

The 15th chapter of 1 Samuel ends with these sad and heavy words: “*And the LORD regretted that he had made Saul king over Israel*” (15:35). The Lord confirms to Samuel that he has rejected Saul and orders Samuel to prepare oil for a holy purpose and to go south to Bethlehem to find the king that the Lord will provide from among Jesse’s sons. So that Saul might not expect Samuel’s traitorous action, Samuel is to take a heifer with the excuse that he will perform a sacrifice.

At Bethlehem the elders are frightened to see Samuel. He is not above performing ritual murder, as in the case of the king of the Amalekites (15:32). He’s also a person of political power, and whether he is working for or against the king he can get the village into trouble. Samuel was not considered a benevolent “blessor” of the status quo, as Congressional chaplains or a clergyperson invited to the White House might expect to be. The nervous elders must feel like Samuel’s arrival could mean trouble. What exactly can this mean?

David is off tending sheep. He’s an example of how work, any kind of work, helps to prepare a person for another kind of work, even the work of leading others. Samuel assures them that he comes peacefully and orders them to consecrate themselves for the sacrifice he will perform. He personally consecrates Jesse and his seven sons. Perhaps in the action of consecrating them the sons come before Samuel one by one, only the Lord does not choose any of them, regardless of Samuel’s impressions of their individual potential.

Samuel goes to the house of Jesse because the Lord told him “*I have chosen one of his sons to be king*” (16:1). So Jesse trots out his sons except for the youngest who is tending the sheep. At last, in the midst of this parade of potential candidates, Samuel finds God’s person of choice. Verse 11 says: *So [Samuel] 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.”*

The key to understanding this scene, however, is back in verse 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.”*

If I could change one thing about how I approach people it would be to look at and size up people not by their *appearance* but by their *heart*. I realize only God can do that. Therefore, we have to look to God to give us, with our limited view, that sort of deeper discernment that we don’t have ourselves.

That’s why God says, “Samuel, here’s the person of choice. That’s why I’ve said no to all the others.” He saw Eliab, Abinadab, Shammah, and Jesse’s other sons as they really were. He saw their hearts. Let’s remember too that God had said, “*I have chosen one of his sons to be king*” (v. 1). And back in chapter 13, Samuel said to Saul, “*the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him ruler of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’s command.*” God knew exactly who that man was to be.

On this Father’s Day there is also a lesson for dads in this story, but it’s really a mistake in parenting that we should avoid. Notice that Jesse doesn’t have his youngest son there for Samuel to meet. Why didn’t Jesse have his youngest son in the room? Jesse saw his youngest as nothing more than the boy who tended the sheep. Father Jesse reveals two very common mistakes we parents make. Number one, he didn’t have

an equal appreciation for *all* of his children. And number two, he failed to cultivate a mutual self-respect among them. Jesse viewed David as nothing more than the boy who tended the sheep for the family. But God saw much more.

You see, Samuel, with God's help, was given the proper perspective. Nothing would hinder him pursuing the one God had chosen! "It doesn't matter what he does. Why should it matter how old he is? Go get him!" Oh, for the ability to see beyond the obvious. To see beyond a person's bad track record. To see beyond someone's age or their level of intelligence. To see worth and value down deep inside that person. That's the kind of vision that Samuel, with God's help, finally demonstrates. It's a beautiful moment. Remember, David's out with the sheep. He doesn't know what's going on back home. He's faithfully keeping the sheep, when suddenly someone runs across the field and calls to him, "Hey, David, they want you back at the house."

Samuel commands Jesse to bring him and he is handsome. This is the one the Lord orders Samuel to anoint. He does so "in the presence of his brothers," at which the Lord's Spirit rushes upon him from then on. Here is the description of the act from verse 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.*"

David is just a teenager. He walks into the house, still smelling like sheep, and all of a sudden an old man hobbles over and pours oil on his head. It drips down his hair and onto his neck. Josephus, the historian, says that "Samuel the aged whispered in his ear the meaning of the symbol: *You will be the next king.*" What did David do? What would any of us do in a situation like that? I mean, it doesn't happen every day, you know. God's ways are so marvelous, aren't they? At the most unexpected moments, the most magnificent things can happen.

David was sensitive enough to hear the whisper of God's voice, "*You will be the next king.*" But as soon as the big moment was over and they turned out the lights, he was humbly back tending the sheep. People actually had to pull him from the sheep to get him to do anything that was related to the limelight. In fact, I think that's one of the reasons he was *a man after God's heart*. He was always approachable, always believable, always authentic...and always faithful in the little things.

Charles Swindoll* once wrote: Three timeless lessons ring through my head as I look at these scenes in David's life. **First**, God's solutions are often strange and simple, so be open. We try to make God complex and complicated. He isn't. Amid all the complications with Saul and the throne, God simply said to Samuel, "Go where I tell you to go. I've got a simple answer. A new man. You just follow Me and I'll show you." Don't make the carrying out of God's will complicated. It isn't. Stay open to His strange yet simple solutions.

Second, God's promotions are usually sudden and surprising. At the time you least expect it, it will come. Just like His Son's return from heaven. Suddenly and surprisingly He will split the clouds and be with us. Just when we expect Him the least He'll be there, like a thief in the night. And that's the way His promotions are. He watches you as you faithfully carry out your tasks and He says to you, "I know what I'm doing. In a sudden and surprising moment, be ready. I know where you are, and I know how to find you. Just stay ready as you carry out your job."

Third, God’s selections are always sovereign and true. That applies to choosing a mate as well as losing a mate. It applies to our being moved from one place to another, even though we thought we’d remain where we are for years. It also applies to those God appoints to fill the shoes of another. How easy it is to second-guess God’s selections! How necessary, when tempted to do that, to remind ourselves that God’s selections are sure and certain.

God is looking at our township, our city, our neighborhood, and he’s looking for people to whom he can say, “I want to use you there. Because you have proven yourself faithful in the small things.” The only difference is geography. Our calling is to be faithful in the demanding tasks, whether it is in our education, our marriage, our occupation, or just the daily grind of life. That’s the kind of women and men God will use today.

Swindoll also writes: The year 1809 was a very good year. Of course those who were alive that year didn’t know that. Only history tells the story. Those who were living in 1809 were focused on Napoleon who was marching across Austria like a fire across a Kansas wheat field. As hamlets, villages, and cities fell into his grip, people began to wonder if all the world would someday fall into his hands.

During that same period of time, thousands of babies were born in Britain and in America. But who cared about babies and bottles and cribs and cradles while Napoleon was doing what he did in Austria. Well, someone should have cared, because in 1809 William Gladstone was born in Liverpool. Alfred Tennyson began his life in Lincolnshire. Oliver Wendell Holmes cried out for the first time in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A few miles away in Boston, Edgar Allan Poe began his brief and tragic sojourn on earth. That same year, Charles Darwin wore his first diaper. And in a little log cabin in Hardin County, Kentucky, an illiterate laborer and his wife named their newborn son Abraham Lincoln.

The lives of these statesmen, writers, and thinkers would mark the genesis of an era. But nobody cared about those nobodies while Napoleon was moving through Austria. The strange thing is, today only history buffs could name one battle that Napoleon fought in Austria. But there is not one person alive today that has not been touched in some way by the lives of those men I’ve just named. In 1809 they were nobodies nobody noticed.

If you and I had been Israelites living around the year 1020 B.C., the same could have been said of us. All of our attention would have been focused upon a man named Saul, the first king of Israel. He was the focal point of the Jewish world at that time. He was taking the country by storm. Meanwhile, a “nobody” was keeping the sheep for his father on the Judean hillsides near the hamlet of Bethlehem. A little boy named David that nobody noticed—except God. *Charles Swindoll © 1977, Word Publishing, Dallas, TX, p. 23-25.

When the prophet Samuel came to Bethlehem that day, David became **The Anointed One of God**, “*and from that day on the spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David*” (v. 13).

May the Spirit of the Lord come powerfully upon every one of us nobodies, and upon our church, so that the glory of God’s name may be made known throughout the world. Amen.