

# Brentwood Baptist

HUMAN: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE REAL || 1 SAMUEL 16:1-13 || AUGUST 6, 2023

## MAIN POINT

God desires people who seek to follow Him with all their hearts.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**When you meet a person, what qualities make a good first impression? What qualities make a bad first impression?**

**Have you ever been wrong about a first impression? Have you met someone whose good or bad first impression ended up not being at all how you knew them going forward?**

Research indicates that there is a correlation between a person's height and the salary he or she earns. This is particularly true in occupations where the perception of others is crucial, such as sales and management. It is also documented that height is seen as a social asset and perceived as indicative of a person's competence. Of course, no research suggests that taller people actually fulfill these perceptions. It is merely indicative of the way we often judge people based on external traits. Today, we'll be looking at God's qualifications for a leader, which are quite different from our human qualifications.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 SAMUEL 16:1-3.

**What was Samuel mourning at the start of this passage?**

**Why and when did God reject Saul? Read 1 Samuel 13:8-14 and 15:10-11 to aid in your discussion.**

By the time we get to 1 Samuel 16, it is not clear how many years had passed since Saul was anointed as king. It was a fairly extensive period, and it may have been decades. This is important because we can see that a major change had come about in Saul's life in the intervening years. When first told that he would become king, he protested that he was unworthy (9:21). When his supporters wanted to kill some men who had opposed the choice of Saul as king, he spared his opponents (11:12-13). But years of ruling had turned Saul into a different man. He became so entrenched in his position that Samuel feared that Saul would kill him in order to hold on to his throne (16:2).

Our story begins in a politically tense situation. The once humble Saul is now determined to hold on to power, and he knows that Samuel no longer supports him (1 Sam. 15:28). God has commissioned Samuel to anoint a new king. Samuel, being as fallible as any other man, needs God's guidance in making his choice of whom to anoint.

**What does this conversation between Samuel and God teach you about their relationship?**

God is sovereign. He has power and authority over everything and everyone in the world, and we can trust Him even as we express to Him our fears about the roles and responsibilities He gives us. In what aspect of your life do you most need that reminder right now?

READ 1 SAMUEL 16:4-10.

Samuel showed up unexpectedly at the town of Bethlehem. This alarmed the townspeople, who felt that his arrival could only mean something bad. Prophets so often brought bad news with them "messages of doom and judgment" and people preferred not to see them at all. When Elijah turned up at the court of Ahab, he received the greeting, Is that you, you destroyer of Israel? (1 Kings 18:17).

**In what ways does pursuing the call of God upon one's life bring isolation from others? What are the risks and rewards of such a pursuit? How might the people's response to Samuel have contributed to him initially thinking (or hoping) Eliab was the Lord's anointed? What was the irony here (see 10:23-24)?**

Eliab evidently had the physical features of a star actor or athlete, looking every bit the part of a potential king. As Jesse's oldest son stood before him, Samuel must have compared him with the tall and impressive Saul (1 Sam. 10:23-24). Our culture also evaluates people by their appearance, social status, and other superficial traits. Nevertheless, people do not see what God sees.

**What does verse 7 suggest about the qualities God counts as most important for His servants? What would you consider qualities of the heart that are necessary for serving God?**

Appearances are only hints at the true character, intelligence, grace, and virtue of a person. They can be misleading. God sees directly into the heart. He has no need to use the outside as an indicator of what may be on the inside, because the inside is fully exposed to Him.

**What dangers lie in assuming that certain individuals are suited for leadership based on appearance or a generalization?**

READ 1 SAMUEL 16:11-13.

**What characteristic would seem to hinder David from being anointed as king (v. 11)?**

**What did David's faithfulness in watching the sheep say about his character? How did this prepare him for the future (see 1 Sam. 17:34-37; Ps. 23)?**

Tending sheep helped prepare David to rule Israel. Shepherd would become a symbolic job description for king. God intended for the king to care for the people with the same compassion that a shepherd gives to his flock. Furthermore, David's encounters with predators developed skills that later became useful in combat.

**What was the real secret of David's power that enabled him to accomplish God's work (v. 13)?**

Immediately after Samuel anointed David and the Spirit came upon him, the Spirit abandoned Saul (see 1 Sam. 16:14). Later, however, Saul prophesied again by the power of the Spirit (19:23). David, after his sin involving Bathsheba, was fearful that God would take away His Spirit (Ps. 51:11). Thus, it appears that the Spirit could come and go in the lives of kings.

In the New Testament, the Spirit dwells within believers primarily for their sanctification (Rom. 8; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; Gal. 5:22). Even the gifts of the Spirit are primarily for the edification of the church, and they were given to all rather than to a select few (1 Cor. 12:8-13). Paul indicated that believers can grieve the Spirit (Eph. 4:30), but he does not say that the Spirit might abandon us.

Samuel anointed David in Bethlehem (1 Sam. 16:4). Not only would Bethlehem be important for God's people in Samuel's day but also in days to come. The prophet Micah would point to Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Promised Messiah. Centuries later, that prophecy was fulfilled with the birth of Jesus Christ, God's Anointed One (John 1:41) who is our perfect King (Matt. 2:1-6).

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What are some signs a person is spending more time on external or superficial attributes than on applying the gospel to inner character?**

**What are some steps we can take to spend more time on growing an inner character of godliness than we do on being appealing to others?**

**How can we encourage our pastors as they seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit for the church?**

# PRAYER

Thank God for the perfect King, Jesus. Thank Him for the leaders He has given His Church and ask His Spirit to lead them even now. Pray that you would pursue godly character and would point others toward Christ as David's life did.

# COMMENTARY

## 1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

16:1. Samuel had anointed Saul as king. Saul's failure hurt the prophet deeply, but he was not alone. The Lord also had grieved over Saul's conduct. The Lord confronted Samuel about his continuing distress over Saul and instructed Samuel to go to Bethlehem to the home of Jesse. The verb mourn usually refers to a rite that is observed for the dead. Biblical mourning involved human emotion and usually was expressed both audibly and visibly. Possibly Samuel moaned aloud and hung his head in despondency. Certainly he hovered in a state of mental and spiritual depression.

As chapter 15 shows, the Lord had spoken to Samuel about Saul's failure to conform to His will. Here the Lord spoke to Samuel about the prophet's attitude. The time for mourning was past; the time for action had come. The prophet's mission was identified in three specific actions. First, Samuel was to fill his horn with oil. Then he was to go to the home of Jesse of Bethlehem. Third, he would anoint one of Jesse's sons to become the next king. God would identify the particular son at the appropriate time.

16:2-3. Samuel's assignment was simple. He was to anoint a new king. He already had announced God's rejection of Saul. However, the prophet's inquiry reflected the inherent danger of the task. Samuel had legitimate concerns about how Saul would interpret his anointing one of Jesse's sons as king. While the prophet might have divine authority, the king had the political will and the armed power to act if he knew about Samuel's taking action to replace him. So the Lord gave Samuel a second task that would mask the primary purpose of his visit to Bethlehem. As a priest, Samuel was authorized to offer sacrifices. This act doubtless was intended to designate Samuel's visit to Bethlehem as religious and not political. What on the surface might appear to be a strategic tactic of rebellion was in reality just the opposite. In ancient Israel the king was a representative of God. His appointment was sacred, not secular. Samuel followed the Lord's directions concerning his visit to Bethlehem. He assured the town's leaders of his peaceful intentions and invited Jesse's family to be special attendees as a sacrifice. In doing so he emphasized the king served at God's prerogative. Not knowing whom he would anoint demanded faith on the part of Samuel. He had to trust that God would speak to him at the appropriate time.

16:4. Perhaps the elders trembled because they interpreted Samuel's appearance as an indication a murder had occurred in the area. According to Deuteronomy 21:1-9, the ritual surrounding an unsolved murder prescribed that a priest break the neck of a young cow. Samuel was a priest, and he came to Bethlehem with a young cow. Or, perhaps the recent execution of Agag may have been in their minds and the leaders feared they had incurred Samuel's displeasure. He might exhibit similar violent

behavior toward them if they had offended him in some manner. Or they may have been aware of the discord between Samuel and Saul. If so, they were terrified that any possible action on Samuel's part to subvert the reigning monarch would bring royal retribution against their community.

16:5-6. Consecrate refers to becoming ritually clean. The specific guidelines are uncertain, but they presumably involved bathing, putting on clean garments, abstaining from sexual activity, and avoiding contact with unclean objects (such as a corpse). The consecration of Jesse and his sons demonstrated Samuel's complete obedience. The incident would require that he fully comply with God's revelation and not merely do what he wanted to do. Samuel did not know whom the Lord had selected. Therefore the prophet began to guess at who might be chosen. However, his faulty insight led him to the wrong conclusion. Eliab was Jesse's firstborn son. His appearance compared favorably to Saul's appearance (see 1 Sam. 10:23-24). Samuel incorrectly guessed Eliab's height and appearance qualified him to be king (v. 7).

16:7. As Samuel sized up Jesse's oldest son, he felt confident this was the Lord's choice for king. Before Samuel could pour oil on Eliab's head, however, the Lord ended his silence. The Lord then explained He looks at people's hearts and not just their physical features. God's words were not what Samuel expected. Having been disappointed over Saul and having been corrected concerning Eliab, Samuel then showed where his priority was. He would listen to God's voice, look for God's choice, and advance God's purposes. External appearance does not qualify an individual to govern. The language of the Lord's rebuff linked Eliab to Saul: I have rejected him. Here, God's decision was not based on Eliab's previous behavior. Instead, it reinforced the weakness of human methodology and reminded Samuel of the vast difference between our methods and God's.

God's statement that the LORD sees the heart is the crux of this passage. The heart refers to human volition. God is much, much different from humans (see Isa. 55:8-9). His thinking and His ways are unlike those of people. His methods cannot be understood by mortal minds and are vastly superior to those of the human race. People often base decisions on visible perceptions. God's actions are based on information inaccessible to a human being. God knows and understands human volition. The message of the cross of Jesus is an example of God's methodology (see 1 Cor. 1:18; 2:5).

16:8-11. A second son was brought before Samuel. This time Jesse called Abinadab, but God also rejected him. A third son, Shammah, was brought before Samuel. Once more, God did not select him. God rejected seven consecutive sons of Jesse. They were the only sons present on this occasion. A perplexing situation confronted Samuel. God's revelation seemed contradictory. God had instructed him to anoint a son of Jesse as the next king. But then God rejected each son presented to Samuel. Rather than give up in frustration, Samuel sought additional information. He asked Jesse if he had any other male children. Jesse's response suggests he did not think his other son would be selected. The Hebrew word for youngest literally is small or insignificant one. The root term denotes small in quantity or quality. Hence the word can mean small in years, or the youngest. Because of David's youth he had been excluded from consideration.

Because David was a son of Jesse, he fell within the sphere of the Lord's instructions. Thus Samuel could not proceed until the last son appeared.

16:12. The description of David as healthy is literally reddish. It means David either had hair with a red tint or a bronze complexion. His appearance later would generate a magnetic effect on women. Yet, these physical attributes did not qualify him to become king. His qualification was in his heart, and only God could evaluate that. God had spoken and told Samuel the purpose for bringing the oil. In addition God indicated He had selected the young man who would become king (v. 1). Surely Samuel already understood the implication of filling the horn with oil. Regardless, God's instructions made the purpose of the oil irrefutable. God kept His promise to reveal to His prophet the person He had selected. Samuel's action would be the result of obedience, not conjecture.

16:13. The Lord identified Jesse's youngest son David as the new king, and Samuel obeyed God. Samuel anointed David and witnessed the Holy Spirit take control of him. The anointing took place within the family circle. To what extent was this ceremony kept secret? We do not know, but in time everyone would become aware of this new reality, even Saul. At that time the privacy of the event and the inconspicuous nature of the son being anointed combined to create little understanding of its true importance. The reference to the Spirit of the LORD taking control of David indicates that unlike Saul's, David's disposition was one of obedience. God was his primary guide in life. The Holy Spirit's control of David confirmed that Samuel had completed his God-given task. Samuel had moved on from a grievously disappointing situation. He witnessed encouraging spiritual evidence that God had used him in advancing His purpose. Having completed the assignment, Samuel returned to his home in Ramah.