

An Unlikely King

The Singer, Part 1

1 Samuel 16:1-13

I have read that there are almost 3,000 biographical portraits in the Bible. To this day, the Bible remains the most comprehensive source of biographies – covering the widest scope of history – than any other single source in the world.ⁱ

Now, most of the lives entered into the Biblical record get a few verses at most. But some of the biographies receive the widest exposure and the most detailed recording of their lives.

The Apostle Paul made it clear that the events in the history of Israel were given as an example, written down for our instruction (1 Corinthians 10:11)

He told the Philippian believers to join in imitating what they knew of his own life, keeping your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us (Philippians 3:17).

He challenged the Thessalonians to be an example to all the believers in Macedonia (1 Thessalonians 1:2).

The Apostle Peter even used the biography of two cities to warn his audience when he wrote, God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes, condemning them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly. (2 Peter 2:6).

God evidently believes in teaching us through visual aids. He has evidently chosen to teach us how to walk and worship and live and confess and as much through the biographies of other nations and leaders and cities and churches and individual Christians as anything else.

It probably won't surprise you to learn that David the Shepherd, singer, King receives a lot of news print. There's a lot of ink associated with his life.

In fact, there are more chapters – 141 of them – devoted to the life of David than any other human being recorded in the Bible.ⁱⁱ

The only person who gets more exposure in the Bible than David is God.

Little wonder . . . there is so much of David's life we can enter into . . . he experiences more ups and downs, more mountain tops and valleys; more joy and pain; more righteous living and wicked sinning than anybody revealed in scripture.

In the foreword of his classic work on David, Alan Redpath, the pastor of Moody Church in the 1960's writes, "The Bible never flatters its heroes. It tells us the truth about each of them in order . . . that we might ultimately magnify the grace of God . . . it's like looking into a mirror . . . we are humiliated by the reminder of how many times we have failed. Great has been our stubbornness, but greater still is God's faithfulness."ⁱⁱⁱ

I would agree.

In fact, one of proofs of divine inspiration is the fact that God is discreet and descriptive at the same time.

When he presents the life of David, He will refuse to polish the image or silk screen the blemishes of attitude and soul and heart.

God will not cover up the worst of David and He will not exaggerate the best of David. But keep in mind that God isn't interested in writing a tabloid either. He won't drag us too deeply into the mire of David's sinful failures. There's a lot more to David than Bathsheba and Uriah.

When you finish his biography, and we will only cover a few of the chapters dedicated to his life – you will begin to understand why people didn't just

sing about David . . . they sang about the God of David – and they would learn to sing to God because of David’s example.

Now we’re definitely not going to be able to cover all 141 chapters of David’s life. We will prayerfully choose around 20 or so and complete this study at the end of the school year.

I remember from some old notes that insightful moment when I took my youngest daughter to the Christian bookstore to pick out a Bible cover. She was right around 9 years of age at the time. She picked out the cover she liked, which is fascinating because she still – now at the age of 20 – likes those same color patterns. Anyway, we hopped back in the pickup truck and she opened the box . . . she’d brought along her Bible to make sure the cover was the right size – and she inserted her Bible. The lady at the bookstore had given her a bookmark and she decided to put that into her Bible as well. She turned to the Book of Romans, where we’d been studying for some time – well, for a long time. And with perfect innocence she looked up at me and asked, “Daddy, what verse are you going to teach this year.”

Some people slow down as they get older, I’m getting faster.

Let me invite your attention to *the Book of First Samuel and chapter 16*

You could outline David’s entire biography into three simple sections.

The first section could be called, David’s Training (1 Samuel 16 to chapter 31).

The second section could be called, David’s Triumphs (2 Samuel 1 through chapter 10).

The third and final section could be called, David’s Troubles (2 Samuel 11 to chapter 20).^{iv}

David’s biography opens in the worst of settings.

King Saul has just been judged by God as unfit to reign and the Samuel has delivered the news.

In fact, look back at *chapter 15 and verse 26. And Samuel said to Saul, “I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the Lord and the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel.” 27. As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. 28. And Samuel said to him, “The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbor of yours who is better than you.”*

Saul had become the first King of Israel . . . Samuel had personally anointed him. The hopes of

the nation had become attached to the fact that they now, like every other nation, had a king.

But Saul turned out to be like most other kings; petty, paranoid, proud, disobedient and defiant.

And God had nothing good to say about this first king.

But Samuel grieved all that was lost by the foolish disobedience of King Saul.

In fact, as David’s biography opens, Samuel is gently chided by the Lord. *Notice verse 1 of chapter 16. 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.*

I love this expose of human nature.

Certainly Samuel had every right to grieve.

Not only was the king rejected – the very first to sit upon a throne in Israel; but add to that the fact that Samuel wanted peace for his nation and this has now upset the apple cart; he doesn’t want civil war and a mad dash by others to the throne; he doesn’t want Saul’s anger and resentment; he doesn’t want the nation weakened in the eyes of the nations around them . . . he had every reason to be troubled.^v

The Hebrew participle indicates that Samuel is continually grieving.^{vi}

The truth is, he’s grieving over yesterday . . . at a loss over today . . . but God says, I’ve got plans for tomorrow!

But let me flip the coin over for a moment. There is something admirable in what causes Samuel great ongoing grief, isn’t there?

Doesn’t this tell us volumes about David’s future teacher?

As one author wrote, “Samuel isn’t distressed over a lousy golf score or someone sideswiping his Chevy – or because he only has a 3-bedroom house with one garage.”

No, Samuel is grieving over the fallen condition of his friend and king; he’s grieving the loss to his nation; he’s distressed over the potential of even greater spiritual disaster to his people.

Would that we would grieve and sorrow over the right things.

And in the midst of his sorrow, God comes along and teaches Him something about His sovereignty.

He effectively tells Samuel, “Look, I’m in control . . . of yesterday, today and tomorrow. The

King may have rebelled, but the King of Kings hasn't lost his grip.

No nation or leader's rebellion creates havoc in heaven.

The fact that the president of North Korea recently put to death publically some of his citizens for owning a personal copy of the Bible – and the fact that our news media outlets remained virtually silent – didn't create some kind of emergency session in the courts of heaven.

From God's perspective and now theirs, they have gained a martyr's crown and have just now been given a tour of their golden residence in the Father's House.

The sinful defiance of King Saul and his nation – and any King and any nation – does not throw heaven into panic mode.

But this was quite a reminder to Samuel. Samuel's assuming Israel's worst days are ahead.

God happens to know that Israel's best days are ahead!

In fact, he's about to anoint the greatest king Israel will ever know – until his descendant, the Son of David – our Messiah – descends to reign upon the earth..

You see, Samuel has two problems with his perspective – we have the same problems too:

First, he's grieving over the past and secondly, he's worried about the future;

That pretty much summarizes so much of our agony, doesn't it?

Samuel is weeping, "All is lost . . . all is lost!" and God says, "Go get your flask of oil, Samuel . . . I've got a king already picked out.

Samuel just about faints here – *notice 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.'*

Now before you get all knotted up – keep in mind that this wasn't something Samuel was just going to say, this was something that Samuel actually does.

The ark has been lost to Israel's enemies – Samuel the priest goes about his circuit holding sacrificial ceremonies.

God doesn't tell Samuel to just say this – in fact, God doesn't tell Samuel to deceive, but to disguise his hidden agenda.

Given the fact that it will be 15 or so years before David assumes the throne, God definitely doesn't want Saul or anyone else coming apart at the seams.

In fact, as I'll show you in a few minutes, David, Jesse and his other sons won't even know why Samuel was there either.

David will be officially anointed as king 15 years later in *2 Samuel chapter 2*.

This anointing is actually going to accomplish something else – at least that's our deduction.

So what Samuel does, is plan for a sacrificial festival where following the sacrifice, Samuel would eat at someone's home.

Notice verse 3. 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."

Note that – God isn't declaring this publically . . . God and Samuel actually carry on a silent conversation.

Look at verse 4. Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem.

Note that – he's traveled to the ancestral land of David's great grandfather Boaz and great-grandmother, Ruth. This is the families homestead – it will one day be the birthplace of David's descendant, Jesus Christ.

These are the skies that will one day fill with angels, singing, "Glory to God in the highest."

Samuel's visit to Bethlehem isn't an accident . . . this isn't bailing wire and duct-tape because Saul messed everything up . . . this isn't plan B . . . this is plan A.

Now we know that there is an interval between the sacrifice and the meal *from verse 11*. Samuel refuses to sit down and eat until he's seen all of Jesse's sons.

We also know from Biblical history that there would be an interval between the sacrifice of the animal and then the preparation for portions of the heifer to be eaten in great joy.

More than likely, Samuel has moved from the altar scene of the sacrifice to the feasting scene of the sacrifice which would have been in someone's home – in this case, Samuel is waiting to eat in the home of Jesse.

And all his sons are invited to meet Samuel. Keep in mind that only Samuel knows why he wants to meet them . . . and even after he leaves, none of them will be the wiser.

One of them has been chosen by God as the future king of Israel.

The problem for Samuel is that he doesn't have a glass slipper in his pouch – or in this case, a pair of men's sandals for the sons of Jesse to try on – and guess what, size 11 triple E is the future King.

The truth is Samuel hasn't been given any information regarding the criterion for God's selection; which is why he keeps wanting to choose the wrong guy.

Notice **verse 6** as he's introduced to each son, **beginning in oriental custom, with the oldest first. When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him." 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."**

Listen, we're going to say a lot more about this verse, but one of the things that strikes me, again about Samuel, is that he's still looking for another king like Saul.

When Saul was anointed king, the biblical description informed us back in **chapter 9** that Saul was head and shoulders taller than all the other people.

And now as soon as Samuel sees tall, striking **Eliab**, he's reaching for his flask of oil. Even the great priest in all his wisdom is blind in this area. He wants Saul, part 2.

God whispers in his spirit, "Let that flask of oil alone . . . I'm not looking at height . . . I'm looking for heart."

Notice verse 8. Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said – to Samuel by the way – Neither has the Lord chosen this one."

By the way, this isn't a pageant where all the contestants lined up and walked by Samuel in their high heels. Maybe got asked a question by Samuel on how they would solve world hunger and then listen to absolutely ridiculous answers.

In actuality, this is nothing more than a typical introduction of each son before Samuel.

But don't miss it – Jesse would have been thrilled that his sons were able to personally meet and talk with and eat a meal with the great prophet and priest, Samuel, in person.

This is the most honorable event he's ever had on his homestead – especially to think that one of them might be selected as perhaps an assistant to this aging prophet/priest.

Look at verse 9. Then Jesse made Shammah pass by . . . not him either; verse 10. And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, "the Lord has not chosen these."

This is the only indication that Jesse is given any insight that Samuel is on some kind of a quest.

However, Jesse will be left to assume, as many evangelical scholars point out, that Samuel is just looking for an apprentice – a helper.

One scholar says that this anointing may have been perceived as David's consecration as a pupil of the prophets . . . a prophet apprentice. And David will become a prophet.^{vii}

The truth is, it is the grace of God that keeps Jesse and his sons in the dark.

Had they been informed:

- that the dynasty of Saul will no longer take place –
- that the royal line will shift from the tribe of Benjamin to the tribe of Judah;
- that his son Jonathan will not wear the crown – he would have considered Samuel and Jesse guilty of treason and he would have put them to death and certainly the sons of Jesse to death.

Saul has not abdicated his throne and he will kill to keep it.

Now notice **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."**

Pause

There remains, literally, the smallest – but look, he's tending the sheep.^{viii}

I mean, if you're here to choose an apprentice, David is the last guy you'd ever choose.

Most Sunday school stories take this chapter to be a lineup for the next King and Jesse doesn't think David is king material. Frankly, Jesse would have been happy for one of his sons to be king – even David.

It's actually worse than that – Jesse doesn't even think David qualifies to be Samuel's assistant.

They evidently stand there looking at each other – Samuel's waiting for Jesse to say, "But let me fetch him." But Jesse doesn't volunteer.

And so Samuel finally says to Jesse – **verse 11b – "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here."**

Go get your 8th and youngest son. By the way, 1 Chronicles 2 refers to David as the seventh son. Most evangelical scholars conclude that one of David's seven older brothers died without either marrying or having children and was omitted from this abbreviated genealogy.

Now notice verse 12. And he (Jesse) sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome.

You might think this contradicts the Lord's earlier rebuke to not consider someone's appearance.

What you have here in this verse is a biographical description of David – not a resume that qualified him for the next king of Israel.

Let me point out that this word ***ruddy*** is from the Hebrew word, *edom* – which gives us the word, red. In fact, the only other time this Hebrew word appears in the Old Testament is in Genesis 25:25 where it describes Esau as literally, “red haired”.^{ix}

The word was used to denote the reddish color of the hair. David was red-headed. If anything, he would have been rather unusual looking boy for a Hebrew – a young 14 year old boy with red hair . . . and bright eyes.

David just sort of bounces into the house, smelling like sheep; I believe he would have been just really glad to be included, since he more than likely had heard about the great honor bestowed upon his father and his family by the presence of Samuel in his very own home – for dinner!

Without saying anything to him, or to his father, or to his brothers, Samuel gets the message from the Lord that this is the one – ***verse 13. And 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.***

No fanfare . . . no explanation . . . no regal pronouncement.

And for good reason.

Now, if I could choose two words to describe this unusual scene, the first one would be:

a. Unprecedented!

This isn't how you do it.

Why would you ever choose a king and then not tell anybody? Why risk it . . . why not play it safe.

It will be 15 plus years before David is officially anointed as King of Judah (2 Samuel 2).

Besides, you need to choose a warrior . . . at that very moment there is a Philistine garrison stationed in that little village.^x

Samuel, we need a champion . . . not a shepherd boy who loves to write music.

We don't need a singer . . . we need a sovereign who knows how to lead a nation.

This is totally unprecedented . . . oh yea, but it was Divinely planned.

There's another word that strikes me here. It's the word:

b. Unimpressive

David doesn't even come close to conventional expectations for royalty. For that matter, neither does the family of Jesse!

They're living in a little town . . . Jesse's a relatively unknown farmer; in fact, he only has a few sheep to his name for David to keep (***1 Samuel 17:38***).

Just like the Son of David who will come centuries later – the King of Kings, born to peasants without any impressive connections.

The truth is, we're a lot like Samuel . . . we keep making the same mistakes.

We are impressed with the impressive. We're biased towards appearances.

Newsweek Magazine several years ago ran a survey – in 2010 – on the hiring and promoting criteria used by managers. When all the data was tallied and evaluated, the clearest determining factor for everything was physical appearance, age and charisma. The majority of decisions to hire, promote or reward had little to do with qualifications, character and work ethic,

- 68% admitted that physical looks affected the way managers rated job performance.
- 61% of hiring managers admitted that women would benefit from wearing clothing that showed off their figure
- 84% of managers admitted that someone who looked older than the other co-workers would find it difficult to be hired, although qualified for the job
- 64% of the hiring managers admitted that companies hire people on the basis of their looks and they considered that justifiable.^{xi}

This is one of the universal flaws of fallen human nature. Which is why God can say to Samuel – man looks on the outward appearance . . . in other words, this is what mankind does.

Take one look at this red headed farm kid . . . look at his family . . . and you can write this word above the doorway of Jesse’s home – and David’s life:

Unimpressive . . . ah, but Divinely chosen.
Unimpressive . . . but Divinely chosen.

That’s you too, by the way . . . that’s me . . . that God would choose us; and use us; independently of anything we could offer Him or impress Him with or wow Him over – He chooses by His sheer grace to make us future Kings and Queens – co-regents with our Beloved Messiah!

Who are we?

Consider who you are at your calling, Paul wrote, **not many brilliant among you; not many mighty; not many noble (1 Corinthians 1:26 paraphrased).**

Unimpressive . . . but divinely chosen.

But still, why anoint David 15 years before his time?

God is inducting David into a decade plus of training. He’ll no doubt receive biblical training periodically from Samuel and other traveling prophets. Just read David’s Psalms and you’ll see they are rich with Old Testament scripture.

But let’s take just a couple of minutes in closing and mark several characteristics of these early years as David evidently runs back out to the pasture to pick up where he left off.

Alan Redpath wrote, “The conversion of a soul is the miracle of the moment; the manufacture of a disciple is the task of a lifetime.”^{xii}

What was God going to do to manufacture a disciple out of David?

Look more closely into the life of this little shepherd boy and discover:

1. The symptoms of Rejection

Imagine not being included in an event so incredible as Samuel’s visit and meal with your father and mother and brothers.

Later, David will be insulted by his older brother when he runs out to bring him food and ask about Goliath’s blasphemy.

He will be demeaned and personally insulted.

Evidently it’s such a standard treatment that David never even responds to the insults that imply he’s worthless.

If there is a tinge of implied sadness in the biography of David is that he will never mention his father – ever. He will mention his mother twice, calling her the handmaiden of the Lord.

God is preparing David to bear the strain of brutal rejection and threat and criticism as he forges a nation together.

I read here not only the symptoms of rejection, but:

2. The sighing of Redundancy

There was nothing more unending than shepherding. It was 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

I mean, what does shepherding sheep have to do with being a king?!

But the responsibilities David grew to accept would prepare him for the never ending challenges of shepherding a nation.

I also sense here:

3. The signs of Reflection

While David was driven into a life of obscurity and loneliness, He was actually being driven to God . . . and to the Word of God.

He would lie out under the stars and mediate on the truths of God’s word.

He would lie out there and look up and reflect with spiritual depth, “When I look up there and see the moon and the stars . . . what is man that You are mindful of Him.”

Hey, I think that would make a great song.

He’d reach for his hand harp or his flute and begin to work out a melody that he’d practice on his sheep . . .

David had no idea his songs would become the hymnal of his nation, but the first hymnal of the church; in fact, he had no idea that on the Day the church was created – on the Day of Pentecost, Peter would preach from the biography of David – proving that David’s prophetic poetry referred to Jesus Christ . . . and those songs had actually found their fulfillment in Jesus, the Son of David.^{xiii}

And 3,000 people would believe.

But for now, young David . . . you have 15 plus years of obscurity . . . and challenges . . . and preparation . . . and difficulty.

This is your training ground . . .
With its symptoms and sorrows of rejection
With its sighing and suffering through redundancy;
But there are signs and songs of quiet, private,
intimate reflection.

These are *good* days for David.

This manuscript is from a sermon preached on 1/5/2014 by Stephen Davey.

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i www.DiscoverTheBook.org

ii Ibid, p. 1

iii Alan Redpath, The Making Of A Man Of God (Revell, 1962), p. 5

iv Outline adapted from J. Carl Laney, First and Second Samuel (Moody Press, 1982), p. 55

v Adapted from W.G. Blaikie, The First Book of Samuel (Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1887; reprint, 1978), p. 253

vi Dale Ralph Davis, Expositions of the Book of I Samuel: Volume 2 (Baker Books, 1994), p. 26

vii Keil & Delitzsch, p. 170

viii C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament: Volume II (Eerdmans Publishing, 1991), p. 169

ix Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 3, general editor, Frank E. Gaebelin (Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), p. 685

x F.B. Meyer, David: Shepherd, Psalmist, King (Christian Literature Crusade, 1973), p. 10

xi www.preachingtoday.com/site/utilities/print.html?type=article&id=93769

xii Alan Redpath, p. 5

xiii Phillip Keller, David the Shepherd King, II (Word Books, 1986), p. 186