

A Daily Devotional On the Life of David

1 & 2 Samuel, 1 Kings

By Ken Miller



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1 Samuel 16:1-11a

Last, But Certainly Not Least

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." 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.' 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 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?" 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 they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." 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." Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen these." 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." – 1 Samuel 16:1-11a ESV

The story of the life of King David, considered to be Israel's greatest king, starts off in a rather less-than-flattering manner. He was born in the city of Bethlehem, the eighth and youngest son of Jesse. David was a member of the tribe of Judah. Judah was one of the sons of Jacob, and it is significant to note that, when Jacob blessed his sons on his deathbed, he said of Judah, "The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples" (Genesis 49:10 ESV). This prophetic word from Jacob revealed that there would be a king, a sovereign, who would rise up from the tribe of Judah. And of this king, Jacob predicted, "your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; your father's sons shall bow down before you" (Genesis 49:8 ESV).

Which brings us to 1 Samuel, chapter 16. The prophet, Samuel, has been sent by God to the city of Bethlehem to anoint a new king. The current king, Israel's very first king, had disobeyed God and was going to be replaced. King Saul had been the people's choice. After the up-and-down period of the judges, when Israel had no king, the people had demanded that they be given one. They were tired of being ruled by judges. In fact, the people told Samuel, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint for us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Samuel 8:5 ESV). Samuel's two sons were judges, but they were dishonest and ungodly men, which prompted the demand for a king. Samuel became angry that the people would ask such a thing, but God told Samuel to give the people *exactly* what they wanted: A king to judge us like all the nations.

"Obey the voice of the people in all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them. According to all the deeds that they have done, from the day I brought them up out of Egypt even to this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are also doing to you. Now then, obey their voice; only you shall solemnly warn them and show them the ways of the king who shall reign over them." – 1 Samuel 8:7-9 ESV

But Saul's reign didn't last long. He ended up being just what the people ordered. God had warned them that Saul would prove to be a less-than-satisfactory king (see 1 Samuel 8:10-18). On top of that, Saul proved to be disobedient to God. And God was forced to remove him as the king, commanding Samuel to break the news to him:

"But now your kingdom shall not continue. The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart, and the Lord has commanded him to be prince over his people, because you have not kept what the Lord commanded you." – 1 Samuel 13:14 ESV

"The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours, who is better than you." – 1 Samuel 15:28 ESV

Which brings us to the city of Bethlehem and the house of Jesse. God sent Samuel to Bethlehem with the clear directions to anoint one of the sons of Jesse to be Saul's replacement. Samuel was a bit reluctant, because Saul was still the king, and he feared what Saul might do if he caught wind that another king had been anointed. But God insisted that Samuel do just as He had commanded and invited Jesse and his sons to a sacrifice where he consecrated them. When he got his first glimpse of Eliab, the firstborn, he immediately assumed he was the one, saying, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him" (1 Samuel 16:6 ESV). But he was wrong. God responded to Samuel with one of the most revealing statements in the entire Bible.

"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." – 1 Samuel 16:7 ESV

Saul, Israel's first king, had been chosen based on sight. He is described as "a handsome young man. There was not a man among the people of Israel more handsome than he. From his shoulders upward he was taller than any of the people" (1 Samuel 9:2 ESV). But looks can be deceiving. And Samuel had allowed himself to be deceived by Eliab's outward appearance. But it is important to remember what God had commanded Samuel to tell Saul: "The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14 ESV). This time, the selection process was going to be different. No more kings by consensus. God was looking for a man of character, not stature.

So Samuel had Jesse parade each of his sons in front of him, but one after the other, God repeatedly rejected them, forcing Samuel to announce, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one" (1 Samuel 16:8 ESV). The time came when Jesse ran out of sons and Samuel held the flask of anointing oil in his hands – unused. Samuel, a bit perplexed, asked Jesse if he had any other sons, and Jesse responded, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep" (1 Samuel 16:11 ESV).

There is a lot of conjecture as to why David was not invited to the festivities to begin with. The passage does not indicate that Jesse knew the purpose behind Samuel's visit. But when Samuel invited Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice, David was left out in the fields to tend the flocks. He was the youngest, the low man on the totem pole. While all his brothers were being consecrated, he was left to care for the family's livestock.

It is interesting to note that when Jesse informed Samuel about David, he said, "he is **keeping** the sheep." The Hebrew word is *ra'ah* and it can literally be translated, "he is **shepherding** the sheep." David was faithfully caring for and protecting the helpless sheep. He was doing his job to feed, guide, and nurture those who had been placed in his care. In Psalm 78, we are given a glimpse into the shepherd heart of David, the one who was about to be anointed the next king of Israel.

*He chose David his servant
and took him from the sheepfolds;
from following the nursing ewes he brought him
to shepherd Jacob his people,
Israel his inheritance.
With upright heart he shepherded them
and guided them with his skillful hand. – Psalm 78:70-72 ESV*

God was going to choose David because of his heart, not because he was handsome. God was going to anoint David the next king of Israel, not because he was famous, but because he was faithful. Yes, he was the last in line of all the sons of Jesse, but he was far from the least in the eyes of God.

There is a song written by Kittle L. Suffield that sums up the situation with David quite nicely.

*Does the place you're called to labor
Seem too small and little known?
It is great if God is in it,
And He'll not forget His own.*

*Little is much when God is in it!
Labor not for wealth or fame.
There's a crown—and you can win it,
If you go in Jesus' Name.*

David was left in the field by his father. But he was not left out of God's plan for the future of Israel. David was an afterthought in his father's thinking, but he would be thought worthy by God to become the shepherd of the flock of God. David was unknown and insignificant, shepherding sheep in the fields of Bethlehem. But God was about to do something with his life, the likes of which neither he nor his father could have ever imagined.

1 Samuel 16:11b-23

You Call This A Plan?

And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." 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." 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.

Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him. And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you. Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well." So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me." One of the young men answered, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the Lord is with him." Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, "Send me David your son, who is with the sheep." And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul. And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, "Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight." And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him. – 1 Samuel 16:11b-23 ESV

David, the youngest son of Jesse, was eventually brought before the prophet, Samuel. And while the passage describes David as ruddy in color, with beautiful eyes and a handsome exterior, that had nothing to do with his selection by Samuel. God had already told the prophet, "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" (1 Samuel 16:7 ESV). While David's outward appearance had nothing to do with his selection by God, it is interesting to note that he is described as "ruddy." The Hebrew word is *'admoniy* and it can refer to someone who is red-headed or who has a reddish complexion. It is the same word used to describe Esau at his birth (Genesis 25:25).

David was a young, handsome, redheaded, Hebrew shepherd boy. When he walked into the presence of Samuel, Jesse and his seven brothers that day, he would have stood out like a sore thumb. There was Eliab, who by Samuel's own admission, had the look of a king. Each of the brothers who had heard the prophet say of them, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one" (1 Samuel 16:8 ESV), had to stand and watch as Samuel took the oil and poured it over David's head. There is no indication that anyone but Samuel knew the significance of his actions. Samuel had not told Jesse why he had come to Bethlehem. He had not indicated the reason for wanting to see each of Jesse's sons. And even when David arrived, Samuel was the only one to

whom God said, “Arise, anoint him, for this is he” (1 Samuel 16:12 ESV). What is missing in this scene are any signs of celebration or trepidation. Had they realized that David had just been anointed the next king of Israel, you would have thought that Jesse and his sons would have reacted with either joy or fear. Joy, because it was not every day that one of your own family members was anointed to be the king of Israel. Fear, because they would have realized that King Saul was probably not going to take the news all that well. Had they recognized the significance of what had just happened, it seems they would have shown more of a reaction. But all that we’re told is that the Spirit of God rushed upon David, Samuel rose up and went to Ramah and, according to verse 19, David simply returned to tending sheep. No party. No celebration. No celebratory pats on the back. But while it may appear that all things remained the same, one thing was radically different.

The Spirit of God rushed upon David. God placed His Spirit upon this young shepherd boy, radically altering his life, just as He had done with Saul. After Saul had been anointed king by Samuel, he had been given specific instructions and was told, “this shall be the sign to you that the Lord has anointed you to be prince over his heritage” (1 Samuel 10:1 ESV). The prophet sent Saul on what can best be described as a sort of scavenger hunt, where he would encounter a variety of people along the way and receive various clues, that would eventually lead him to the city of Gibeath-elohim.

*“And there, as soon as you come to the city, you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with harp, tambourine, flute, and lyre before them, prophesying. **Then the Spirit of the Lord will rush upon you, and you will prophesy with them and be turned into another man.**”* – 1 Samuel 10:5-6 ESV

Saul had received the Spirit of God as well. But with the anointing of David as his replacement, Saul would have the Spirit of God removed from him. “Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him” (1 Samuel 16:14 ESV). Saul retained the crown, the symbol of his reign, but He lost the power to rule. With the removal of the Spirit of God, he “turned into another man” again, but this time, not for the better. Without the abiding presence of God’s Spirit, Saul was left to his own fleshly, sinful self. And he was left open to the influence of Satan. We are not told the nature or source of the “harmful spirit” that tormented Saul, but it is clear that God, in His sovereign plan, allowed this spirit to come upon Saul.

“Saul’s evil bent was by the permission and plan of God. We must realize that in the last analysis all penal consequences come from God, as the Author of the moral law and the one who always does what is right.” – Gleason L. Archer Jr., *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*, p. 180.

It was the presence of this evil spirit that set up David’s transition from the pasture to the palace. He would go from shepherding sheep to serving as the king’s personal servant. And King Saul loved David. What an ironic scene. Here was David, the newly anointed king of Israel, serving as the personal valet to the man he was supposed to replace. At this point, Saul has no clue as to David’s anointing by Samuel. And David seems to be ignorant of the fact that he

might be in any kind of danger. Which leads one to believe that he had no clue that Samuel's anointing had been to make him the next king of Israel. I think David's awareness of what was happening in his life would happen over time. He would gradually put the pieces together and recognize that he had been chosen by God to be the next king. But in the meantime, his life would never be the same again.

He and King Saul would have a love-hate relationship. There would be moments of genuine affection coupled with inexplicable periods of terrifying hatred and life-threatening anger. Saul's temperament would be all over the map. His psychological condition would grow progressively worse, as David's popularity and fame increased. And yet, all of this was part of God's plan for David's life. God could have simply removed Saul and replaced him with David. He could have made this an immediate and hassle-free transition plan, but He didn't. David was going to discover that his road to the throne was to be a rocky one. His anointing by God, whether he understood the full import of it or not, was not going to mean that his life would be easy or trouble-free. Had the prophet sat down with David and given him a full description of what the next years of his life would entail, he might have decided to return to the sheep for good. God's calling is not a guarantee of the good life. Abraham's calling by God was accompanied by much sacrifice, years of disappointment, and a constant requirement to live by faith, not sight. Moses was called by God, but faced constant danger, rejection, doubt and questions about his leadership ability. The disciples were called by God, but were also told by Jesus, "Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles" (Matthew 10:17-18 ESV). Jesus went on to tell them, "and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 10:22 ESV).

David was in for a wild ride. He had the anointing of God, but now he was to receive the equipping of God. He had the Spirit, but the Spirit was out to have all of him. He was a man after God's own heart, but now God was going to give David a heart like His.

1 Samuel 17:1-18

When the Least-Expected Does the Unexpected

Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him. He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together." When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.

And Jesse said to David his son, "Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers. Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them." – 1 Samuel 17:1-18 ESV

The exact timeline of the story of David can be a bit difficult to piece together. Samuel, who wrote the book that bears his name, seems to have been less interested in providing a precise chronological outline of David's life than he was of highlighting the details of how he came to be king. A case in point is the reference to David found in chapter 16. It was made by one of King Saul's servants when the king began to suffer the effects of the harmful spirit placed upon him by God.

“Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the Lord is with him.” – 1 Samuel 16:18 ESV

He refers to David as a man of valor and a man of war. But the last reference we have of David is that of his anointing by Samuel. Immediately after that event, David is said to have returned to his sheep. And with David being the youngest of Jesse’s eight sons, it is believed that he could have been no older than 15 at the time of his anointing by Samuel. So when did he become a man of valor and war? It would seem that some significant time has passed since David’s anointing – enough time for him to grow up and join the army of Israel. He must have gained some experience in battle to have earned the reputation as “a brave warrior, a man of war” (NLT). But regardless of how much time has passed, one thing remained unchanged about David: ...the Lord was with him (1 Samuel 16:18). David had the Spirit of God resting upon him. He had the power and the presence of God available to him. His anointing with oil by Samuel made his selection by God to be Israel’s next king official, but it was his anointing with the Holy Spirit that would make him fit for the office of king.

It is interesting to note that when Saul sent for David, he was found back with the sheep. So whatever deeds of valor and bravery he had done must have been done on the side or as a result of his responsibilities as a shepherd. Later on in the story, David himself will recount to King Saul a few examples of his exploits in the field caring for the sheep. It seems that it wasn’t as safe an occupation as one might think.

“Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears...” – 1 Samuel 17:34-36 ESV

But back to our timeline. David had been hired by the king and given the responsibility to minister to Saul when he experienced the fits brought on by the “harmful spirit.” He was also made the king’s armor bearer. Which presents another interesting issue. When chapter 17 opens, the Israelites are preparing to do battle with the Philistines. And while King Saul is there with all his troops, David, his armor bearer, is not. He was at home tending the flocks. The text tells us that “David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father’s sheep at Bethlehem” (1 Samuel 17:15 ESV). It seems that David was pulling double-duty, balancing the demands of a bi-vocational lifestyle that required him to split his time between his responsibilities as a shepherd of sheep and a servant to the king.

It is essential to keep in mind that, all during this time, David was the God-appointed and Holy Spirit-anointed successor to King Saul. And yet, here he was dividing his time between tending sheep and plucking out tunes on his lyre to calm the heart of the current king of Israel. Saul was still on the throne and tasked with the responsibility of defending the nation of Israel from their enemies. But he was ill-equipped for the job. He no longer enjoyed the anointing of God’s

Spirit. He had all the physical attributes to make him “a brave warrior, a man of war,” but when Goliath challenged the armies of Israel to send out a champion to fight him, Saul and his troops were “dismayed and greatly afraid” (1 Samuel 17:11 ESV).

Samuel is less interested in establishing an exact chronology of the events as in creating a stark contrast between the warrior-king and the shepherd-servant. With the introduction into the story line of Goliath and the Philistines, Samuel reminds his readers that there is something far more significant going on here than just who will sit on the throne of Israel. This is about the future well-being of the people of God. The king of Israel was to be much more than a figure head. He was to be the leader of God’s people, providing them with physical protection and spiritual direction. He was to be a man after God’s own heart, who listened well, followed instructions obediently, and protected God’s people faithfully. Saul was tormented by a spirit that attacked him relentlessly, leaving him unable to do his job as king. Goliath represents a physical manifestation of that same spirit, tormenting the people of God and creating in them fear and dismay. They stood before their enemy leaderless and helpless. They had to suffer his daily taunts and jeers, unable to do anything about it. He demanded that they send one man who would be willing to face him a winner-takes-all match. But no one stepped forward. Nobody had the guts to face the Philistine champion and keep God’s people from becoming slaves.

The stage was set. Saul, the king, stood immobilized and paralyzed by fear. But all of that was about to change, when the Lord’s anointed stepped onto the scene. David, the sheep-tending, lyre-playing, armor-bearing, food-delivering son of Jesse was about to provide an unforgettable lesson in faith and godly leadership. The least-expected was going to do the unexpected. The sheep-keeper was about to become the giant-killer.