

David Anointed as King

Devotional Reading: [Acts 13:21-31](#)

Background Scripture: [1 Samuel 16:1-13](#)

1 Samuel 16:1-13

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² But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”

The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’” ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”

⁴ Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”

⁵ Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”

⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” ⁹ Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” ¹⁰ Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.” ¹¹ So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”

“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

¹² So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

¹³ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

Key Text

The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD

God's Exceptional Choice

Unit 2: Out of Slavery to Nationhood

Lessons 5–9

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Describe the selection process of David as king.
2. Compare and contrast that process with that of the choosing of Saul as king.
3. Write a prayer asking God for a clean heart and eyes of faith.

Lesson Outline

Introduction

- A. The Unlikely President
- B. Lesson Context

I. God Chooses a New King (1 Samuel 16:1–3)

- A. Rejection (v. 1)
Pity Party for One

- B. Direction (vv. 2–3)

II. God Chooses David (1 Samuel 16:4–13)

- A. Coming to Bethlehem (vv. 4–5)
- B. Rejecting Older Sons (vv. 6–10)
- C. Selecting the Shepherd Son (vv. 11–13)

Picture Perfect

Conclusion

- A. Walking by Faith
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

How to Say It

Abimelek Uh-*bim*-eh-lek.

Abinadab Uh-*bin*-uh-dab.

Eliab	Ee- <i>lye</i> -ab.
Gibeah	<i>Gib</i> -ee-uh (<i>G</i> as in <i>get</i>).
Kiriath Jearim	<i>Kir</i> -jath <i>Jee</i> -uh-rim or <i>jee</i> -a-rim.
Ramah	<i>Ray</i> -muh.
Shammah	Shuh- <i>muh</i> .

Introduction

A. The Unlikely President

Abraham Lincoln’s birth in 1809 in a Kentucky log cabin was a sign of his family’s nineteenth-century situation. His education was unimpressive. As an adult, Lincoln did not attend college but studied on his own to pass the bar exam and become a lawyer. Drawn to politics, he was defeated for election to the Illinois state legislature in 1832 but then elected to four terms beginning in 1834. Looking to the serve in Congress, he lost his first attempt at gaining his party’s nomination to the U. S. House of Representatives in 1843. Running again, he was elected in 1846 but limited himself to one term in that office. He then twice lost in his quest to be elected a senator from Illinois—first in 1855, then again in 1858. He became his party’s surprise nominee for the 1860 presidential election, and he changed the course of the nation.

Did all that happen by random chance, or was it by providential intervention? Only God knows! But the Lord always reserves the right to intervene in matters involving human leadership, as today’s text affirms.

B. Lesson Context

Much of the context for this lesson is shared with that of [lesson 8](#). Israel’s first king, Saul, was identified by the Lord and anointed by Samuel. But Saul overstepped his role and failed to obey the Lord ([1 Samuel 13:7b–14; 15:2–33](#)). Saul increasingly demonstrated the downfalls of having a king at all. As a result the Lord regretted choosing Saul and decided to find another king ([15:35](#)).

The events in this lesson occurred sometime during Saul’s 40-year reign, which lasted from 1050 to 1010 BC. David’s reign would not begin until 1010 BC, but it was known to Saul and his family long before then that they were not the start of a dynasty in Israel ([1 Samuel 23:16–17](#)).

I. God Chooses a New King

([1 Samuel 16:1–3](#))

A. Rejection (v. 1)

1a. The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel?”

Samuel’s mourning over Saul’s failures and rejection was not inappropriate. After all, Saul’s suc-

cess would have been success on behalf of Israel. And the last time Samuel would ever meet Saul was to tell him that God had rejected him as king (1 Samuel 15:20–23, 35). But Saul demonstrated that he looked the part (9:2) without being able to carry out the office of king in the manner desired by the Lord (15:1–11). God’s word to *Samuel* was that the time for mourning was past (compare Ecclesiastes 3:1, 4).

What Do You Think?

How do you discern when you have moved from healthy mourning into unhealthy over-focusing?

Digging Deeper

What cautions do you employ to ensure that you do not assume someone else is unhealthily dwelling on pain because he or she does not mourn like you do?

1b. “Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.”

The *horn* is likely that of a ram (see Genesis 22:13). Though horns were often used to produce sound (example: Joshua 6:5), they could also make excellent containers for *oil* (compare 1 Kings 1:39; Psalm 92:10).

Jesse was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:21–22). Jesse and his family made their living as shepherds (see 1 Samuel 16:11, below). Their hometown, *Bethlehem*, was located in Judah, south-southeast of Samuel’s home in Ramah in the territory of Ephraim (compare 7:17). There are perhaps five towns named Ramah in the Old Testament, so we take care not to get them mixed up. The journey of more than 20 miles to Bethlehem required crossing through the territory of Benjamin. The New Testament village of Arimathea is likely this same place renamed (John 19:38).

Pity Party for One

“I’m going to my room and I’m never coming out!” The bedroom door slammed shut. That agony-filled hyperbole came from our 15-year-old daughter, who had asked to go to a concert with her friends and then stay the night in a hotel. While she thought that was a perfectly reasonable request, her father and I knew it was asking for trouble.

We wondered how long it would take her to resume the normalcy of life; it was during dinner the next evening. A friend called and asked her to the movies, and we gladly gave the OK. While she still wasn’t happy with our decision about the concert, she was moving on.

God’s rejection of Saul as king was valid, but Samuel mourned that decision deeply. But God stood fast and told Samuel it was time to move on. How long will you sit and mourn when God tells you no?

—P. M.

B. Direction (vv. 2–3)

2a. But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.”

The most likely road to Bethlehem went through Gibeah, the hometown of *Saul* (1 Samuel 15:34).

The odds were high that Saul or his family might realize what Samuel was doing, which could prove to be a grave danger. Without an innocuous reason to travel, suspicion or curiosity could be aroused.

What Do You Think?

How can you discern when an unpopular course of action is in keeping with God's will?

Digging Deeper

What fears prevent you from acting when you feel it is right to do so?

2b. The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’

Samuel was known for offering sacrifices while traveling (1 Samuel 7:9; 9:12–13; 10:8; etc.). While this was not the primary reason for Samuel to be traveling this time, it was a legitimate reason—and quite an appropriate one when anointing a king chosen by God.

A *heifer* is a young female cow. Heifers were not typically sacrificed, although precedent and instruction existed (Genesis 15:9; Numbers 19:2–10; Deuteronomy 21:3–6). Generally male animals were sacrificed (Leviticus 1:5; 4:3–21; Numbers 8:8; Deuteronomy 18:3; etc.). This may have been in recognition that female animals were more valuable for reproduction. While one male could significantly increase an entire herd, one female was unlikely to be so fruitful.

The Law of Moses specified several types of animal sacrifices (examples: Leviticus 12:6–8; 16:3–28). Samuel's sacrifice was not connected to any specific festival, so it should likely be considered a fellowship offering. The beast could be male or female so long as it was “without defect” (3:1). A key difference in this case is that neither the tabernacle nor priests play a part. But Samuel had been instructed by the Lord himself to make this sacrifice as part of his errand to Bethlehem, so these absences are no cause for concern.

3. “Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”

The Lord did not give Samuel detailed instructions at this point, though Samuel might have appreciated a step-by-step guide in advance. All he needed to know to proceed was to take a *sacrifice* and to *invite Jesse* to be present for it. Samuel would walk by faith, eager for God's next instruction (compare Romans 1:17).

II. God Chooses David

(1 Samuel 16:4–13)

A. Coming to Bethlehem (vv. 4–5)

4–5a. Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?” Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace;

It's unclear why *the elders* immediately *trembled* at Samuel's approach. Their reaction may be evidence that Samuel had a reputation for bringing punishment and bad news—a reputation that many

prophets later earned (1 Kings 18:17–19; Jeremiah 38:1–4; Amos 7:10–17; etc.). The Hebrew word translated *in peace* has more to do with positive connotations of peace—like wholeness and well-being—than simply an absence of violence. Regarding their question *Do you come in peace?* compare 1 Kings 2:13 and 2 Kings 9:17–29.

5b. “I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

Israel did not yet have a temple (1 Kings 6:1), and the ark of the covenant was located in Kiriath Jearim (1 Samuel 7:1–2). Though in later generations, sacrifices offered outside Jerusalem and the temple where the ark was housed were often associated with idolatry (examples: 1 Kings 13:32–33; 14:23; 15:14), at this time it was the norm (example: 1 Samuel 9:11–25). Sacrifices such as Samuel’s could be given on an altar that was built to God’s specifications (Exodus 20:24–26).

Consecration was an act of preparation that involved ceremonial washing to remove any ritual uncleanness and the donning of freshly washed clothes (example: Exodus 19:14–15; compare Numbers 6:1–21). The ritual of cleaning oneself for a sacrifice was an acknowledgment that ultimately no gift could be given to God that was “good enough,” but he would accept what came from a clean heart (contrast Leviticus 26:41).

B. Rejecting Older Sons (vv. 6–10)

6. When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”

Eliab was Jesse’s oldest son (1 Chronicles 2:13). Being the firstborn son entitled him to high honor. He could expect to inherit double what his brothers would receive when Jesse died (Deuteronomy 21:15–17). Possibly Samuel noticed markers of Eliab’s favored status, though this is by no means a necessary conclusion. More likely Jesse brought his firstborn in front of Samuel first, assuming this was another honor for the oldest son (see 1 Samuel 16:8–10, below). For whatever reason, Samuel jumped to the conclusion that his search was done.

7a. But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him.

Eliab was apparently tall and handsome, reason enough for Samuel to be impressed at first glance. But such outward measures had already failed as valid criteria regarding whether Saul was up for the job (1 Samuel 10:23–24; see lesson 8).

7b. “The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

The Lord would later tell Isaiah, “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways.... As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8–9). The evidence supporting this truth is overwhelming, present from Genesis 1 to Revelation 22. Here God cites the key difference in the way he sees things. Society often judges a person based on his or her appearance (example: Esther 2:17–18; compare Isaiah 53:2–3), and Christians are not immune to making the same assessments (James 2:1–4). But *the*

Lord looks past this—is not even distracted by *appearance*—and seeks out the deepest recesses of our hearts (Psalm 139).

Samuel could not possibly be expected to know Eliab’s character on sight. But God’s knowledge went beyond sight. We catch a glimpse of Eliab’s heart when he fails to stand up to Goliath *and* chastises David (see 1 Samuel 17:28). That encounter gives us a clue as to why Eliab was not God’s next choice for king (contrast 17:32–37a).

8–9. Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.”

Jesse called his second- and third-born sons, *Abinadab* and *Shammah*, respectively. Little more is known about these brothers beyond that they were in Saul’s military facing Goliath and the Philistines (1 Samuel 17:13).

10. Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.”

Only *seven* of Jesse’s sons (and both of his daughters) are named in 1 Chronicles 2:13–15. But David was the eighth son (see 1 Samuel 16:11, below; 17:12). The likeliest explanation for this difference is that Jesse had another son who unfortunately died before reaching adulthood. Because a genealogy documented lineage, especially from father to son, a son who died before marrying and without heirs might not be named.

What Do You Think?

What do you learn from situations in which you have been passed over for a promotion or other position of authority?

Digging Deeper

How do you serve effectively when you have not been called to be a leader?

C. Selecting the Shepherd Son (vv. 11–13)

11a. So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.”

Jesse apparently considered his *youngest* too insignificant to be called home. Or maybe there was no one to relieve that son from his work watching *the sheep* (contrast 1 Samuel 17:20), and he seemed an unlikely choice regardless. Jesse’s description of the missing son as the youngest could also be understood as the “smallest,” suggesting that Jesse hadn’t called this son home because he wasn’t a grown man (compare 17:42). Exclusion for this reason clearly contradicts the Lord’s admonition to Samuel that the physical qualities of a candidate were of no consequence (see 16:7, above).

Though shepherding was not a profession of great esteem, the imagery of a shepherd was used to describe the caliber of a leader. When a priest or king was unfaithful, the people were like defenseless, directionless sheep (Jeremiah 10:21; 23:1–2; Matthew 9:36). When the people were led well, it was like having a good shepherd guiding them (Psalm 23; Isaiah 40:11; John 10:1–18). The man God chose

would be in the latter category ([Ezekiel 34:23](#); [37:24](#)).

11b. Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”

Jesse and all his sons but one had been sanctified for the sacrifice ([1 Samuel 16:5b](#), above). Still, Samuel insisted that the remaining son arrive before they sat down to eat the sacrifice (see [16:2b](#), above). Samuel needed to see the youngest son before his task was finished.

Picture Perfect

My husband is a part-time photographer with a very good eye. After one particular wedding shoot, he edited the proofs and picked out a few for the album. He left others out, thinking they would have little sentimental meaning to the bride and groom. When he met with the couple, they asked him if any pictures were missing and requested to see the ones he hadn't included. One of those missing photos became the main cover of their wedding album. My husband realized he was not the best judge of what others would find valuable in his photographs.

Like my husband, Jesse and Samuel both tried to make a decision that was better left to another—in their case, the Lord. But you have never done that, have you?

—P. M.

12a. So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Even though the Lord does not look at the outward appearance ([1 Samuel 16:7](#), above; compare [2 Corinthians 10:7](#)), the youngest was a good-looking young man. Just as we cannot assume that an attractive person is also a good person (see [1 Samuel 16:7](#), above), neither can we assume that the opposite must be true (example: [Isaiah 53:2b](#)). Truly the outside is no measure, one way or the other.

The Hebrew word translated *glowing with health* is a rare word in Hebrew for physical description that implies the color red. Elsewhere it described Esau's appearance at birth ([Genesis 25:25](#); see [lesson 2](#)). This has been interpreted to mean Esau looked healthy and robust or, alternatively, that he had red hair and rosy cheeks. We cannot be sure of this, but if David had red hair, he would have been a conspicuous sight. Red hair is found among most of the peoples of the earth, but is rare in all.

12b. Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.”

Though David had not been sanctified with his father and brothers for the sacrifice, the Lord indicated that not only would David participate, but he was to be anointed as Israel's next king (see [1 Samuel 16:13a](#), next).

13a. So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came powerfully upon David.

Here all David's brothers stood, freshly washed and in their best clothes, ready for a feast. In from the fields came this youngster, unwashed, smelling like sheep ... and *he* was the honored one! While this might be puzzling or even troubling to the brothers or other onlookers, we know that God had chosen David based on the state of the man's heart. Though he hadn't cleaned the outward dirt, inside David had a heart turned to God and ready to do his will.

Jesus later said to the scribes and Pharisees, “You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean” ([Matthew 23:25–26](#)). We can conclude here that God considered David clean on the inside already; an outer washing would just have been for appearances.

Before the anointing of Saul and then David as kings in Israel, the act had been used primarily for ordaining priests or sanctifying an object as holy to the Lord (examples: [Exodus 28:41](#); [30:22–33](#); [Numbers 7:1](#); [35:25](#)). From Abimelek’s attempt to become king ([Judges 9](#)), anointing shifted to focusing more often on a king than a priest.

Significantly, *David* was not *anointed* only with *oil* but also with *the Spirit of the Lord* (compare [1 Samuel 10:6](#), [9–10](#); contrast [16:14](#), not in our printed text). This image reminds us of Jesus’ own baptism in water and the Spirit’s coming to him “like a dove” ([Luke 3:22](#); compare [4:18](#); [Acts 10:38](#)). Echoes of David are appropriate and even intentional in Jesus’ life. After all, Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise to David of an eternal throne ([2 Samuel 7:11b–16](#); [Hebrew 1:8–9](#)). And if David was an imperfect, fallen example of a man after God’s own heart, Jesus is the perfect example, the very image of God ([Colossians 1:15–20](#)).

What Do You Think?

In what ways do you experience the presence of the Holy Spirit?

Digging Deeper

What you intentionally do this week to help you follow the Spirit’s lead more closely (see [Galatians 5:25](#))?

13b. Samuel then went to Ramah.

The saga ends with no drama. The next king was anointed, so *Samuel* simply left to continue his usual work in *Ramah* (see [1 Samuel 7:17](#)).

Conclusion

A. Walking by Faith

God’s choice transcended human expectations of royalty and testifies to the Lord’s knowledge of the human heart. We are at a disadvantage when we make decisions based on what we see. And sight may not be limited to what we sense right before our eyes. We fear that war and persecution may come to us, that violence is blossoming all around; we dread the next hurricane or tornado or earthquake. We mourn the moral failings of our secular leaders and, especially, of Christian leaders.

But like David, we have been anointed with the Spirit ([2 Corinthians 1:21–22](#)). And this Spirit leads us not into fear of what we see but with confidence in what we cannot see, hope in what we know by faith ([5:7](#)). Like Samuel, we do not often know the whole story or what we are meant to do many (or even a few) steps into the future. For the prophet, as for us, the Lord gives the information needed in order to be able to act in faith. We can work confidently when we are focused on becoming more like Jesus and calling others to love him as we do.



Visual for [Lessons 6 & 9](#). Ask the class to consider how they answered this question in [lesson 6](#) and how it may have shifted since then.

When you look at the world, do not trust only your senses. Ask God for the heart to see what he sees, to see past all the terror and sin to his redeeming work and desire for the hearts of all people. May we pray as David did, “Create in me a pure heart, O God” ([Psalm 51:10](#)).

What Do You Think?

What takeaways from [lessons 8](#) and [9](#) are most challenging to you?

Digging Deeper

What changes do these insights require of you in thought, speech, and action?

B. Prayer

Lord God, teach us to value the heart over the outward appearance of a person. Purify our own hearts so that when others see us, they will see that you have chosen us and are forming us in the

image of Jesus. It is in his name that we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

What does God see in your heart?

Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Give participants time to talk about how it worked during the past week to make choices by leaning on godly principles.

Distribute a handout (you prepare) with each of the following statements. Put the continuum at the top of the page or on the board.

Not at all important Extremely Important

0 1 2 3 4 5

1. My reputation among my coworkers
2. The way I look when I go out to run errands
3. How clean and neat my clothes are
4. Whether my outfits reflect current styles
5. What my family members think of me
6. My ability to be “the best” in at least one area
7. The style reflected by the car I drive

Give students one minute to jot their answer beside each statement. Then ask volunteers to tell which statements they rated 4 or 5 and which they rated 1. Talk as a whole class about why people often rely on outward appearances.

Alternative. In groups of three, class members should search media for evidence of our culture’s emphasis on outward appearances. If they find contrasting examples—an emphasis on internal character—they should note those also. Allow at least five minutes for group study before asking them to share examples with the whole class.

After either activity, lead into the Bible lesson by saying, “Samuel listened to what God was telling him—despite wanting to depend on appearances.”

Into the Word

Divide the class into groups of three. Ask half the groups to skim 1 Samuel chapters 10–11 and 13–15 to understand why Saul (the subject of last week’s lesson) was rejected as king by God. The other groups should use study Bibles or online Bible reference tools to prepare a brief report on Bethlehem. Allow six to eight minutes for research. Have groups report their findings to the whole class.

Send class members back to their groups to look at 1 Samuel 16:1–13. Write *God’s sight is not human sight* on your board and ask class members to list how today’s text shows that statement to be true.

After calling time, compare the lists as a whole class. Ask a volunteer to read Acts 13:22. Discuss how their findings agree with what Paul says about David.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Samuel’s Tough Assignment” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have learners work in pairs or small groups to complete as indicated.

Into Life

Draw a large outline of a heart on your board or on a piece of newsprint taped to the wall. Distribute self-stick notes to class members, and ask them to write descriptions, each on a note, of the heart of God—what he values most. Invite them to attach their notes inside the heart you’ve drawn. Distribute sheets of paper. Ask each class member to draw a heart in the center of their sheet and write, in the center of it, one or two of the qualities on display inside the heart on the wall.

Alternative. Distribute copies of the “Leaders You Know” exercise from the activity page. Have learners work independently for one minute before working with others in their groups of three to complete the activity.

After either activity, end with sentence prayers from class members asking God to help them develop a clean heart and eyes of faith, as well as the specific qualities they wrote down. You may ask students to jot down their prayers on their sheets. Plan time next week to talk about how God is working to develop godly leadership qualities in your learners.