

Message #5

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Life of David

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DAVID AND FITNESS FOR LEADERSHIP

1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

INTRODUCTION

In this month's issue of *Christianity Today*, the president of the magazine makes these observations: **"An older generation of American evangelical leaders has passed away or passed the baton. When it comes to the younger generation, scarcely a week passes when we do not have another noteworthy Christian leader suffering a deeply destructive fall from grace. The ironic part is this: Evangelicals produce and consume countless books, seminars, and events on leadership. We have a thriving Christian leadership industry, yet we're starving for Christlike leaders. Why is there so much leadership content and so little leadership character?"**

Whatever are the immediate causes for this unfortunate state of affairs, the remedy for the people of God lies in God's Word. Our study of the life of David has important lessons to teach us about leadership and about character. In looking at the setting for the appearance of King David, we have considered King Saul, who preceded him. We have seen that Saul was the kind of person whom the people of Israel wanted when they demanded a king like all of the other nations had. So about 1000 BC the Lord through the prophet and last judge of Israel, Samuel, provided the kind of leader whom they wanted. Saul started out well. He led his people in initial victories over surrounding enemies.

But from Chapters 13-15 of 1 Samuel we learned last week a negative lesson about leadership from King Saul. For we found that he was guilty of an unhealthy presumption. He thought that he could take on the role of priest, when it was not assigned to him. He was guilty of selfish pride. In the middle of conflict with the Philistines he built a monument to himself. Then also he was guilty of flagrant disobedience. For he disobeyed the command of God through Samuel to wipe out all of the evil Amalekites. God then told Saul through Samuel that He had taken the kingdom away from him.

Now our attention turns to David. He will provide us with positive lessons about leadership. In our introduction to David from 1 Samuel #16 we will find four primary players in the drama that unfolds. Each of them will provide us with lessons about character and about leadership.

I.

So turn, if you would, to 1 Samuel 16 vv. 1-13 as we consider “David and Fitness for Leadership.” The passage is found on p. 238 in the black Bibles under many of the chairs. We are first going to look at LEADERSHIP AND THE SOVEREIGN ROLE OF GOD. (PROJECTOR ON--- LEADERSHIP AND THE SOVEREIGN ROLE OF GOD.) Leadership which is truly godly and Christian will see God as our leader. There are three things that we learn about the sovereign leadership of God in our passage.

A.

First, we find that GOD WILL LEAD. (I. LEADERSHIP... A. GOD WILL LEAD) He is sovereign. His program with mankind is not dependent upon the faithfulness of any one of us human beings. He will accomplish His purposes in the face of what we might regard as successes and failures, advances and retreats.

Notice what v. 1 says about the leadership of King Saul: **“The Lord said to Samuel, ‘How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.’”**

Samuel was upset. He had invested a lot of time and energy in Saul. He wanted to see him succeed as king of Israel. He was grieved to see his flagrant disobedience. Although he understood it, he was sad to see the judgment of God come upon him. He was concerned about the effect that this might have on his country.

God takes the lead. He already has a new king picked out. This new king has no clue about the plans that God has for him. He has not filled out an application. He has not been searching online for a job. He is not aware of a vacancy. Superficially he has no qualifications that would cause him to ever be considered for the job. He is just a kid from a small town watching his family’s sheep. But David is God’s choice to be king, and He will bring it to pass.

In Ephesians #1 v. 11 (EPHESIANS 1:11) the Apostle Paul declares, **“...[God] works all things according to the counsel of his will...”** He is sovereign. The subtle temptation in leadership that is godly and Christian is to make up plans on our own and ask God to bless them. A better approach is to focus on God’s revealed will in the Bible, to pray for direction, and to proceed with an attitude of dependence upon God, recognizing that He is in charge.

In a church context recognition of the sovereignty of God means that we don't believe that the head of the church is the pastor or the elders or the biggest giver. It means that we believe that Jesus is in charge. In Ephesians #5 v. 23 (EPHESIANS 5:23) the Apostle Paul writes, **"...Christ is head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior."**

B.

The second thing that we learn in this passage about God's sovereign leadership is that GOD LOOKS FOR A HEART FOR GOD. (I. A. B. GOD LOOKS FOR...) At God's direction Samuel heads to Bethlehem to find a new king. He shows up and meets the family of Jesse. According to v. 6, **"When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.'"**

Eliab was the oldest son of Jesse. According to custom throughout the Ancient Near East he would be the one who would take over leadership of the family after his father died. The oldest son was entitled to twice as much of the family inheritance as any other son. Eliab looked to Samuel like he could play the part of a king. His name meant "My God is Father." That was an appropriate name for one who would be king.

But Eliab was not the guy. We read in v. 7, **"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'"** The heart was understood to be the innermost part of one's being. It is this innermost "me" that God is concerned about in looking for leadership. Everything else is secondary. Does this person love God? Is he or she willing to follow Me, to submit to My direction whatever the cost?

This is a challenge even for people who are truly Christians, who have put their trust in Jesus for forgiveness of sins, and who are headed for heaven. We are willing to follow Jesus ---until we realize that we are doing something that we should stop doing, or we realize that following Jesus means that we should go in another direction. Having a heart for God can be inconvenient for doing what we want to do.

David had a heart for God. As we shall see, he was far from perfect. But in the New Testament Book of Acts Paul is quoted (ACTS 13:22) as saying, **"And when he [God] had removed him [Saul], he raised up**

David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'"

Too often in the Christian world what we want is the celebrity. We want the megachurch pastor to speak at our conference. We want the star athlete or actor or singer to share his or her testimony. We want the guy who has a doctor's degree to be the pastor of our church or leader of our organization. What the Lord is looking for is the guy or gal who has a heart for Him.

C.

The third thing that I find about God's sovereign leadership in this passage is that GOD PICKS UNLIKELY PEOPLE. Beginning in v. 8 we are told, **"Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.' And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen these.'"** Samuel perhaps thought that all seven looked kingly. Certainly Eliab had impressed him. But somehow God told Samuel that none of them was the one.

Verse 11: **"Then Samuel said to Jesse, 'Are all your sons here?' And he said, 'There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.' And Samuel said to Jesse, 'Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here.'"** David was the youngest son. We don't know if Samuel told Jesse the whole story about his purpose in visiting the family. But it is obvious that Jesse did not think that it was necessary or appropriate to call in David for this occasion, whatever it was. He was just a kid, and someone had to watch the family flock.

God has a tendency to pick unlikely people to accomplish His purposes. No one expected the Messiah to be born to a poor, young couple from the sticks of Galilee. The people of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth could not believe that He was the Messiah. He was just one of them. The Pharisees could not accept the notion that Jesus was the prophesied Messiah. He hung out with sinners. He didn't follow their rules.

Such is the pattern that continues today. William Carey was a shoemaker in England. He went to India and established several Christian institutions and translated the Bible into several Indian languages. He became known as the "Father of Modern Missions." Billy Graham never went to seminary. He didn't have a formal theological education. Yet he probably reached more people with the gospel than any other human being. Howard Hendricks grew up in Philadelphia in a broken home. His father was a

military officer who was always gone. He was raised by his grandparents. Yet he went on to become probably the most influential professor at my seminary.

The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians #1 vv. 26 & 27 (1 CORINTHIANS 1:26), **“For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. (1 CORINTHIANS 1:27) But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong...”**

II.

Consider next LEADERSHIP AND THE INSTRUMENTAL ROLE OF SAMUEL. (II. LEADERSHIP AND THE INSTRUMENTAL...) Samuel was the last of the occasional leaders of Israel in the four hundred years preceding the appearance of Saul and David on the scene. He was also a prophet. We don't know exactly how he got his messages from God. We do find two elements in his leadership. He listens to God, and he does His will.

Look again at v. 1: **“The Lord said to Samuel, ‘How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go, I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.’”** It would appear that the Lord spoke audibly to Samuel.

Verse 2: **“And Samuel said, ‘How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me.’ And the Lord said, ‘Take a heifer with you and say, “I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.””** Samuel has an understandable fear of Saul. A bit earlier Saul had expressed an intention to kill his own son. Samuel had also indicated that the Lord was going to appoint someone else to be king. If Samuel was involved in doing that, his action could be interpreted as treason. Having heard that pronouncement from Samuel, Saul might also be keeping a close eye on the prophet.

So the Lord authorizes a subterfuge, an alternative reason for going to Bethlehem. Samuel will indeed make some kind of sacrifice. (DAVID 6) Samuel was from Ramah, a bit north of Saul's home town of Gibeah. Bethlehem was south of Jerusalem and a bit out of the range of the places that Samuel would normally travel. But Samuel listens to God and does His will.

According to v. 3 the Lord instructs Samuel, **“And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you.”** God doesn’t tell Samuel the whole story. He doesn’t tell him exactly what person is going to be king. That is typical of divine direction. He often points us in the right direction, but doesn’t tell us everything. He gives us just as much information as we need to know.

Verses 4 & 5: **“Samuel did what the Lord commanded--- notice the obedience to God’s revealed will--- and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, ‘Do you come peaceably?’ And he said, ‘Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.’ And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.”** Prophets in Israel were known for their pronouncements of judgment. So there was fear in the elders of Bethlehem to see this guy show up. But Samuel explained that he was there to perform some kind of religious ritual. Exactly what consecrating the elders and the family of Jesse meant is not explained. There follows a presentation of Jesse’s sons to Samuel.

Somehow Samuel hears clearly from God that none of these sons is the one who is to be king. He asks about additional sons. David is called in, and he is identified by the Lord as the one to be king. What we should notice here is that Samuel listens to God and does His will.

Samuel had little, if any, of the written Word of God available to him. Our responsibility as God followers is to give attention to God’s written word. If we are faithful to do the primary things that are commanded there, we don’t have to worry about acting outside the will of God. He is sure to lead us if we are faithful to the responsibilities that we find in the Bible.

III.

Consider then a third aspect of leadership that is found in this passage: LEADERSHIP AND THE PREPARATORY ROLE OF FAMILY. (III. LEADERSHIP AND THE PREPARATORY ROLE OF FAMILY) There are two aspects of our connection to family that relate to leadership development.

A.

First, there is FAMILY AND INHERITANCE. (III. A. FAMILY AND INHERITANCE) There are certain things that all of us inherit from family over which we have no control. The place and time of our birth is determined by God. We have no control over the parents we have or the DNA which we inherit. We do not determine the talents or the IQ which we acquire.

David, by the grace of God, inherited a certain pedigree. That lineage is mentioned in the Old Testament book of Ruth. (RUTH 4:17) According to #4 v. 17, **“And the women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, ‘A son has been born to Naomi.’ They named him Obed. He was the father of Jesse, the father of David.”** Naomi was actually the mother-in-law of Ruth, who was the birth mother of Obed. Ruth was a Moabite. So David inherited Gentile blood. Obed’s father was Boaz, who was from the tribe of Judah. Moses centuries earlier had prophesied that leadership for Israel would come from the tribe of Judah. Obed was born in Bethlehem, as was his descendant David. Centuries later their most famous descendant would also be born in Bethlehem. Such was the pedigree which David inherited.

(PROJECTOR OFF) Besides this ancestral pedigree which David inherited, it becomes clear that he inherited some considerable abilities. I suspect that his IQ put him in the genius category. The poems that he wrote in the Psalms are still being studied and appreciated centuries later, not only for their spiritual character but also for their literary value. We will find out that his musical abilities qualified to put him in the palace of the king. He apparently had physical strength and good health. According to v. 12 in our passage he was a handsome young man. We will find out later that David had a mind that was able to think strategically, which would be an asset in his military planning and in his leadership of the nation.

Likewise all of us inherit certain abilities and liabilities by the nature of the family into which we are born and by virtue of the country and time and history into which we are born. We have no control over this.

B.

The second aspect of the preparatory role of family is FAMILY AND TRAINING. (I. A. B. FAMILY AND TRAINING) We have only limited information regarding the upbringing of David. We see here that he was the youngest son and that he was charged with the responsibility of shepherding the family flock. His experience with shepherding taught him about providing food, leading, and defending sheep and goats. One day David would be shepherd of his people and would write Psalm 23.

By the treatment of David by his family here we might sense that there was some deficit in the parenting he received. All of the other brothers were called in for this religious ceremony. He was excluded. Verse 11 might be interpreted as meaning that Jesse had a lesser view of David than he did of his other sons.

The Bible and experience and scientific studies tell us about the value and importance of family training. It has an important impact upon how our kids turn out. It affects their future leadership ability. American families and marriages are under assault today. Several years ago *Time* magazine had a cover story about this topic. (7/13/2009) The author wrote, **“An increasingly fragile construct depending less and less on notions of sacrifice and obligation than on the ephemera of romance and happiness as defined by and for its adult principals, the intact, two-parent family remains our cultural ideal, but it exists under constant assault. It is buffeted by affairs and ennui [boredom], subject to the eternal American hope for greater happiness, for changing the hand you dealt yourself.”**

Scientific studies generally show that broken families cause problems for our kids. We also know from the Bible that the right thing to do is to do what we can to preserve our marriages and our families. That often requires a sacrificial attitude. Life should not be about pursuing our own individual happiness and self-fulfillment. Of course, we cannot control what our mates do, or do not do. By the grace of God and a commitment to Biblical values, kids can overcome the difficulties that come from broken families. We can find evidence of that in our own congregation. It would seem that David did not come from a perfect family.

IV.

The last lesson about spiritual leadership that I find coming out of this passage involves LEADERSHIP AND THE MUNDANE EXPERIENCES OF LIFE. (IV. LEADERSHIP AND THE MUNDANE...) My suspicion is that the life of the shepherd in the Judean wilderness was often boring. I doubt that David as a child saw very much of the world. Perhaps his family brought him up to Jerusalem when they took sheep to be sold there. I doubt if David had much exposure as a young person to a great deal of literature or to diversity of culture.

But at night under a clear sky unaffected by artificial light he witnessed the display of the heavens. He recognized there the presence of God. He cultivated a relationship with Him. One day David would write in Psalm 19, **“The heavens declare the glory of God.”**

The long stretches of boredom were occasionally punctured with sudden moments of terror. For we later learn that David was involved in killing lions and bears which attacked his flock. Perhaps it was in connection with such attacks that he learned to use a sling.

In this wilderness setting David also learned to use a stringed instrument. He developed musical ability that would one day bring him into the palace of the king. Perhaps it was here that David first composed poems, Most of these poems would deal with a relationship with God.

Such it was that one normal, mundane day David was called out of obscurity to be anointed the king of Israel. These mundane experiences would prove to be useful in his future career.

Such it was that Joseph spent time as a shepherd. He was a righteous kid. But he was sold as a slave to Egypt by his jealous brothers. He continued to do right, but he was sent to prison. He spent years in a filthy Egyptian prison. I suspect that life was pretty mundane and difficult there. But one day he was called out of obscurity and became the number two man in Egypt, the most powerful country in the world.

Moses spent forty years in the wilderness of the Negev Desert as a shepherd. He had started out in the royal household of Egypt. He must have received a great education and was afforded opportunities that were denied to most other people in the world. But life must have seemed pretty mundane for him in his desert existence of forty years. But one day God would use those experiences in the wilderness to lead his people out of slavery in Egypt and to help them to live in that same wilderness.

I suspect that life as a fisherman in the sticks of Galilee must have seemed pretty mundane to men like James and John and Peter and Andrew. They had limited exposure to the wider world. Yet one day Jesus would call them to become fishers of men. Somehow that earlier experience would help them to become leaders of men and women. Two thousand years later we are still studying the writings of Peter and John.

Likewise the Lord can use our seemingly mundane experiences to accomplish His purposes. In v. 13 of our passage we are told, **“Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.”** Saul had been anointed with olive oil to be king in a similar ceremony.

There is evidence from the Ancient Near East that anointing with oil was used to sign business contracts, to affirm wedding commitments, to sign diplomatic deals, and to release people from slavery. It appears that the ceremony involved the pledge of a commitment from the anointer to the anointee. In this case the Lord was pledging Himself to be with David. Thus it was that the Holy Spirit came upon David. We

don't know all that this entailed. But we shall see from what follows that David had some kind of divine empowerment.

David would need this empowerment for the trials which would soon come. We don't know if his family members understood what was happening. Perhaps they thought that Samuel was just making him another prophet. But David seemed to understand what was involved. At least at some time soon he understood that the Lord was promising that he would be king. For he would find himself being pursued by King Saul and being trapped by the Philistines. In Psalm 56 he would declare, **"When I am afraid, I put my trust in you, In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I shall not be afraid, What can flesh do to me?"** If God's word was true, David was going to be king some day. Until that happened, he was indestructible. He could not and would not be killed.

God is still looking for leaders today. They may be young, or they may be old. Moses was 80 when God decided to put him to work. He will use the mundane experiences of life if we are faithful in the small things, and if we seek to be obedient to Him.