



Turning Lost Students into Christ-Centered Laborers

DIVINE VISION • Looking Not at Physical Appearance, but at the Heart

What Do I Need to Know About the Passage?

I Samuel 16:1-23

Remember grade school recess time when all the kids would gather to play kickball? The captains who picked the teams always went for the big, tall, fast, athletic kids, right? No captain ever picked someone because they thought, “I bet they are a great teammate, a hard worker, and have a wonderful personality.” It’s sad, but true. In I Samuel 16, we see the same principle. Samuel illustrates that the crooked disposition of the human heart is to look at the external nature of a person and not the internal qualities. Thankfully, God’s vision isn’t like ours! He looks at the beauty of someone’s heart instead of their athletic build, pretty face, or smooth skin.

In the last few studies, we have looked at the ascent of Saul to the throne and his quick descent from God’s favor. Things went so badly for Saul that God wasted no time in anointing another man as king. Our passage centers on David’s anointing as the next king of Israel, who will be obedient to God and bring Israel back to spiritual health. This chapter looks ahead to the day that David’s greater son, Jesus, will be king over God’s people and will bring final redemption. The beauty of I Samuel 16 is God’s passion for judging by what is on the heart; this chapter illustrates His desire to use people whose hearts are right with Him. Saul’s heart was wicked from the start. David’s heart, on the other hand, is humble, prayerful, and repentant. Because of this, Saul is punished and David is rewarded.

Samuel Anoints David as King (16:1-13)

In I Samuel 13:14, Samuel said to Saul, “The LORD has sought out a man after His own heart, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over His people.” This word is immediately fulfilled in David, son of Jesse. Samuel is directed by the LORD to go to Jesse’s house, but not after grieving over Saul. God asks Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul?” Samuel is probably saddened over Saul’s rejection of God and the future of Israel. It’s okay to grieve over leaders who reject the Lord, but we must move on when God commands us to. When Samuel finally gets to Jesse’s house, the Lord teaches him an important lesson about the difference between human and divine vision.

After Samuel meets Jesse, Jesse’s sons come to the sacrifice that Samuel was performing (v. 5). Samuel sees the first son, Eliab, and thinks, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is before him” (v. 6). God scolds Samuel for looking at Eliab’s physical appearance. “For the LORD sees not as man sees,” God said (v. 7b). Every one of Jesse’s sons who passed by were turned down by God, but there

What’s the Big Idea?

After rejecting Saul as Israel’s king, God sends His prophet Samuel to anoint David as his successor. This passage shows God’s value of the heart over outward appearance in choosing a king and foreshadows the promise of the greater, eternal King Jesus who will be sent to save us once for all.

What’s the Problem?

By nature our hearts are not right with God, so we are bent toward valuing external qualities rather than internal qualities.



was still one son left. Jesse calls for David who was working in the fields keeping his sheep. David was the youngest in the family, not an honorable quality in Jewish culture. But God picks David the shepherd to lead His people Israel. In the same way, God chooses Jesus to be the great Shepherd for His people, to lead us to eternal salvation and joy in Him. Jesus could have easily been forgotten, as He was born in a horse trough to poor parents in a ghetto town called Bethlehem. That's not much to brag about, but God's vision is not like ours. Pray that the group will know and embrace that we serve a God who does not look to the outer appearance but looks on the heart of His servants to find favor.

David the Musician (16:14-23)

Between verses 13 and 14, there is an interesting exchange. Verse 14 says, "Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him." Notice back in verse 13, when Samuel anoints David that "the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon [him] from that day forward." God has made a clear break with Saul as king and devoted all of his Spirit to nurturing and building up David. As the Spirit leaves Saul, an "evil spirit from the LORD" makes his life miserable. Theologian R.C. Sproul comments, "The empowering and validating presence of God's Spirit must have been removed from Saul at his definitive rejection as king. The Hebrew word [for "evil spirit"] may describe something that is troubling, annoying, or harmful." We can't say that God made Saul demon-possessed, but this verse does show that God is in control even over the forces that affect people spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically.

Because he's going a bit crazy, Saul needs something to soothe his soul. His servants suggest that he needs some tunes to calm his emotions. Well, not only was David fit to be king, but evidently he plays a sick guitar riff, because the musician search finds him to be the best lyre player in the land (a stringed instrument, but I'm betting it wasn't electric). He probably wasn't jamming to Jimi Hendrix or Eric Clapton, but David's talent was pleasing to Saul. He played well enough to find favor in Saul's eyes and he refreshed him so much that "the evil spirit departed from him" (v. 23).

Before leading this lesson, pray that the group members' hearts would be prepared to honestly look at their attitudes and motivations to see where their vision is focused. Pray that God would open everyone's eyes to the fact that our natural position is to look on the outside and that He would cause us to see people as He does.

What's Our Response?

We need to believe in the Greater David, namely Jesus, and strive for a God-oriented heart that looks to people's inner self rather than external qualities.

What Are the Questions?

I Samuel 16:1-23

LAUNCH

“Don’t judge a book by its cover” is a famous saying. Why is it a bad idea to judge people externally? Why do we do it so frequently?

EXPLORE

Read I Samuel 16:1-7

1. Why do you think Samuel was grieving over Saul?
2. What is hopeful about God saying in verse 1 that he has selected a king for Himself?
3. What does God send Samuel to do?
4. Why do you think the city leaders trembled when Samuel came to their town?
5. What is the difference between Samuel’s and God’s assessment of Jesse’s first son?

Read I Samuel 16:8-13

6. What does it say about Jesse’s estimation of his youngest son that he didn’t even bother to have him appear before Samuel?

7. What do you think is significant about the positive descriptions of David’s appearance in verse 12 combined with God’s statement about the priority of the heart in verse 7?
8. What happens to David once Samuel anoints him?

Read I Samuel 16:14-23

9. What happens to Saul in this section?
10. How do Saul’s servants try to resolve Saul’s problem?
11. What contrasts do you observe between David and Saul in this section?

APPLY

12. In what ways do you place too much value on outward appearance and neglect the value of a heart that’s oriented toward God in yourself and others?
13. Read I Peter 2:6-8. This passage shows that our temporal and eternal well-being depends on the extent to which we orient our lives to God’s value of the heart expressed in Christ. What steps do you need to take to believe in Him with what’s happening in your life today instead of disbelieving Him?
14. Read Isaiah 53:2-6 (and look back at I Peter 2:6-8). What similarities do you see between God’s choice of David as king and God’s choice of Jesus as King?
15. After God’s Spirit came upon David in verse 13, he began to experience an extended period of difficulty. Read Matthew 3:13-4:1. What parallel do you see?

What Are the Answers?

1. Possible reasons may include Saul's hard-heartedness and concern over the future of Israel.
2. God's choice is a good thing, in contrast to His choice of Saul, which was really condescension to the people's choice and which proved to be a disaster.
3. He sends him to Bethlehem to anoint a new king from among Jesse's sons.
4. It may have been because they knew his reputation as God's messenger and were concerned that they were under God's judgment for some reason.
5. Samuel looks at his outward appearance and assumes he's God's choice, but God rejects him because He's making His decision based on the condition of his heart.
6. It shows that as the youngest son he didn't regard him as being of any consequence to Samuel's visit.
7. It shows that while it's OK to be good looking, outward appearance is irrelevant compared to a person's heart condition.
8. The Spirit of the LORD comes mightily upon him.
9. God's Spirit leaves him, and an evil spirit begins to terrorize him.
10. They suggest that Saul calls for David to play his heart and sooth his troubled spirit.
11. David has God's Spirit while Saul has an evil spirit. The LORD is with David, but He's departed from Saul. David brings peace, but Saul is full of turmoil.
12. Allow the group to discuss.
13. Allow the group to discuss.
14. Both David and Jesus were easy to overlook and reject, yet God chose them for greatness.
15. Experiencing God's Spirit doesn't necessarily mean that things will go well. They may actually get worse. Yet God's presence and favor bring blessing in the midst of trials.

Memorize

For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.

I Samuel 16:7b