

“The Heart of the Matter” (1 Samuel 16:1–23)

This past Friday I received a convicting e-mail from a woman in our congregation. Last week in her small group, Laurene shared the need to spend less time studying at night and more time in the morning because her eyes are just so tired at night that it’s hard to see the small print in her study tools. The next morning she found a pair of her husband’s readers on her study pile. As Bob left for work, he tenderly suggested that Laurene use the readers because they would help her see well. She then opened to 1 Samuel 16 and began to prepare her heart for Sunday morning. She went through her usual study routine of marking references and doing word studies, but her eyes were still tired. The coffee had not kicked in yet. Finally, a little voice inside her said, “Put on those readers; quit being so stubborn!” Laurene acknowledged that the readers made all the difference in the world. She sensed that God was saying, “Use My eyes that you may see. See your heart with My eyes. The readers are available—put them on!”

The theme of 1 Samuel 16¹ is that God has superior eyesight. He is not limited to physical 20/20 vision, which can hinder one from seeing reality. We all acknowledge this to be true. We even have expressions to summarize this concept: “Looks aren’t everything”; “looks can be deceiving”; “you can’t judge a book by its cover.”² Our human perceptions are profoundly limited and unreliable because we can’t see God’s power and purpose with our eyes. It is very difficult to see things the way God sees things. He sees all things and all people in the true light of His own will and purposes. The whole world looks very different from that perspective.³ Therefore, it is critical to *see as God sees*.

1. God chooses David (16:1–13). Our story begins on a very practical note: “**Now 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 selected [ra’ah, lit. “to see,” used seven times in this chapter⁴] a king for Myself⁵ among his sons’**” (16:1). When Samuel pronounced Saul’s rejection as king, he did so with a heavy heart. Samuel had been instrumental in choosing Saul as king. He had been drawn to this young man and watched him become the deliverer of Israel. And now, the Lord sends him to anoint a replacement for Saul! Samuel was depressed. He is now elderly. His hope of seeing the king who will lead Israel into righteousness and victory is dashed. In the midst of his depression, God gently rebukes Samuel!⁶ God seems to say there’s no point in grieving over that which He has rejected.⁷ It’s right to grieve when someone falls into sin but eventually it’s time for action. The Lord calls Samuel to “fill his horn with oil and go.” This is good wisdom for us as well. May we move beyond our circumstances or those of others and be faithful to God’s call.

Samuel doesn’t take God’s challenge sitting down. Instead, he responds: “**How can I go? When Saul hears of it, he will kill me**” (16:2a). Here, Samuel shows his humanity. After confronting and rebuking King Saul and hacking Agag to pieces (ch. 15), Samuel now seems to fear Saul more than God.⁸ Samuel fears for his life for at least three reasons: (1) Saul is actually king, and anointing another in his stead would be regarded as an act of open treason. (2) The trip from Ramah to Bethlehem would take Samuel through Gibeah, Saul’s hometown. (3) Undoubtedly Saul’s agents are watching Samuel’s every move because any future king would most assuredly be anointed by this old and famous prophet.⁹

On account of Samuel’s fear, the Lord said: “**Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. You shall invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for Me the one whom I designate to you’**” (16:2b–3). God appears to assign Samuel an additional task to mask his journey to Bethlehem and not raise undue suspicions. Some scholars suggest that God is guilty of deception or a “half-truth,¹⁰ however, telling only what is true doesn’t necessitate telling the whole truth about the matter.¹¹ What is critical to recognize is that God called Samuel to simply obey His Word. This entails a willingness to trust and obey and *see as God sees*.

Fortunately, in 16:4–5 Samuel gets over his fear: **“So Samuel did what the LORD said, and came to Bethlehem. And the elders of the city came trembling to meet him and said, ‘Do you come in peace?’ He said, ‘In peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves¹² and come with me to the sacrifice.’ He also consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.”**

Despite his fear, Samuel obeys. What a great principle: Even when we’re scared to death, God calls us to obey. Perhaps you’re in a difficult marriage and you want to call it quits. I know marriage can be tough, but God is calling you to honor your covenant and persevere. Maybe you’re having fits with a particular child and you can’t imagine making it another five or ten years until he or she turns eighteen. But God is urging you to exercise the patient unconditional love He has offered you. Perhaps you’re single and fighting to maintain your purity in a culture of constant temptation. God, however, is calling you to honor Him with your body. We are called to obey even in the midst of fearful and trying circumstances.

Interestingly, Samuel isn’t the only one who is afraid—the Bethlehem elders are trembling as well.

However, they aren’t trembling before the prophetic office but because of political risk.¹³ They know that Samuel is a king maker *and* a king breaker. Whenever the high officials of the court come to the village, there can only be trouble and risk. Such officials never come to give, but always to take. In this scenario, Samuel is either Saul’s man or he is not Saul’s man. If it’s the latter, the elders are at risk. Hence, they only give Samuel access into Bethlehem because he repeats verbatim Yahweh’s words.¹⁴

Now the real fun begins in 16:6–10: **“When they entered, he [Samuel] looked at Eliab and thought, ‘Surely the LORD’S anointed is before Him.’”** Eliab is tall, dark, and handsome. Being a firstborn, he is likely competitive, self-confident, and strong-willed. Samuel knows he will make a great leader. **“But the LORD said to Samuel, [Next!] ‘Do not look at his appearance [lit. “the eyes” = a symbol of the outward form¹⁵] or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance [“according to the eyes”], but the LORD looks at the heart.’¹⁶ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, ‘The LORD has not chosen this one either.’ Next Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, ‘The LORD has not chosen this one either.’ Thus Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel.¹⁷ But Samuel said to Jesse, ‘The LORD has not chosen these.’”** The first three sons are rejected by name; the others are handled generically to fill out the number seven. The narrative begins with the rejection of Saul (cf. 16:1). Now we have a threefold use of the phrase “not choose.” The combination of “reject” and “not choose” builds the suspense of the narrative. We are waiting for a choice.¹⁸

But first we must recognize that God’s choice is different from ours, for He looks upon the heart (16:7). In the ancient world, the heart was believed to be the seat of one’s thoughts, emotions, and will.¹⁹ For God to look on someone’s heart meant that his or her character and motivations were being investigated.²⁰ This means that God’s primary concern is not your exterior, but your interior—your inner person. Perhaps you’ve noticed in your grocery shopping that some manufacturers are selling comparable sized packages or containers we are accustomed to, but they are putting less of the product in the box. This is true of detergent, potato chips, mayonnaise, etc. What really grieves me is that even Dryers Ice Cream went from 1.75 quarts down to 1.5 quarts! This is a travesty! What is this world coming to?! How something is packaged doesn’t always reveal what’s on the inside. That’s true with people as well. One of my all-time favorite boxers, Evander Holyfield, said it well, “It’s not the size of a man but the size of his heart that matters.” When you and I *see as God sees* we judge ourselves and others rightly.

At this point Samuel is probably scratching his long beard in puzzlement. He couldn’t help but wonder whether he had heard the voice of the Lord correctly. So he asked Jesse: **“‘Are these all the children?’ And he said, ‘There remains yet the youngest [lit. “smallest”], and behold, he is tending the sheep.’ Then Samuel said to Jesse, ‘Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here’”** (16:11). I am confident that Jesse and his sons were holding their sides and snickering. They couldn’t imagine that little David would be considered for anything. It’s possible that Jesse didn’t see David as valuable as the rest of his sons.

Many parents are guilty of favoritism and neglect. Do you favor the child in your family who is most like you or who has qualities you enjoy? Do you slight the child who is least like you or who has qualities that annoy you? Your kids will pick up on how you treat them and their siblings. You need to recognize that the greatest gift you can give your children (aside from introducing them to Christ) is to help them understand their worth. Do you communicate to all of your children that you believe in them and that God wants to use them in a special way? Do you value their heart and character above their gifts and performance? Tell your children how you feel and how God feels about them. Write a letter to each of your children. Express your love to them in a physically meaningful way. See them as God sees them.

In 16:12 our narrator provides a few intriguing details concerning David: **“So he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes and a handsome appearance. And the LORD said, ‘Arise, anoint him; for this is he.’”** Can’t you just see the jaws dropping? Jesse and his sons must have been shocked beyond belief! David is fifteen years old—he is the family runt! But we learn that David is easy on the eyes—a pretty boy. He is described as “ruddy” with either a bronze complexion or a reddish tint to his hair.²¹ I suspect it was the latter. David’s red hair would have been highly prized in the Middle East where black hair was the norm.²² He had “beautiful eyes.” Once again, the narrator emphasizes the theme of seeing. David also had a “handsome appearance.” It appears to me that God uses more average looking people, but this verse demonstrates that He is not opposed to using good-looking folks either. But the point is: God doesn’t use individuals on account of their height, weight, appearance, personality, gifts, wealth, or position. He may choose to use these characteristics, but He is never limited to them. David is the youngest, the least impressive, with no claim to make, and no credentials to present. In ancient Near Eastern societies the firstborn sons were always privileged and esteemed. However, here, David is chosen instead! God regularly chooses people who are overlooked and ignored by others to do His most special work! David joins a long line of individuals honored by God even though they were disqualified by people.²³ The choice of David is part of a continuing lesson that God works with human weakness to demonstrate His strength.²⁴ He loves to use the most unlikely people (1 Cor 1:28–29). Today, if you are feeling rejected by your family, friends, classmates, or church, please know that God has His hand upon your life. Even if everyone else rejects you and neglects you, the Lord will not. He is a friend who sticks closer than a brother (Prov 18:24). He will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb 13:5b).

In 16:13 we come upon an important verse of transition: **“Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers;²⁵ and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily [lit. “rushed”] upon David²⁶ from that day forward.”²⁷** Samuel took an animal horn filled with a specially prepared olive oil. This oil was used to anoint prophets, priests, and kings. In the Bible, oil is the symbol for the Holy Spirit. As the oil worked its way into the individual’s hair and pores, it symbolized God’s presence entering into the one being anointed.²⁸ To be anointed with oil meant one was being prepared to do a job for God.²⁹ A simple principle is: Those whom God appoints He also anoints. If God gives you a job to do, He will enable you to do that job.³⁰ It may seem insurmountable and overwhelming, but God is more than able to exercise His power in and through you. But you must *see as God sees*.

The last phrase in this scene appears rather inconsequential: **“And Samuel arose and went to Ramah”** (16:13b). Why did the author spill ink on this footnote? The answer is simple: God has a habit of rescuing us when we think everything we have lived for has collapsed.³¹ Samuel goes home because his job is over. How the little shepherd boy would get from the field to the throne was not his responsibility. God would see to it! Samuel understood the importance of not taking unnecessary responsibility for God’s work. This is a great principle for you and me in our respective ministries. Let’s not take on more than God intends; let’s trust Him! He is more than able to do what needs to be done. Samuel’s public career now came to an end. Although he made appearances later on, he no longer played an active role in the narrative.³² Obviously, the anointing of David was the apex of Samuel’s prophetic career.³³ God vindicated Samuel by allowing him to anoint David, who would bring in the messiah! He was able to *see as God sees*.

2. Saul chooses David (16:14–23).³⁴ The initial anointing of David was a private, even secret, matter (16:1–3). Now it’s time for David to become publicly visible. Specifically, it’s Saul’s time to deal with David. There will be a deep and deliberate tension in this second scene.³⁵ In 16:14 the narrator pens a very controversial verse: **“Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul,³⁶ and an evil spirit from the LORD terrorized him.”**³⁷ Obviously, there are two important issues to be dealt with in this verse. First, how could the Holy Spirit depart from Saul (16:14a)? We must first understand that 16:14 says nothing about salvation but only that God’s power worked in those whom He selected for service.³⁸ This verse doesn’t describe Saul’s loss of salvation. The Spirit’s presence (or lack thereof) is related to the kingship. David is being anointed as the new king, and Saul is now rejected; thus, the Spirit comes mightily upon David while being removed from Saul.³⁹ This explains why David cries out in Ps 51:11: “Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.” In this Psalm, he is repenting of his sin with Bathsheba, and he is aware that God could remove him as king just as He had done with Saul. The principle is: God will never depart from you; your salvation is secure. However, like Saul, you may lose your ministry. Hence, it is critical to walk with God and depend upon the filling of His Holy Spirit. Then, our ministry will spring forth from our intimate fellowship with God. Fruitful ministry requires *seeing as God sees*.

The second important issue that needs to be addressed is: How could God send a terrorizing spirit upon Saul (16:14b)? We must note that this is the only time in the Old Testament that an individual is said to be tormented by an evil spirit.⁴⁰ Thus, I will attempt to be careful and humble in my explanation of his verse. The Hebrew word translated “evil” (*ra*) has a much broader range than our English word and can be used to refer to anything negative. This leads some scholars to prefer a psychological condition like depression. However, the evil spirit is said to have “terrorized” (*baath*) Saul. The Old Testament frequently ascribes evil or temptation to the hand of Yahweh (e.g., Deut 13:2–4; 2 Sam 24:1; 1 Chron 21:1; Amos 3:6). God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem (Judg 9:23) and a lying spirit in the mouth of the false prophet at the time of Micaiah (1 Kgs 22:19–22).⁴¹ All this happened by the permission of God rather than as a result of His directive will, for God cannot be the author of anything evil. In summary: Saul’s tortured state was not an accident of nature, nor was it essentially a medical condition. It was a supernatural assault by a being sent at the Lord’s command, and it was brought on by Saul’s disobedience (esp. 1 Sam 13–15). I suspect this evil spirit was an angel of judgment (2 Kgs 19:35) that caused Saul to experience frequent misery.⁴² Although this is a most unusual experience, we must recognize that when we sin God will do whatever it takes to discipline us. Even God’s discipline is an expression of His great love for us. He doesn’t want us to be consumed by anyone or anything but Him. He knows that the only true satisfaction in this life is Him, and He doesn’t want us to miss out.

The work of this evil spirit was obvious to all and alas quite a problem. So in 16:15–18, **“Saul’s servants then said to him, ‘Behold now, an evil spirit from God is terrorizing you. Let our lord now command your servants who are before you. Let them seek a man who is a skillful player on the harp; and it shall come about when the evil spirit from God is on you, that he shall play *the harp* with his hand, and you will be well.’ So Saul said to his servants, ‘Provide for me now a man who can play well and bring *him* to me.’ Then one of the young men said,⁴³ ‘Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite who is a skillful musician, a mighty man of valor, a warrior, one prudent in speech, and a handsome man; and the LORD is with him.’”** Saul’s servants recognized the power of music. They were confident that if someone played the harp Saul would experience relief. You have seen a tear-streaked, red-faced, crying baby soothed by his mother’s tender lullaby. Or perhaps you have been driving in your car, angry at something going on, then you turn on some of our favorite music and it settles your soul. Music is powerful! When I work out with weights, I want to listen to heavy metal to get pumped up. If I want to be smile, I tune in country music. If I want to draw close to the Lord, I turn on praise and worship. If I want to be repulsed, I listen to rap☺. Music is powerful! What kind of effect does it have on you? Does the music you’re listening to soothe you and minister to your spirit? Does it draw you closer to Christ?

The OT links Israel's great musical heritage with the life of David. He was the "sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam 23:1) and the author of at least seventy-three psalms—more than six times the number attributed to any other person or group. He also was responsible for establishing music as a major part of the temple worship in Jerusalem (1 Chron 25). The musical instrument played by David (*kinnore*) is not like a modern harp, as we would imagine, but is really a lyre. A lyre has strings stretched across a sounding board over a blank space and attached to a crossbar. The musicians would draw a plectrum (large pick) across the strings with right hand and deaden the strings with left. The Greeks called it a Kithara, where we get our word guitar. You could say that David was cutting-edge in popularizing the lyre, particularly in temple worship!

Our story concludes in 16:19–23: **“So Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, ‘Send me your son David who is with the flock.’ Jesse took a donkey *loaded with bread and a jug of wine and a young goat, and sent them to Saul by David his son. Then David came to Saul and attended him; and Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor bearer. Saul sent to Jesse, saying, ‘Let David now stand before me, for he has found favor in my sight.’ So it came about whenever the *evil* spirit from God came to Saul, David would take the harp and play it with his hand; and Saul would be refreshed⁴⁴ and be well, and the evil spirit would depart from him.”*** One of the most striking pictures of David in this book is his reluctance to force his way into his rightful position as king. Even after David was chosen as king, he went back and forth between the palace and his father's flock (cf. 17:15). He was the anointed king from 1 Sam 16 on, but it's not until 2 Sam 5 that he was recognized as king over all Israel. Throughout this period, David patiently waited for God's timing and tried his best to live peacefully with the jealous Saul.⁴⁵ Moreover, after being chosen to succeed Saul as king, David begins by serving him. He gets his first training of rulership by serving. This service involves healing the stresses brought on by divine judgment (playing the lyre) and acting as a personal aid to the king (armor-bearer). He does it so well, so personally, that Saul loves him.⁴⁶ Thus, David demonstrated that he was willing to play second fiddle. He was a king in waiting, but he knew that leadership involved being a servant. You and I must realize that those who cannot serve cannot lead. David didn't seek kingship. His brothers thought of many reasons why they should have been chosen. They thought that kingship was a matter of self-confidence and ability. David knew that leadership in the kingdom was a choice that had to be left to God. He never forgot whose kingdom it was.⁴⁷ He learned to *see as God sees*.

Why was David chosen as the king of Israel? Carefully read the divine commentary in Psalm 78:70–72: “He also chose David His servant and took him from the sheepfolds; from the care of the ewes with suckling lambs He brought him to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands.” David was simply promoted from one kind of shepherding to another! He took what he learned in the fields and applied it to leadership.⁴⁸ Two thousand years later another Shepherd would appear, born near where David had been anointed. Indeed, Bethlehem would then be known as the “City of David,” the town where a virgin would spend the night and give birth to a son. He was the “Good shepherd,” who would eventually volunteer to “lay down His life for the sheep.” Have you trusted the Good shepherd? Have you placed your faith in Christ? To do so you must *see as God sees*. He calls out to you today to see your sin for what it is—separation from God. He pleads with you to see His Son, the Lord Jesus, and entrust your eternal destiny to Him.

Scripture References

1 Samuel 16:1–23

Psalms 24:3–5; 42:1-2; 78:70–72

Proverbs 4:23

Acts 13:22, 36

Luke 12:32, 42–48

1 Corinthians 1:26–29

1 Peter 5:6

Study Questions

1. Have I been feeling sorry for myself or for someone else? Is the Lord calling me to move on? How can I trust the Lord to heal my heart from past disappointments and hurts? What course of action will I begin to take? Who will help me take the necessary steps forward?
2. Have I been a part of Christian leadership transitions? What went well? What did not go so smoothly? Why? What principles from this passage could have been applied in this leadership transitions? How can my church be careful in recognizing godly spiritual leaders?
3. Since God looks at the heart does that affect the way I see myself? Does that influence my priorities? How so? When do I allow discouragement and stubbornness to slow me down in moving forward to fulfill God's agenda? Am I preparing myself for future opportunities God might have for me by working on character growth and developing my gifts and abilities?
4. Why did God allow Samuel to be the one to select David? How did this critical act allow him to finish well? Who have I chosen to believe in? How has this person become God's man or woman? Have I rejoiced in God's work in this believer's life? In what specific way(s) has God allowed me to transfer truth to the next generation? What has been the most rewarding experience?
5. How did David prepare for his kingship even after being anointed? What was his mentality? What can I learn from this season in David's life? Am I willing to be obscure? How can I become more humble? How did David use his gift with King Saul? How can I use my gift(s) for God's kingdom purposes? How can my present service lead to future impact?

Notes

¹ Leithart astutely observes: “The story of chapter 16 actually begins with 15:34–35, since the references to Ramah in 15:34 and 16:13 form an *inclusio* around this section. Further, there is a contrast between the Lord’s regret regarding Saul and the Lord’s choice of David. Thematically 15:35 introduces the key word ‘see’: Samuel did not see Saul again until the day of his death. In itself, this was a forceful judgment on Saul and Israel, for when Saul was cut off from Samuel, he was cut off from the Word of the Lord. The word ‘see’ (along with ‘eyes’) is used throughout the chapter. In 16:1, the Lord said that He had ‘seen’ a king for Himself; Samuel ‘saw’ Eliab and was sure he was the Lord’s anointed (16:6), but the Lord said that He does not ‘see’ the ‘eyes’ but the heart (16:7). Along the same lines, the text says that David had beautiful ‘eyes’ (16:12). This emphasis on sight contrasts human sight with Yahweh’s and also connects back to the story of the priests, especially Eli, whose sight was failing as he grew old.” Peter J. Leithart, *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 95. However, Klein seems to minimize this connection: “The account of David’s anointing clearly ends at v 13, and v 1 forms as good a beginning as any. There is a literary allusion in v 1 to 15:35 (Samuel’s mourning).” Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1983), 158. Youngblood summarizes: “One of the many indications that the two halves (vv. 1-13, 14-23) of chapter 16 are closely related is that each section is framed by an *inclusio*: ‘Horn with/of oil’ is found in vv. 1 and 13, and the phrase ‘Spirit . . . departed from’ constitutes the first words of v. 14 and the last words of v. 23 . . .” Ronald F. Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Electronic ed.

² Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*. New International Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 232.

³ For a similar perspective see John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*. Preaching the Word series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 291–92.

⁴ The verb *ra’ah* is used in 1 Sam 16:1, 6, 7 [thrice], 17, 18. It carries the sense of “select” four times (16:1, 7, 17, 18; cf. Gen 41:33; 2 Kgs 10:3).

⁵ Waltke remarks: “God’s choice of David ‘for Myself’ contrasts with Saul’s choice ‘for them’ (the people; cf. 8:18; 12:13).” Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 641. This point is also made by nearly every major commentator.

⁶ The implicit rebuke in the words, “How long?” can be seen in 1 Sam 1:14 and 2 Sam 2:26.

⁷ Gary D. Vreeland, *The Darker Side of Samuel, Saul, and David* (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2008), 189.

⁸ See also Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 641. Moses (Exod 3:11, 13; 4:1, 10, 13) and Jeremiah (Jer 1:6) also expressed fears over the missions that God called them to.

⁹ James E. Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*. College Press, NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press, 2000), 212.

¹⁰ Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*. New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 178. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 641 calls this a “half-truth.” Brueggemann comments: “This may not be a blatant lie authorized by Yahweh, for Samuel does take an animal for the occasion, but this is clearly an authorized deception. Yahweh will lie, if necessary, in order to move the kingship toward David. We have read in 15:21 that the God of Israel will not ‘lie’ (*sqr*). Here Yahweh is very close to falsehood for the sake of David.” Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 121.

¹¹ Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 596 n. 8 remarks: “I doubt very much that the Lord was here giving Samuel ‘a cover story for his trip from Ramah to Bethlehem’ . . . On the contrary, however, the anointing of a king *would* involve offering sacrifices (see 1 Samuel 11:15), and here, therefore, Samuel’s commission in verse 1 was simply reiterated with more details made explicit.”

¹² The act of consecration likely occurs by ritual washing (see Exod 19:10; Num 8:21).

¹³ Youngblood suggests that the elders “were awed by his formidable reputation,” established in part by his recent execution of Agag. Ronald F. Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Electronic ed.

¹⁴ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 121.

¹⁵ Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 213.

¹⁶ Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 287 argues that a literal understanding of 16:7 is “the key to understanding the whole of 1 and 2 Samuel! More than that, it is really the key to understanding life, the universe, everything!”

¹⁷ In 1 Chron 2:13-15 only seven sons of Jesse are named, one apparently having died young. Leithart, *A Son to Me*, 96 n. 4 writes: “David was the seventh son of Jesse (1 Chron 2:15). Seven is the number of the creation week, and particularly of the Sabbath. David is being presented as the one who would bring rest to Israel (like Noah). In 1 Samuel 16:6–8, only three other sons are mentioned: Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah. David is the fourth son named. Perhaps this connects him to Judah, who was the fourth of Jacob’s sons, and the royal son.”

¹⁸ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 122.

¹⁹ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 179.

²⁰ This is why Prov 4:23 states: “Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life” (NIV).

²¹ The term “ruddy” (*admoni*) is only used two other times in the Bible. It was used of Esau at his birth (Gen 25:25), and it is used in 1 Sam 17:42 as a reason that Goliath despised David.

²² Vreeland, *The Darker Side of Samuel, Saul, and David*, 190.

²³ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 180 notes that Seth, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, Moses, and perhaps Abraham were also younger brothers whom God exalted over their siblings.

²⁴ David himself expressed this in Ps 8:2: “From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength because of Your adversaries, To make the enemy and the revengeful cease.”

²⁵ “Anointing kings was common in the ancient Near East. In some cultures it was believed to protect from evil influences. In others it was understood as an endowment of life. When done at a coronation it often represented the subordination of the newly anointed king to the deity. In Israel it symbolized the person’s elect status as chosen by God to service.” John H. Walton & Kim E. Walton, *The Bible Story Handbook* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 161.

²⁶ This is the first time that David is mentioned in the Bible. He is the only person in Scripture to bear this name. The most likely meaning of David is “beloved” or even “uncle.” David Toshio Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*. New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 423–24.

²⁷ Klein, *1 Samuel*, 162 suggests that David’s spirit endowment is superior to Saul’s in two respects: (1) The spirit came upon David as an immediate result of this anointing, while Saul’s was separated in time from his anointing, and (2) David’s anointing was permanent, while Saul’s appears to have been spasmodic.

²⁸ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 180.

²⁹ Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 641–42: “David knows of his election by the prophet’s words, the pouring of the consecrating oil upon his head, and the coming of the powerful presence of God’s Spirit. On those assurances he risks his life on behalf of God’s kingdom. Likewise, Jesus Christ encourages us to have faith in Him as God’s Son, by pointing to the testimonies of John the Baptist, of God’s word to Him at the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Him, and of His messianic works (see John 5:31–47). So also believers risk their lives on the firm foundation of the promises of God’s Word, the convincing work of the Spirit that accompanies those promises, and their spiritual transformation.”

³⁰ Jerry Vines, *Pursuing God’s Own Heart* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 13.

³¹ Michael Eaton, *1 Samuel*. Preaching Through The Bible (Kent: Sovereign World, 1995), 66.

³² The only other occasion we are told that David and Samuel come in contact is 1 Samuel 19:18.

³³ Smith, *1 & 2 Samuel*, 215.

³⁴ Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” comments: “The transition at vv. 13-14 can . . . be arguably defined as the literary, historical, and theological crux of 1 Samuel as a whole.”

³⁵ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 124.

³⁶ I had a professor in Bible College who refused to sing the song, “Create In Me A Clean Heart.” The chorus included: “Cast me not away from Thy presence, oh Lord / And take not Thy holy spirit from me / Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation - And renew a right spirit within me” (see Ps 51).

³⁷ I particularly appreciate Peterson’s remarks: “The phrase ‘an evil spirit from the LORD’ grates on our ears, but it cannot be avoided—it opens and closes this part of the story (vv. 14, 23). It contrasts with Saul’s earlier visitations by God’s spirit (10:6, 10; 11:6), and David’s anointing by God’s spirit, ‘mightily’ (v. 13), in the preceding verses. We cannot reduce the story to politics or psychology—*God* provides the central presence and energy. Our biblical writers have a comprehensive understanding of God—everything comes through God’s hand, blessings and curses, good and evil. The ‘evil’ in this instance is not arbitrary, but clearly an aspect of judgment, the result of Saul’s bullheaded disobedience. It is not the only word, however, for David is graciously provided by God for Saul’s comfort and healing.” Eugene H. Peterson, *First and Second Samuel*. Westminster Bible Companion (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 95.

³⁸ Kaiser sees Saul as a believer as well. See Walter C. Kaiser, “An Evil Spirit from the Lord?” in *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, [1996] 1997), 210.

³⁹ The Spirit of God had overwhelmed Saul when he had assumed the role of king over the land (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6). Exactly what the Spirit’s presence with Saul entailed is not explained, but it seems to have included the gift of government, the gift of wisdom in civil matters, and a spirit of fortitude and courage. Saul was a great leader for twenty years (14:47–48), but his ministry and gifts were lost as suddenly as they had been gained—the Spirit had removed his gift of government.

⁴⁰ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 182.

⁴¹ Klein, *I Samuel*, 165.

⁴² This evil spirit is seen to attack and withdraw on several occasions (cf. 1 Sam 16:15, 16; 18:10; 19:9).

⁴³ This episode is very similar to what occurred with Joseph in the Old Testament.

⁴⁴ The verb translated “refreshed” (*ravach*) is cognate with the word usually translated “spirit” (*ruach*).

⁴⁵ Sailhamer, *NIV Compact Bible Commentary*, 231.

⁴⁶ Peterson, *First and Second Samuel*, 95.

⁴⁷ Erwin Lutzer, *Growing Through Conflict* (Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1992), 19.

⁴⁸ Lutzer, *Growing Through Conflict*, 16.