

Called to Lead With Integrity

LESSON TEXT: 1 Samuel 16:1-4b, 6-13 **BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE:** 1 Samuel 16:1-13

DEVOTIONAL READING: 2 Samuel 7:18-29

TIME: about 1025 B.C. **PLACE:** Bethlehem

1 Samuel 6:1-13

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." ² But Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me."

The Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate." ⁴ Samuel did what the Lord said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?" ⁵ Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. ⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed stands here before the Lord." 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." ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The Lord has not chosen this one either." ⁹ Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the Lord chosen this one." ¹⁰ Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The Lord has not chosen these." ¹¹ So he 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." ¹² So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one." 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.

2 Samuel 7:8-16

⁸ *"Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. ⁹ I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. ¹⁰ And I will provide a place for my people Israel and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning ¹¹ and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders^[a] over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies.*

"The Lord declares to you that the Lord himself will establish a house for you: ¹² When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹³ He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. ¹⁴ I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. ¹⁵ But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. ¹⁶ Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me^[b]; your throne will be established forever.'"

LESSON AIMS

1. Share with others the purpose and results of Samuel's journey to Bethlehem.
2. Understand that integrity in the hearts of leaders at all levels of society is pleasing to God.
3. Resolve to honor God, whether leading or following.

INTRODUCTION

Timing cannot be more critical for our leaders' accountability to their calling and to the expectations of their office. It is unfortunate, but when one leader falls, all eyes turn to his or her cohorts to see whether or not the offense will continue. In this sense, one bad apple does spoil the whole bunch; and some will comment, "I knew something wasn't quite right with Senator So-and-so! He always did have those shifty eyes."

On the same token, how many times have we sized up someone as a "good leader" simple because of their physical appearance; only to find out later that he or she did not have the experience or ability to lead well? Truthfully, we are not qualified to judge who will make a good leader or not. This is why we must use sound reasoning along with prayer to pick our leaders. God has already told us that while we use our eyes to appraise one another, He can see clear into their very hearts. We should trust Him to send us just whom we need. In the meantime, we too can honor God by supportively following our God-sent leaders in obedience to Him.

BACKGROUND

One millennium plus another sixty years - that is the period of time between the call of Abram in about 2091 B.C. in last week's lesson to the lesson for today. During that time God worked with two types of leaders to accomplish His purposes: family leaders and national leaders.

Family leaders. In the book of Genesis the three great patriarchs are Abram, his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob. The final fourteen chapters of Genesis give the thrilling account of how Jacob and his family went to Egypt from Canaan because of famine. In Egypt the family experienced a population explosion. During that period of four hundred and thirty years (see Exodus 12:40, 41), it is assumed that the heads of families continued their leadership roles.

National leaders. Moses became the first leader of Israel as a whole as it grew into a mighty nation in Egypt. After forty years Moses turned the leadership over to Joshua. His task was to conquer the land that God had promised to Abram over six hundred years previously.

When Joshua died, the only national leaders were the high priest. Each tribe had its leaders during the sojourn to Canaan, and that system remained in place after the conquest of the land. The Lord had promised abundant blessings if the people would obey His law. But the people did not resist the temptations of idolatry that are often combined with immorality. God punished Israel with periods of oppression. Then He raised up judges as deliverers.

Samuel is considered to be the last such judge in Israel. His sons were not worthy successors, so the people asked for a king. God then had Samuel anoint Saul as the first king of Israel. Saul began well, but his faith faltered in two critical situations (see 1 Samuel 13 and 15).

Samuel may have felt that much of his life had been a failure: his sons were dishonest judges (1 Samuel 8:3), and Saul's disobedience caused him to be rejected by the Lord.

God's Plan for Finding a New King - 1 Samuel 16:1-4b

Saul was the first king of Israel, but he was never wholly obedient to God. God finally announced His rejection of Saul as king when Saul disobeyed by refusing to annihilate the Amalekites as God had commanded him. On the occasion Samuel exhorted Saul with these words: *"Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams."* (1 Samuel 15:22). It was Samuel who told Saul that because of Saul's rejection of the Word of the Lord, God had also rejected Saul from being king (v. 23).

1: Who was the first king of Israel, and what finally precipitated his rejection by God? (1 Samuel 16:1-2a)

Since God was giving Samuel the command to make the journey to Bethlehem to the house of Jesse in order to accomplish the replacement of Saul, it is not surprising that He had already determined how He would protect Samuel from Saul. God had specifically said to Samuel, *"I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king."* (v. 1). God was aware of Saul's emotional state, and instructed Samuel to take a sacrifice with him as not to draw suspicion from Saul.

For Samuel it was a matter of being obedient to the known will of God as far as God revealed it to him and then trusting the Lord to continue to direct him as he followed God's instructions.

It is often this way for us as well. God does not choose to reveal immediately the entirety of His will in most matters. Rather, He expects us to be obedient to what we know and to trust Him to continually guide us through the pathways He has chosen that are at the present not revealed to us. As we are obedient to what we understand, God will be faithful to give us further guidance as we move ahead confidently and prayerfully in following Him.

2: Where was Samuel told to go, and what was the potential problem for him in doing so? (1 Samuel 16:2b-3)

Because Samuel had had King Agag of the Amalekites killed--something God had instructed Saul to do, but he failed to carry it out, the people of Bethlehem were fearful of Samuel when he arrived.

This great sense of respect for Samuel may well have been used by God to prepare the people to follow his instructions. Not only was Saul kept from feeling threatened by Samuel's journey to Bethlehem, but the people there also were more than willing to support whatever he wanted them to do.

3: How did God provide protection for Samuel? (1 Samuel 16:4a-b)

Samuel's Attempts to Fulfill God's Plan-1 Samuel 16:6-10

God's instruction to Samuel not to be influenced by Jesse's eldest son, Eliab's, appearance because he was tall and handsome and apparently everything one would look for physically in a leader. God already knew who the next king of Israel would be, but he did not yet tell Samuel.

J. Vernon McGee, in his unique way of describing things, wrote regarding God's perspective, "When God looks at us, friend, He looks at us from the inside. He is an interior decorator. He always checks the interior. Samuel looks at this well-built, handsome young man and feels this must be God's choice for the next king of Israel... We are also apt to judge folk, even in Christian circles, by their looks, by their pocketbook, by their status symbol" (Thru the Bible with J. Vernon McGee, Nelson).

Thank God that He does not evaluate us by what we appear to be before others; He evaluates us by what He sees in our hearts. There is nothing hidden from Him. He sees what we are in the core of our hearts.

4: What specific directions did God give Samuel, and what did He not yet tell him? (1 Samuel 16:6-7)

In a round about way, God acknowledged that Eliab's "appearance" and "physical stature" commended him to leadership, but He then stated that He "refused" Eliab because the state of a man's heart was far more significant than natural ability and physical appearance.

5: What truth did God give Samuel when he was considering Eliab? (1 Samuel 16:7)

It is important for us to recognize that when we stand before God following life on earth, we will be totally without excuse. He will know what our true motives and thoughts were, and we will be stripped of all pretenses at that time. Does it not seem right that we should endeavor to grow spiritually and become NOW what God wants us to be so that we will not be ashamed in His presence later?

6: Why is this truth just as important for us today as it was then?

First Samuel 17:13 lists the three oldest sons of Jesse as Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah. Verse 14 says that David was the youngest of Jesse's eight sons. In ancient cultures a great deal of emphasis was placed on the birth order--especially of sons. It was logical that Eliab would appear before Samuel first and that Abinadab and Shammah would come after him in order. It was also logical that the firstborn would probably be the one God had chosen for the important position of king of the land. However, these men did not have the spiritual depth their young brother, David, had.

7: Why was it logical for Jesse to present his sons in order of age? (1 Samuel 16:8-9)

No doubt God spoke quietly to Samuel's spirit through His spirit. We should recognize the spiritual sensitivity in Samuel that made it possible for such communication.

God can guide us in the same way, but we must have an intimate relationship with Him for that to happen. In order to have that kind of relationship, we must take the time to study His Word and pray fervently on a regular basis. We live in a noisy world that easily-and purposefully-crowds out the quiet voice of God unless we seek Him in times of submissive solitude.

8: How was God probably communicating with Samuel, and why should this be an encouragement to us? (1 Samuel 16:10)

David's Anointing for New Ministry-1 Samuel 16:11-13

Jesse's youngest son, David, was out in the field caring for his father's flock. In ancient times, both divine and human rulers were frequently compared to shepherds (see Ezekiel 34). The fact that David was tending the sheep at this particular moment is something of a divine foreshadowing of his appointment as the king of Israel.

9: Where was David at this time? (1 Samuel 16:11)

The initial anointing of David was done in a private ceremony. Two public anointings came much later, once when he became king over Judah and again when he became king over the entire united nation of Israel (2 Samuel 2:4; 5:3). For now, Saul was still the king, but God was indicating His will for David in the future and using this to begin preparing him for the responsibility.

Part of that preparation was the coming of the Spirit of the Lord upon him. It is significant that the text says "from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David." (1 Samuel 16:13). At study of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament reveals that He usually came upon people to accomplish special purposes but did not remain in the way He does today.

New Testament believers – you and I – are permanently indwelt by Him at the moment of salvation, and He serves as the guarantee of our eternal redemption (Ephesians 1:13-14).

10: What did the anointing and the coming of the Spirit do for David? (1 Samuel 16:13)

CONCLUSION

God is looking for faithful leaders who have a heart for Him and His mission on this earth. He often uses ordinary people who, in turn, will faithfully lead others with divinely given wisdom.

One of the famous remarks of Samuel is that it would be a sin if he did not pray for Israel (1 Samuel 12:23). The apostle Paul encouraged people to pray for him (1 Thessalonians 5:25). Prayer is therefore a mutual obligation for those who lead and those who follow.

The leaders in spiritual projects especially need prayer, for souls are involved. The spiritual implications are sobering. In the church there are the extra meetings, people with problems, plus the added stresses on the families of the leaders. Pray for your leaders at all levels-and for their spouses and families!

PRAYER

Lord, bless with wisdom, courage, and endurance the leaders of this nation, the church, and especially those who have the fearful task of preaching and teaching. In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

"Lead and follow with integrity."