

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 26

1 Samuel – Vignettes

There are great stories in 1 Samuel as the life of David unfolds. Most of these stories are well known, but still well worth our study, using each selection to focus on some useful insights for life. Each of these stories could easily merit a class by itself. We are using them, however, in an abbreviated mode to focus on one special message from each.

DAVID ANNOINTED KING (A/K/A SAMUEL’S VISION TEST)

When I was in seventh grade, I was not hitting the baseball as well as my father thought I should. The jury was out on whether it was a lack of talent or something more. While Dad was trying to figure out the problem, we left town to see my grandparents in San Angelo, Texas. My grandfather decided I needed to learn how to drive and took me in his pickup on some rocky ranch roads. It seemed I managed to hit most every chug hole. Midway through this jarring ride, my grandfather gave up on me. He pronounced that either I was deliberately hitting every hole, or I needed glasses.

I explained to mom and dad that I truly did not see the holes in the road and it was then dad decided to “take me to get my eyes checked.” Between baseball and driving, he knew something must be wrong. Lo and behold, the eye doctor gave me the vision test and declared to my parents, “That boy can’t see the side of a barn!” I’ll never forget putting on those glasses the first time. What I had thought was normal vision was not even close! I could see things like never before! I still remember the precise place on 4th street when I put the glasses on for the first time in 1973.

Vision—what registers in our brain after processed by our eyes—is one of our senses we rely upon for more than navigating a street. This reliance can sometimes deceive us; there are “optical illusions.” In fact, by avoiding the optical illusion, sometimes those who are blind can see better than those with 20/20 vision! We witness the deception of sight in our vignette where David is anointed as king.

Samuel was mourning the rejection of Saul as king over Israel when the LORD told Samuel to go anoint a new man as king. Although Samuel feared Saul’s reaction, he followed the LORD’s instructions:

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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 (1 Sam. 16:1).

The LORD further told Samuel that God would show him both what to do and declare whom he should anoint as king.

Once in Bethlehem, Samuel consecrated Jesse and invited Jesse and his sons to join his sacrifice to the LORD. This gave Samuel a chance to see the sons for himself. When Samuel saw Jesse's oldest son Eliab, he thought that surely he would be the one. Evidently Eliab was a tall fellow, as was Saul. The LORD then 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 (1 Sam. 16:7).

As the scene progressed, each of the seven available sons of Jesse passed before Samuel, but none were the LORD's choice. Samuel asked Jesse if these were all his sons and Jesse replied that the youngest was still out in the fields tending the sheep.

The youngest boy, David, then came before Samuel and Samuel laid eyes on him. David was "ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome." The LORD told Samuel to anoint David, and Samuel did so. David was the man "after his own heart" (1 Sam. 13:14). As David was anointed, the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon him, staying from that day forward.

This story prominently features a Hebrew word *r'h* meaning "to see." The passage directly illustrates the difference between what God sees and what man sees – even when that man is Samuel, a "seer" (1 Sam. 9:9).

The first time the verb "to see" is used is in verse one. The translation in the ESV reads, "for I have provided (*r'h*) for myself a king among his sons." A more literal translation might be "for *I have seen* for myself a king among his sons." God had seen among Jesse's sons one who would be king. Samuel was to go find that son.

The Hebrew of the story unfolds with the same verb "to see" used repeatedly as Samuel works to identify the right son. In verse six, Samuel "sees" (*r'h*) Eliab (translated as "looked") and thinks he has seen what God has seen!

Surely the LORD's anointed is before him (1 Sam. 16:6).

But Samuel's vision was off! The LORD explained to Samuel that he was gazing on *what he could see* (*r'h*). It is translated "do not look on his appearance." The word "look" means to gaze or stare intently; it is the word "appearance" that is our same Hebrew word *r'h* used again. God then tells Samuel,

The LORD sees (*r'h*) not as man sees (*r'h*): man looks (*r'h*) on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks (*r'h*) in the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).

Man sees, literally, “as far as the eyes.” God, however, sees “as far as the heart.” Working with God’s vision, Samuel then lets each son pass before finally discerning David as the LORD’s choice. David is then anointed.

POINT FOR HOME

“The LORD sees not as man sees” (1 Sam. 16:7).

This is a loaded point for home with multiple implications. First, consider God’s vision: we are encouraged and warned that the LORD looks upon the heart. It is encouraging that God does not look for the prettiest, the most athletic, the most gifted, or the best dressed. God wants those whose hearts are after his own, who care and love for others, who seek his will. It is also a warning. Our life before God is not one principally of duty and responsibility. It is one of relationship. He wants the obedience that flows from faith and love, not the rigid obedience of obligation.

Of course, a second implication for home is our own vision. We should seek not to look and judge based on outward appearance, but also look for the heart of a person. We know not to judge a book by its cover, but we frequently fail to use that guideline with other people. Let us decide to seek God’s vision and heart for people, making a conscientious effort to live out of love for him as well as to look for the good in people rather than make decisions based upon their outward appearance.

A third implication is our own life and calling before God. How many of us doubt our usefulness for God because we do not have “the gifts?” We are “too old.” We do not “know enough.” We are not in the right place at the right time. We are _____ [Fill in your own blank!]. God does not see things our way though. We serve a God who “chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God!” (1 Cor. 1:28-29). Find what God wants you to do, and trust him to anoint you to fulfill his calling!

DAVID AND GOLIATH (PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR FIGHTING GIANTS)

I was getting ready to try the first Vioxx case in the nation. The stakes were high. National and international media were in attendance trying to figure out the truth

about this blockbuster drug, the health concerns, and the actions of the international company that developed and marketed the drug. The FDA had reported an unnecessary 88,000 to 120,000 heart attacks due to this drug, which meant our suit was the first one among thousands and thousands.

The drug company had dozens of lawyers from the biggest international firms, well known from all over the globe, for this two-month long fight in the courtroom in Angleton, Texas. My team was small, but we knew each other and had fought together in courtrooms before.

A New York lawyer who had a number of Vioxx cases came down to watch our case. This lawyer had a measure of success in New York, and as an older and more experienced lawyer, thought it his job to tell me what to do and how to do it. I remember before opening statement, which follows jury selection and signals the start of the trial, this lawyer telling me to “throw away your PowerPoint!” “Speak from the gut,” he told me. After I had politely ignored him, he then went to my team to enlist their support in persuading me to do things “his way.”

I sat this lawyer down and told him that while I was fine with his presence at the trial, I needed to have a heart-to-heart discussion with him. I said, “Let me tell you the story of David and Goliath.”

Here is the story I told him:

The Philistines had drawn up for battle against the Israelites. Each side did not dare charge the other side. Instead, the Philistines would daily send out a challenge. The giant name “Goliath” who hailed from the Philistine city of Gath would come out and taunt the Israelites. “Don’t bother with the armies,” he would shout. “I will fight for my people, you send out your champion. Winner takes all!”

The Israelites cowered in fear from the giant. No one, not even the Israelite king, would accept the challenge. Then one day, the shepherd boy David was tending sheep when his father called him. David’s father sent him to the Israelite fighting camp with some food for David’s older brothers.

David happened to be on site when the Goliath came out and issued his daily taunt. While the Israelite army was “much afraid,” David’s reaction was 180 degrees different. David did not see it a personal taunt against him and his brothers. He understood that Goliath was really taunting God! David was stunned that Goliath was so stupid! You can see David elbowing his brothers as he asked, “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

Word got back to King Saul that David wanted to fight the Philistine so Saul had David brought before him. Saul pointed out the obvious – how was young, little David going to fight the giant Philistine man of war? David replied that David had fought lions and bears by the strength of God, the uncircumcised Philistines would have even less chance, having taunted God!

Saul decided to let David go into the battle with his blessing. Saul himself was a fearsome warrior, and he had the best armor of Israel. Saul then took his armor and put it on David so that David could go into battle with the same tools as the king of Israel. David tried on Saul's armor, his helmet, his mail-coat, and even his sword. But David couldn't even walk well!

David then took the armor off and politely declined wearing it. He explained to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." David then went down to the brook, chose five smooth stones, and the rest is history!¹

Having recounted the story, I then moved into commentary. "Ben," I said, "You may not believe this story. But that does not matter. I believe it, and it has an effect on the way I practice. So I ask you to listen while I explain how."

I continued, "I appreciate that you have good battle experience. I also appreciate that I am going into a battle that the odds say I will lose. I understand that losing has implications for you and all others involved in this war. But Ben, I have fought before. And I do not go into this battle without believing I have truth on my side. By the grace of God, I will go into this battle with the weapons I have used before, weapons that work for me, weapons that I have tested (including PowerPoint!) with a team whose counsel I value and trust. By the grace of God, these weapons have sustained me in my battles before, and if I am to win this battle, they will sustain me here."

I then told him that he was there to watch, and that I was glad to have his advice, but once I made my decision, he needed to accept it.

¹ We must add to this story something I left out when speaking to the lawyer. There was some tremendous trash talking between Goliath and David. As David went out, Goliath cursed David asking, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" Goliath was likely referencing David's staff he had taken into battle. David responds profoundly, "You come to me with a sword and a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied" (1 Sam. 17:43-45).

A second interesting note is the blasphemy of Goliath and his curses were subject to one penalty in the Law of Moses: "Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him" (Lev. 24:16). David had yet another reason to hurl the stone!

After we won that case, I was put on a speaker's circuit to go around the nation and teach lawyers what we did and "how we won." All around the country I got to tell thousands of lawyers the story of David and Goliath. I explained the importance of going into battle with the weapons that are tested (first and foremost being the Lord!). Our wars may not make the Bible, or even the news, but our giants are no less real, and our weapons no less strong.

POINT FOR HOME

"I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them" (1 Sam. 17:39).

David was not simply taking stones as weapons; he was taking stones that the Lord had used before to help him in his battles. The size of the weapon has no more relevance than the size of the enemy. This, like the earlier vignette, becomes a vision issue. The Israelites *saw* a giant. David, anointed and filled with God's Spirit, saw some silly fool who dared taunt God. All David needed was what he knew would work. David was not winning this battle because he had better battle skills or weapons. He was going to win because God would guide his fight.

Where are your giants? Seek to understand them in God's sight. Seek to follow God's will and seek his power in your life. Then trust the tools he has given you to defeat the giants. For the battle may look earthly, but the real battle is God's. We again pray this from our Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." If we seek God's results, then we will not be disappointed!

SAUL AND DAVID (WHAT DRIVES YOU?)

As I type this lesson, I am asking myself the question above: What drives me? What are my motivations for my actions? If I look at my past, I see a variety of motivations behind my actions, some good, others not.

The 20th century psychologist Abraham Maslow rose to fame for setting a pyramid model to explain peoples' motivations. The base of the pyramid set out the most basic and fundamental needs of breathing, sleep, water, and food. Maslow theorized



that only after those needs were met could people then seek to fulfill higher level needs like security, rules to guide actions, and the need for order. Beyond that level (going up the pyramid) there were needs of love, affection, belongingness and freedom from fear. If all those needs are met, people can live out of a higher position on the ladder, self-respect and esteem of others. After all these needs are met, people can reach the top of the pyramid and live out of motivations of fulfilling their abilities and other self-actualization needs.

I am not certain that Maslow's pyramid is accurate for the Spirit-filled Christian, but I have seen a good bit of support for it in the basic unregenerate nature of man. Why we do what we do is a pertinent question when we examine the relationship of Saul and David.

The relationship begins with Saul out of his mind, and David playing his harp to bring a measure of solace to Saul. Needing relief from pain and lack of sleep (Maslow's lowest most basic level - physical needs) keeps Saul from being worried of much else. It was a basic need that God met through David, and life was fine. Saul trusted and enjoyed David's presence in his life (I Sam. 16:14-23).

Working up the pyramid, we see Saul's "physical needs" met, but his "security needs" endangered. The Philistines are waging a war and their giant has struck fear into the hearts of Saul and his army. Saul offers a great reward to anyone who can meet this security need. Saul offers a daughter in marriage to the man who can resolve this second level problem.

Enter David. Just as David met Saul's first level Physical Needs, so he meets Saul's second level Security Needs. David kills Goliath and, true to Maslow's pyramid, resolution of Saul's security needs just bumps Saul's motivation up the ladder to his social needs.

Saul doesn't let David return home after the Goliath encounter. Saul keeps David around as part of his family, still using David for military missions to keep the security problems at bay. David becomes a brother to Saul's son Jonathan, eats at the king's table, and found success at all the chores Saul set before him.

With Saul's Physical Needs, Security Needs, and Social Needs met, Maslow's insight indicates that the unregenerate man will then address his Esteem Needs. This need of respect and esteem from others is an area where David never could help Saul. David would fight the Philistines and return. The success was David's, however, not Saul's.

As David returned from one battle engagement, women began dancing in the street in celebration singing,

Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands (1 Sam. 18:6).

This enraged Saul. Rather than meet Saul's esteem needs, David was hindering them. Saul was determined and motivated to meet these needs, so his jealous anger did not go dormant. Instead, it stoked into a fire of destruction. Saul sought to kill David in an effort to be more secure and esteemed.

Multiple times Saul sought to kill David. He threw spears, he sent David on military missions that should not have succeeded, and he tried to have David accosted, but each effort failed. David was saved by good reactions, by Saul's daughter (David's wife Michal), and even by Jonathan, Saul's son. Saul never resolves the problems with David; they plagued him till he died.

The motivations of Saul stand in the storyline in stark opposition to the motivations of David. David, filled with God's Spirit, does not act at all in accord with Maslow's pyramid. Over and over David sacrificed personal safety in an effort to live as he perceived right before God. David had reason and Maslow-ian motivation to kill Saul. The opportunity presented itself many times. David was not safe as long as Saul was alive. Samuel had already anointed David king. David had a military following. Yet, in spite of all this David left Saul unharmed, explaining to Saul and those within earshot:

Some told me to kill you, but I spared you. I said, "I will not put out my hand against my lord, for he is the Lord's anointed...I have not sinned against you, though you hunt my life to take it (1 Sam. 24:10-11).

The motivation that guided David was walking right before God. It trumped his safety, his security, and his home life. David was truly a man after God's heart, not his own selfishness.

The end of the story is well known. Every effort Saul made against the will of the Lord just backfired. David's actions, meanwhile, simply met God's will in God's timing. Saul eventually left the earth and David's kingship came into its own.

POINT FOR HOME

"And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward...Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul" (1 Sam. 16:13-14).

It is not coincidental that the story of David's anointing ends with the Lord's Spirit upon him while the very next verse states the Spirit departed from Saul. The contrast is apparent as the storyline proceeds. Saul acts as an unregenerate man. Saul's concern never centers on what God wants, while David seems to constantly

seek God's will. Saul's actions are selfish and predictable; David's actions flow from a deeper motivation.

Jesus later sets out the basic facts: you can tell who loves him and who is his follower by the way they behave. God's Spirit indwells such a person and then drives a person differently than the spirit of this world:

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you” (Jn 14:15-17).

We have a choice. As believers, we have the Spirit of God and can walk in that Spirit, motivated by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Or we can live following our unregenerate nature with impurity, sensuality, valuing other things before God (“idolatry”), enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, etc. (Gal. 5:19-23).

Which part of our life do we feed and follow?

DAVID AND JONATHAN (THE POWER OF FRIENDSHIP)

When I was a young man, a few months shy of my 16th birthday, I was asked by John King to deliver an evening keynote address at Lubbock Christian College's summer camp for High Schoolers, called “Encounter.” This was a huge opportunity that I wanted to get right! The other keynoters that week were incredible youth ministers with great gifts for inspiring young people to embrace God and the faith.

The topic assigned to me was, “Follow Me in Friendship.” I had about 35 minutes to speak to hundreds of folks, and other than that, had no official guidance. I was excited, nervous, and at a loss on where to start! My mom asked me what my plans were and I told her some feeble ideas that were percolating. Mom then asked if I had considered finding a story of friendship in the Bible, telling the story, and seeking good inspiration and principles I could then teach.

Mom's idea was the right guidance I needed. Working through the Bible, the choice became obvious. I decided to tell the story of David and Jonathan. It was a story of friendship without equal!

What makes this story so appropriate for a lesson in friendship? Multiple things. From the beginning, David and Jonathan connected on a personal level. This was not simply a friendship of convenience where they enjoyed doing things together. After David was brought into Saul's household upon Goliath's death we read that,

The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul (1 Sam. 18:1).

As one cloth was sewn to another, so Jonathan's soul was attached to David. Reading the stories gives good reasons why this might be so. Both David and Jonathan were devout and faithful. They both waged war out of a deep conviction that God was behind them. Jonathan was not jealous of David's achievements, but sought to build David up even higher. Jonathan continually looked out for David's good, even when Jonathan's father Saul sought to destroy David.

This friendship manifested itself over and over. When Saul told Jonathan and others to kill David, Jonathan went to David and told him of the conspiracy (1 Sam. 19:1-2). Jonathan tried to facilitate reconciliation between David and Saul. While the reconciliation worked for a time, Saul soon returned to his murderous schemes.

David fled Saul, but always felt comfortable coming to Jonathan to ask for help or information. David saw that Saul was concerned over the relationship and was likely hiding his murderous plans from Jonathan. David was comfortable telling these concerns to Jonathan who, instead of denying it, listened to David with a willingness to "check it out!"

As the two tried to figure out the relationship in the midst of the treachery of Saul, David promised Jonathan that he would maintain love for Jonathan's house, even if something happened to Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:14).

At one point, Saul got so angry over Jonathan's allegiance to David that Saul threw a spear at Jonathan! (1 Sam. 20:33). Jonathan fled his father in fierce anger and reported the depth of Saul's horrible hatred and planned evil for David. It was a visit of tears and renewed oaths for the love and protection of each other and each other's offspring. It was the last time we know of them seeing each other.

Over a year later, Saul and Jonathan warred against the Philistines near Mount Gilboa. The battle did not go well. Jonathan and his brothers were slain, and Saul was badly wounded by an arrow. Out of fear of what the Philistines would do if Saul were overtaken still alive, he fell upon his own sword, committing suicide (1 Sa. 31:1-6).

When David found out about the deaths, he wept, fasted and mourned. David then wrote and sang a song of lamentation over Jonathan and Saul, with special verses for Jonathan:

How the mighty have fallen in battle!

Jonathan lies slain on your high places.

I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;

Very pleasant you have been to me; your love to me was extraordinary,

Surpassing the love of women.

How the mighty have fallen,

And the weapons of war perished! (2 Sam. 1:25-27).

While the people then anointed David king of Israel, Saul's general (Abner) instead made Saul's 40-year old remaining son Ish-bosheth, king. Other than Ish-bosheth, a survivor from Saul's household was a crippled son of Jonathan named Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 4:4-5). A nurse took this son into hiding upon the death of Saul and Jonathan.

This started a civil war that lasted some time. There were betrayals back and forth and a number of deaths on both sides. Eventually many key supporters of Saul's son Ish-bosheth abandoned the cause. Two brothers "sons of Rimmon" then planned and assassinated Ish-bosheth, bringing the civil war to an end, and at the age of 30, David began his full reign over Israel.

Years later, David found out that his friend Jonathan had a surviving son who was crippled. David asked the people to bring him forward. Mephibosheth was five when his father was killed, and we do not know his age when he was brought to David, but David remembered well his oath with Jonathan:

Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always." And he paid homage and said, "What is your servant, that you should show regard for a dead dog such as I?" (2 Sam. 9:7-8).

David and Jonathan's friendship was kept even through death.

POINT FOR HOME

"...my brother Jonathan..." (2 Sam. 1:27).

It is hard to find a good friend. We live in a busy world, and friendships take time. We live in a private world, and friendships grow from intimacy. We live in a moving world and friendships thrive in proximity. We live in a competitive society, and friendships require teamwork. We live in a selfish world and friendships need self-sacrifice. We live in a changing world and friendships fail without commitment.

It is not only hard to find a friend, it is also hard to be a friend. Not simply a friendly relationship, but a true friend. One who sticks closer than a brother. We live in a society where people often try to build themselves up by taking down those close to them. It is the opposite of what a true friend does. A true friend builds you up at his or her own expense.

These friendships are important. They can be lifesavers. They are not easy, but they are worthwhile. Friends that are trustworthy, available, and committed can make us better Christians, better spouses, better parents, better workers, and better children.

So, if you have a Christian friend like that, call them today and tell them they are valuable. Affirm your friendship. If you do not have a friend like that, pray for God to put such a Christian friendship in your life. Then look for the chance to be a friend to someone.

Finally, behave as a friend to all, even those you are not close to. Be a reliable and trusted confidant when asked to be. Leave gossip from your life. Speak ill of no one. Keep your word, even when it hurts. Watch what God can and will do.

Above all, remember that in Jesus everyone has the best friend. Greater love has no man than to give his life for a friend! That is the love of Christ as your friend. Charles Mickey speaks of his personal thoughts as a Mephibosheth at the king's table when he partakes of the Lord's Supper. He writes, "Undeserving, brought out of hiding, privileged because of the character and conduct of someone else."² Amen!

WANT MORE?

Email us at wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com and tell us the difference a friend has made in your life.

² Personal correspondence, February 5, 2011.