

## The Life of David, 1 Samuel 16:1-13, God and the Underdogs, 1/6/25

1 Samuel 16:1 *The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel?"*

*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.*" With these words begins the epic of David, who will become the central figure of the Old Testament, the one who more than any other person points us to the ultimate King Jesus. I'm looking forward to our study throughout 2025 in 1&2 Samuel.

Pray. I vividly remember one time when I was no more than 5 or 6 my brothers and I were digging a hole by the creek near our house... why? Because that's just what you do when you are bored in the late 1900's before the advent of technology. And we unearthed old wooden railroad tracks...and we thought it was the greatest discovery in the history of America. It was pretty cool, but it probably only went back a couple hundred years at best.

But if you dig a hole in Israel, you may just stumble upon thousands of years of biblical history. In fact, most ancient Biblical discoveries happen by accident, for example in 1990 when they dug out a foundation for a wealthy person's house and stumbled upon a tomb which contained the **bone box of Caiaphas** (the High Priest who had Jesus crucified). Which I kind of think shows God's sense of humor that we found the tomb of Caiaphas with his coffin and bones but the tomb of Jesus whom he crucified is empty. Anyway, that's how it is in Israel, which is why my former pastor, Lon Solomon, would say, "The more they dig out of the ground, the more the Bible proves to be true." In the last 30 years archaeologists both on purpose and by accident have dug out of the ground and proven what the Bible has said about David, his kingdom and his lineage. Like this one, the **Tel Dan Stele**, which includes a number of references to King David and his reign, just like the Bible says. And I tell you this not just because it's fun to pretend to be Indiana Jones for a moment, but so that we know that David was a real person, not a mythological giant slayer in kid's Bibles and Veggie Tales. Every one of these stories that we are going to read actually, literally happened and they are written down so that we discover their enormous spiritual realities and apply them to our own lives today.

Now archaeologists have yet to unearth David's tomb where the Bible says he was buried, but if we did, I wonder what the inscription on it would say? Israel's greatest king? Giant Slayer and War hero? Israel's great Poet, Musician, and Songwriter? Benefactor of the great Temple of Jerusalem? All of these things are true. But if God wrote his inscription, I think all it would say was simply **"A man after God's own heart."** In fact, this is the only person God says this about. I don't know about you, but I want God to say that about me and us at Brandywine. And throughout this study we are going to chase down and discover what it means to have a heart after God's own heart studying the life of David.

We pick up the story in 1 Samuel 16 at the intersection of two very opposite kings- the current king of Israel and the future king of Israel. Our story opens with the grieving of the prophet and

kingmaker, Samuel. And we find him in tears...just heartbroken at the massive failure of King Saul, who he anointed king over Israel just a few years earlier. King Saul externally looked impressive (he was head and shoulders taller than anyone in Israel) and had everything you would want on the outside in a warrior king who would lead the battle, and yet internally, spiritually, he was devoid of qualities that God looks for. And God says to Samuel, "Hey stop crying! I'm starting again with a new king...and this time, v.1 it's a king I have chosen." In the Hebrew it's more like "Choose a king for me". The implication is that Saul was the kind of king the people wanted, now God will choose the kind of king that He wants.

And so Samuel heads to Bethlehem and he invites Jesse and his sons to consecrate themselves for a sacred moment, where they would not only be sacrificing a heifer to the Lord as it says in v.2 which was a big deal in those days, but Samuel would be anointing one of Jesse's sons as God's next king for all of Israel! This is a big moment and you can imagine Mr. and Mrs. Jesse would have been getting their young men looking their very best, their most impressive, maybe having their resume of sorts in hand. **V. 6** *When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD."*

Eliab was the firstborn and clearly Samuel was impressed at first sight. You get the impression that he would have been the bachelor to get the rose if you know what I mean. He's the all-American athlete, valedictorian, most likely to succeed, on everybody's "Who's Who" list...Samuel's is like- bingo! Short trip, let's do this...except that God sees something different. **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.*" This is God saying, "Samuel, remember Saul's height, Saul's appearance you were so impressed with? It's not about that!" Ok, so they bring the next son, and the next...down the line. **10** *Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these."* Awkward...**11** *So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered. "He is tending the sheep."* You know, if you are the youngest you may know the feeling of sometimes being forgotten. My two old brother's baby books are packed with pictures throughout their life. Mine? Not so much, Birth on one side of the page and high school graduation on the other. That can happen in the busyness of raising kids. But it's far more than busyness here, this is intentional that he's left out, his father doesn't even call him by name...but also the Hebrew word here is kind of a demeaning word that means more than "youngest" it means little and insignificant. In other words- we have the runt of the litter, and he's doing the least important job- watching some sheep. If you were with us for Christmas Eve, we talked about how shepherding was looked at as demeaning, low-level work. It's the kind of work that *needed* to be done by somebody but *nobody* wanted to be that somebody.

But I think Samuel upon hearing this tone and the way they looked at him began to realize what God was trying to tell him and so he calls for him and they wait... that must have been as awkward as getting broken up with over dinner at a restaurant, and then the server just

disappears with the check for a while... finally, in walks the runt of the litter, the shepherd boy David. The NIV says, **v.12 He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.** This is a tough translation from the Hebrew, some of yours say he's ruddy...but the idea is that he's cute in a boyband kind of way not in a warrior king kind of way. If Hollywood was making a movie about David they would pick **Timothy Chalamet not Jason Momoa**...make sense? And in those days you want the warrior, the dude that looks like he can kill other dudes to be your king, not the baby face. Here's the point, there was probably never a more unlikely candidate to be king than the nobody shepherd kid from a nowhere town. And Samuel takes one look at him and knows God is going to take this nobody (in our eyes) and make him into a somebody. That's the next king. That's God's king. And Samuel anoints him right there in front of all his brothers and his dad, but not because of what's on the outside, but because of what God sees on the inside.

That's as far as we want to go in the story because I want to talk about what God has for you and me in this story. Two takeaways today: **#1 God loves to use ordinary people like you and me.**

A few years ago the movie **Free Guy** came out. It's a story about a bankteller named "Guy", who is appropriately named, because he eventually realizes he is a background character in a video game. What the kids call an "NPC" A non-playable character." The whole idea is that NPCs aren't important, the story is never about the NPC, they aren't the point, they certainly aren't the heroes. Until one day, Guy realizes that he can be more than an NPC and to everyone's shock, he becomes the unlikely hero of the story...no more spoiler alerts. All good stories have their origins in the Bible. That's David. David is an NPC.

This is not just in the David story, this runs front to back of your Bible. God uses NPCs, the unlikely, the unimpressive, the underdog- whether it is stammering, geriatric, desert shepherd Moses, or the destitute widow Ruth and her widowed Moabite daughter Naomi who become famous mothers in the line of David and Jesus, or the scorned and barren Hannah who God blesses to give birth to Samuel, or a bunch of uneducated teen fishermen who become Jesus' disciples. And this isn't just true in the Bible but throughout church history.

Some of you might know the name **DL Moody**, possibly the most influential American evangelist outside of Billy Graham. But Moody was a nobody. He started out as a poor, overweight, insecure teenager in Chicago with a 3rd grade education, who didn't know how to write well, and everyone had written him off...he was an NPC in the eyes of the world. He came to faith in Jesus just before his 18th birthday. As he began to grow in his faith and into adulthood, he grew in a passion to serve people and wanted to tell them about the love of Jesus, but in his church they wouldn't let him work with adults because he was an embarrassment to educated people. So they said well you can work with children. And so on Sundays he would round up the poor children in the streets and slums who didn't have anything else to do and teach them the Bible and about Jesus, this is where the term "Sunday School" came from. They were called **Moody's ruffians**. Eventually hundreds of these kids were coming and giving their lives to Jesus. Many went on to become major influencers in the world for Christ. It is said that by the time he died

he personally led over 1 Million people to faith in Jesus. It's Moody who famously said, "Moses spent forty years thinking he was somebody; forty years learning he was nobody; and forty years discovering what God can do with a nobody." Moody knew this from experience.

This is you and me! From the world's eyes, most of us are NPCs. But God doesn't care what you look like from the outside. Doesn't matter about all the accolades. If you qualify as a nobody, you are eminently qualified! And if you are a somebody, God won't hold that against you, he will use your influence, talents, money, smarts if you allow him to. The theological phrase for this is **the priesthood of all believers**. We believe that there are not the special few ordained people who get to lead and serve and be used by God while the rest just sit and soak in the pew. It's a call to every one of us, we are chosen by God to serve in the church and share the good news of Jesus. It also means that every job is holy. Every role is important. Greeting at the door, ushering, tech, working with children, being a buddy in our special needs ministry, handing out care packets under the bridge ministry. It's all holy and all important. In 2025, if you are sitting and soaking here. If you aren't involved, I want to call you to the priesthood! Blue Serve Card.

This leads us to point #2 for us today because God doesn't just love to use the ordinary, God loves to use the ordinary with a certain kind of heart. **V.7 The LORD does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.** What God is saying here is that it is very human to look at the externals and choose someone based on their looks, their charisma, their resume of accomplishments, their number of followers. But God does not value what we value. God is looking for a particular heart posture, a quality that made David a man after God's own heart. What is it? It's not stated specifically here, but I think it surrounds the story. It's the quality of humility. **#2 God is looking for hearts of Humility.**

What did David do after he was anointed? Did he start bossing around his brothers? Did he change his Linked-in profile to king-elect. Did he go on SM and humble brag? No! He went back to tending sheep. In fact, look down in vs. 19, it says that when they come to look for David a few years later, they have to get him *from the sheep* to serve King Saul! Let me ask you a question, if you were working in the mailroom at Google and you were told by the boardchair of Google, Dave Goldfein, that you were the next CEO...what would you be like for the next couple years? This tells you something about David. Humility- not thinking of himself more highly than he ought to, not thinking of himself as better or more deserving than anyone else. In fact, thinking about himself less and others more. That's the heart of humility. According to studies, here are the top five signs of a heart of humility.<sup>1</sup>

**1. Willingness to Acknowledge Mistakes.** Did David do this? Absolutely, in fact he put it on display for all of us to read forever. He cried out to God, in **Psalm 51:1 Have mercy on me, of God, according to your unfailing love.**

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<sup>1</sup> List accumulated from a ChatGPT search on this subject.

*V.17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.*

**2. Openness to Feedback.** Proverbs 13:10 *Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.* The proud always have to do things their way, but David had many advisors, Samuel, the prophet Nathan, his best friend Jonathan.

**3. A Deep Respect of Others:** Even when King Saul was trying to unjustly kill David out of jealousy and David had the opportunity to kill Saul in the Cave of En Gedi, he refused and said, "Who am I to lift my hand against the Lord's anointed?"

**4. Gratitude:** They recognize what they have or have accomplished is mostly by grace and others effort. It's the heart quality that is on display in Psalm 8 *V.3-4 When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?*

**5. Readiness to Serve:** That's the heart of shepherding. Being a shepherd is a humble, thankless job. And a good shepherd had to put the needs of the sheep above himself. Do you know that when David became king he continued to shepherd, instead of sheep, it was people. That same heart followed him, *Psalm 78:70-72 He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens;*

*from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance.*

*And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them.*

And that's what God saw in David, and that's what God is looking for in us. God isn't looking for perfection, he's not looking for you to be impressive and a high achiever. He's looking for a heart of humility! Put those **five qualities back up on the Screen**... What are you looking for in others? In a potential mate? What about you? Do these describe you? Ask someone who knows you well. In addition to making 2025 goals of getting in the gym to work on your external qualities, what if you make it your goal to develop these qualities? Read about David's life in the Bible.

And even more importantly than just developing Humility for ourselves, that's what God is looking for. Why is this so important to God? Because this is the essence of God's heart. *Matthew 11:28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*

*29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.* Isn't that amazing to think about, that God is humble? Jesus could have used many words but at his core, his heart is humble. And that's why God says that David had a heart after God's own heart. David's humility pointed to, was an imperfect type of Jesus' heart. In fact, David's whole life pointed to the ultimate Shepherd from Bethlehem that everyone overlooked. The Ultimate King that we long for and need. The ultimate humble heart...

Philippians 2 **5** *In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: **6** Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; **7** rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. **8** And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, **10** that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

This is the ultimate humble heart of Jesus displayed in the gospel. This is the way of salvation. No one can be saved without this heart. This is the repeated refrain of the Scriptures **“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” 1 Peter 5:5** And it is by grace we are saved. A heart of humility in salvation means that we realize that we have nothing to bring to the negotiating table with God when it comes to our salvation. That we are a sinner, incapable of saving ourselves. That Jesus did what we could never do for us out of his great love.