able to respond quickly whenever Saul felt attacked. This story sets up the image of

David as Saul's loyal, trustworthy servant who did nothing to deserve Saul's later murderous anger toward him (1 Samuel 20:1; 30–34). It sets up Saul to be a volatile man who would later react with unreasonable anger and jealousy. The story is just beginning, but this passage sets the stage for what was to come.⁸

Q: In what ways is God positioning David for his future? Looking back on your own life, can you identify seasons in which God was positioning you for the next chapter of your life?

Q: How can we trust in God's power when we are being tempted or attacked?

Q: How has worship music comforted, inspired, or encouraged you in your life?

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Took

Main Point: God judges the heart and empowers His leaders with His Spirit.

According to a recent survey, 77 percent of homeowners reported having had spent money on unexpected repairs within the first year of owning their house.⁹

Q: What are some of the repairs you've had to make in your home?

Imagine that you only invested in the aspects of your home that people can see. Repairs on faulty wiring would be forgone in favor of new paint; foundation repair passed up for improved landscaping. Eventually, that beautiful house would fall apart.

Q: Have you been investing in what others can see and neglecting your heart? Have you become more concerned about how others perceive you and less concerned with your spiritual health?

Q: Are there things of which you need to repent?

Q: What spiritual disciplines do you need to focus on this year?

CHALLENGES

THINK: If God were to look past your external qualities to your heart, what would He see? What does it mean to have a heart (inner person) that is ready for His service? Does it mean you have to “have it all together”? If not, what does it mean? What about your external qualities for leadership? How does it encourage you to know that God empowers people with His Spirit to do what He calls them to do whether you feel “qualified” or not?

PRAY for God to reveal to you what He is calling you to do for His kingdom. Pray for Him to reveal your spiritual gifts to you and provide opportunities to use those gifts to edify the saints. Ask Him to equip you with whatever is necessary for you to fulfill your calling. Pray for His wisdom and His power to serve wherever He calls you to serve.

ACT: Pray for your church leaders. Pray specifically for your church leaders to be led by the Spirit. Pray for them to have the wisdom to see what He is leading them to do. Pray against any spiritual warfare that is attacking them. Pray for them to clearly see how the Spirit is leading your church.

NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*: We'll look at the story of David and Goliath, which we'll see is just as much the story of David and Saul, and we'll learn that those who trust in the Lord and follow His will do not need to be afraid.

¹ Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Hendrickson Academic, 1994).

² Robert D. Bergen, 1–2 Samuel, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1996).

³ There is disagreement among scholars about the order of chapters 16 and 17 because at the end of chapter 16, David enters Saul's service as a musician and becomes his armor bearer, but in chapter 17, David is still living with his dad in Bethlehem as a shepherd. We don't exactly know why these stories seem to be out of order (though it's likely a theological reason connected to the discussion of the Holy Spirit leaving Saul when David was anointed), but even if the story of David and Goliath happened before David went into Saul's service (16:14–23), *this* story of his anointing (16:1–3) almost certainly happened before David slew Goliath or David would have already been well-known by Samuel.

⁴ Robert D. Bergen, 1–2 Samuel, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1996).

⁵ A. Bowling, לֵב, "lev," *Theological Workbook of the Old Testament, Volume I* (Moody Press, 1980).

⁶ Walter Brueggeman, *First and Second Samuel* (Louisville: KY, John Knox, 1990).

⁷ Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

⁸ Robert D. Bergen, 1–2 Samuel, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Academic, 1996).

⁹ <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/02/22/3-in-4-homebuyers-face-unexpected-maintenance-costs-in-first-year.html>