David Is Anointed King

Devotional Reading: Micah 6:1–8
Background Scripture: 1 Samuel 9:1–2; 15:10–16:13

1 Samuel 16:4–13

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.

Key Text

[Jesse] sent for [David] and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. **—1 Samuel 16:12**

Generations:

From Canaan to Jerusalem

Unit 3: From Judges to Kings

Lessons 9–13

Lesson Aims

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize how David was chosen as God's anointed one.
2. Explain the significance of anointing in Scripture.
3. Compose a prayer of thanksgiving for God's ability to see the potential in every person regardless of what the world sees.

Lesson Outline

Introduction
- A. Books and Their Covers
- B. Lesson Context

I. Seeking God's Anointed (1 Samuel 16:4–11)
- A. Samuel's Arrival (vv. 4–5)
- B. Seven Sons (vv. 7–10)
  5'16" Tall
- C. David's Location (v. 11)

II. Finding God's Anointed (1 Samuel 16:12–13)
- A. Physical Features (v. 12a)
- B. Spiritual Presence (vv. 12b–13)
  Oil Averse?

Conclusion
- A. People Think, God Knows
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

Introduction

A. Books and Their Covers

Have you ever noticed how behavior and wisdom don't always align? For example, consider the pithy axiom, "Don't judge a book by its cover." The wisdom of the saying is evident through both personal experience and the observation of others. Yet, a 2023 study found that 57 percent of North Americans buy or read books based solely on their covers! Today's text reminds us that humans have struggled against superficial perceptions for thousands of years.

B. Lesson Context

Today's lesson takes us back to approximately 1025 BC. The exodus from Egypt (1447 BC) was more than four hundred years in the past. The dismal period of the judges (approximately 1380–1050 BC) came to an end and gave way to something different but not necessarily better: an era of a united monarchy for Israel, which lasted approximately 120 years (1050–931 BC).

The Israelites' desire for a human king meant the rejection of God as king (1 Samuel 8:7). It was a time of transition—some might say Israel reached a "tipping point." Samuel had served honorably as judge and prophet for many years (7:15–17). But his two sons, the "heirs apparent," were dishonorable. The elders of Israel had grown weary of the sons' misdeeds. The elders' solution was to ask for a king (8:1–5, 19–20). Neither the wise and elderly Samuel nor their all-knowing God thought a monarchy was a good idea. But Samuel gave the people what they wanted when God directed him to do so (8:21–22).

Saul became the first king of Israel. He was a member of the tribe of Benjamin (1 Samuel 9–10). Saul's reign started well enough, but he succumbed to disobedience after a short time (13:11–14). Following a second episode of failing to follow God's instructions (15:1–21), God rejected him as king.

Establishing a replacement for Saul took about fifteen years to finalize. Today's lesson text takes us to the beginning of that process. The Lord spoke to Samuel and told him it was time to stop

mourning over Saul's disobedience. God pushed Samuel to quickly complete the task of anointing a new king (16:1).

I. Seeking God's Anointed

(1 Samuel 16:4–11)

A. Samuel's Arrival (vv. 4–5)

4a. Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem,

Samuel leaves his hometown in Ramah and travels between ten and twenty miles southward to *Bethlehem*. His trek is in preparation for an anointing (see Lesson Context). The word *Bethlehem* means "house of bread."

4b. the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, "Do you come in peace?"

The elders' trembling over Samuel's arrival and their subsequent question prompts a natural sense of wonder in scholars and readers alike. Some suggest that Samuel's appearance with a heifer implies that there is an unsolved murder in the region that needs cleansing (Deuteronomy 21:1–9; compare 1 Samuel 16:2). Others think that the elders remember Samuel's execution of King Agag of the Amalekites (15:32–33). Most likely, however, the elders know of the recent discord between Saul and Samuel (15:10–29). Samuel's arrival in Bethlehem could put them in an awkward and potentially dangerous position with their king.

5a. Samuel replied, "Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.

Samuel's immediate response de-escalates the tension. He knows that if the public discovers the details of his real mission, it will draw the ire of Saul (compare 1 Samuel 16:2a). Samuel is ready with a cover story: he is there *to sacrifice to the Lord*. This reasoning comes directly out of his conversation with and instructions from God (16:2b).

Under the Law of Moses, a sacrifice to the Lord has prerequisites that validate it. First, Levitical priests are to perform these acts of worship (Exodus 29:44; Numbers 3:10; 18:1–7; etc.). Second, the place of sacrifice is not up to the one bringing it (Deuteronomy 12:13). God chose a single



Visual for Lesson 12. *Place this visual in a prominent place. Point to it and say, "God looks beyond outward appearance and into the heart."*

place for sacrifice for all the tribes—and it was not Bethlehem (12:11–12, 14).

At first glance, Samuel seems to be out of compliance with these prerequisites. He is not a Levitical priest because he is not from the tribe of Levi (1 Samuel 1:1), and he is not sacrificing at the tabernacle. These apparent violations, however, disappear when we remember that God gave the Law of Moses and has the right to grant exceptions. We see God pronounce those two exceptions in 1 Samuel 16:2.

5b. "Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me." Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

Sacrifices bring people into close contact with holy objects and into the presence of God. Therefore, participants need to be *consecrated,* that is, made ritually clean before participating (compare Exodus 40:9–11; Leviticus 20:7). Joshua called Israel to similar preparation for God's movement and presence as they arranged themselves for entrance into Canaan (Joshua 3:5). Yet, there are no delineated steps for Samuel's process. Proper consecration seems to depend on individual circumstances (Leviticus 14:8–9; 15; Numbers 19:11–22). At a minimum, consecration entails washing up (examples: Exodus 19:10; 29:4; 30:17–21; Leviticus 11:26–28; 15:4–6).

Samuel gives the elders instructions and then separately prepares *Jesse and his sons* for *the sacrifice*. The division between the groups may indicate

that Jesse is not an elder in Bethlehem. Thus, he may not be a prominent person there. For generations, elders served as local leaders (examples: Exodus 3:16; 19:7; Joshua 24:1; Ruth 4:2; 1 Samuel 8:4). In contrast to Jesse's presumably humble status, when Saul was anointed, his father's "standing" and influence were emphasized (9:1).

Regardless, the separate actions of consecration between the elders and the family create a pocket of private time for Samuel and Jesse's household.

What Do You Think?

What consecrates modern believers?

Digging Deeper

What practices prepare you for proper worship? In what ways do you pursue sanctification and purity?

B. Seven Sons (vv. 6–10)

6. When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD."

God told Samuel that the mission of this journey was to anoint one of Jesse's sons as the next king (1 Samuel 16:1). But God didn't specify which one. Thus, it is natural for Samuel to speculate that *Eliab* is it, as he is the oldest (17:13). Tradition places rights and responsibilities upon the firstborn in Israel (Exodus 13:1–16). Another basis for Samuel's assumption comes next.

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."

The Lord intervenes to correct Samuel's assumptions (and ours as well). Eliab is tall and handsome. Kings certainly benefit from such characteristics. People like leaders they can look up to, both literally and figuratively. Samuel noted Saul's height twice (1 Samuel 9:2; 10:23). He called the people to "see" Saul and his stature as exceptional (10:24). But here, the Lord identifies an essential difference between humans and God: we perceive differently.

This chapter uses a word derived from the Hebrew root "to see" nine times between verses 1–18. Right here, in the center of the passage, the concept appears four times. In English, it appears as various forms of the verb *look*. The characteristics that most catch Samuel's attention are not part of the Lord's criteria for making the selection (compare Isaiah 53:2).

Humans care deeply about how things and people look on the outside. But God asks Samuel to look deeper. God explains that he looks beyond *outward appearance* and into *the heart*. In the ancient Near East, the heart was believed to be the seat of a person's thoughts, emotions, reason, and conscience. It was perceived as a sort of human command center. So God was looking for a leader with a strong core and character over a powerful physique. After Saul's disobedience, Samuel warned him that his reign was over. The ending came because God was seeking something greater, as indicated by the phrase, "The LORD has sought out a man after his own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14).

What Do You Think?

What leadership characteristics come from the heart?

Digging Deeper

How do Micah 6:8; 1 Corinthians 13:1–7; Galatians 5:22–23; Colossians 3:12; and 2 Peter 1:3–7 influence your answer?

5'16" Tall

Height-based assumptions pepper my life experience. My 6'4" stature places me in the top 1 percent of adult males regarding physical height. I lost count of the times people have assumed I play basketball. Truth is, I play chess instead.

People often ask me, "How's the weather up there?"—as if it's the first time I've ever heard that query. But that's not the worst of it. Clothes are hard! There is a severe limitation to my clothing choices, and frankly, they are more expensive.

But I've learned to let go of such annoyances. I now hold a healthy sense of humor regarding my height. Today, when people ask how tall I am, I respond that I'm 5'16". Their reactions are always delightfully amusing! Additionally, it is gratify-

ing to be asked by short-in-stature people to reach items on the top shelf in grocery stores.

We may not prevent others from forming conclusions about our physical stature or outward appearance. However, what is infinitely more important is our spiritual stature. Consider what Scripture says about Ezra (Ezra 7:6, 10). Who do you consider to be a spiritual giant? How might you emulate them? —RLN

8–9. Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "The Lord has not chosen this one either." Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, "Nor has the Lord chosen this one."

Samuel continues the process of selection, leaning into divine disclosure. Jesse's sons parade past Samuel in birth order (1 Samuel 17:13). As with their elder brother, Samuel rejects the second and third oldest sons as the Lord leads.

10. Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, "The LORD has not chosen these."

The process of discernment continues until Samuel disaffirms all *seven* of Jesse's *sons*. In ancient Hebrew tradition, the number seven represents completion and fullness. The point here is not necessarily the specific number of Jesse's sons but rather the idea that Samuel has seen them all. In the Old Testament, the number seven often characterizes an idealized number of sons within a family (Ruth 4:15; 1 Samuel 2:5; Job 1:2; 42:13). Jesse presents a whole house full of sons, but the Lord selects none of them.

This verse hints at the truth that Jesse has more children. First Samuel 17:12 records that Jesse has eight sons in total. Curiously, this differs from the numbering in 1 Chronicles 2:13–15, which attributes only seven sons to Jesse. Three theories address the resolution of this inconsistency.

First, one of Jesse's sons may have died. Second, genealogies do not always list every member of a family line; the author of Chronicles may have deliberately ignored one son for an unspecified reason. Third, this may be an example of the biblical formula of "a number plus one;" compare the two "seven . . . eight" combinations found in Ecclesiastes 11:2 and Micah 5:5. For various reasons, biblical genealogies are not exhaustive records of every family member or ancestor (example: Matthew 1:1–17). We find out about Jesse's eighth son next.

What Do You Think?

How do you think it felt to be the brothers who were not chosen by God?

Digging Deeper

What dynamics do you think this might have brought to the conflict happening in 1 Samuel 17?

C. David's Location (v. 11)

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."

In wisdom, Samuel asks whether anyone is missing. He finds out that *Jesse* has excluded his *youngest* son from the lineup. As the household gathers to meet with Samuel, responsibilities remain. In the absence of the seven older sons, someone still must watch *the sheep*. The logical choice for this task is the youngest. Given the "pecking order" of birth position, it is a generally safe assumption that the youngest will be least likely to fulfill the role Samuel has in mind.

Samuel is aware that his mission to Bethlehem is unfinished. He makes his request to *send for* the remaining son with urgency. He communicates the magnitude of his demand by declaring that they *will not sit down until he arrives.* There will be no moving on to other tasks until this one is finished!

What Do You Think?

Why does God upend cultural standards or hierarchies (e.g., birth order)?

Digging Deeper

What other Scriptural examples showcase God's choice of younger, smaller, or less experienced over older, bigger, or expected by human standards?

II. Finding God's Anointed

(1 Samuel 16:12–13)

A. Physical Features (v. 12a)

12a. So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

The word *he* refers to the father, Jesse; the word *him* refers to the eighth and youngest son, David (although he isn't named until the next verse). As with the oldest son Eliab (above), the text makes observations regarding David's physical features.

The word translated *glowing with health* is rare in the Old Testament. It is used in Genesis 25:25 (there translated "red") and in 1 Samuel 17:42 (also referring to David). The description may characterize David's complexion after spending all day outside in the sun, engaging in physical activity and tending the sheep.

This final son of Jesse's presents well (compare 2 Samuel 14:25; contrast Isaiah 52:14; 53:2)—but his appearance does not qualify him for the job.

B. Spiritual Presence (vv. 12b–13)

12b. Then the LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; this is the one."

Samuel again hears the word of *the Lord*. God is clear that this youngest son is the chosen *one*.

The Old Testament mentions anointing more than one hundred times. The act of anointing involves pouring oil over an object or a person. It can signify that the anointed thing or person is set apart for the Lord. It can also designate healing or protection. The people of the Old Testament anointed altars (Exodus 29:36), the tabernacle (30:26), and articles in the tabernacle (40:9–11). They set certain people apart for a particular task or role through anointing. Examples include priests (28:41), some prophets (1 Kings 19:16), and some kings (1:34). Anointing is also mentioned in the proper care of sheep (Psalm 23:5). The act of anointing a person symbolizes the Lord's special presence on them and that the anointed person is in a unique relationship with the Lord. To be anointed is closely related to both consecration and sanctification.

Not every king in Israel received an anointing. Instead, the Israelites reserved this practice for certain kings in unique cases: the first king, Saul (1 Samuel 10:1); the beginning of a new dynasty (16:12–13; 1 Kings 19:16); and to identify the legitimate heir in a situation of conflict (1:34, 39). Throughout the Old Testament, the Lord's anointed one, often translated from Hebrew to English as "Messiah," gained symbolic meaning (Isaiah 61:1). By New Testament times, the people of Israel were awaiting a new anointed one, which is translated from Greek to English as "Christ."

13a. 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.

Readers of this text know that David's anointing was toward kingship (1 Samuel 16:1). However, Samuel does not directly mention that detail here. Scholars believe that at this moment, *David* is about fifteen years old. But he does not ascend to the throne until age thirty (2 Samuel 5:4). Therefore, the events recorded between 1 Samuel 16:14 and 2 Samuel 5:1–4 occur over fifteen years.

Samuel anoints David amid *his brothers*, an official designation by a prophet of God before his family. The event marks a significant change in David's life as *the Spirit of the Lord* comes *upon* him. The same happened when Samuel anointed Saul (1 Samuel 10:6, 10). However, the Spirit eventually leaves King Saul (16:14). In contrast, the Lord's Spirit remains on David throughout his life (compare Psalm 51:11). The Spirit comes first as a sign of David's divine election and second to equip David for the task.

What Do You Think?

Why did God anoint David fifteen years before he ascended to the throne?

Digging Deeper

Have you ever had to wait for the fullness of a promise from God? In what ways does the Spirit empower or enable us toward patient waiting?

Oil Averse?

It may be strange or unusual, but I've never really liked oil—of any kind. As a child, I would watch my grandmother pour cooking oil into a frying pan, preparing to fry catfish. As the thick yellow substance flowed out, I remember feeling squeamish inside.

When I became a mother, I received many bottles of baby oil as gifts. Those bottles lined my shelf, unused because I always reached for lotion instead. Even now, I avoid anything that looks oily when shopping for salad dressings. No, thank you!

When I read about anointing oil in the Bible, I can hardly imagine someone pouring oil over another person's head. Just the thought of it sends chills down my spine! I wonder how David felt as he returned to his sheep, his hair coated from his anointing?

Yet, I take great comfort in knowing that I'm anointed in a spiritual sense (2 Corinthians 1:21; 1 John 2:20, 27). Despite my aversion to physical oil, Scripture makes it clear that anointing is a precious gift. Do you take delight in your spiritual anointing? Or are you "oil averse"? —VM

13b. Samuel then went to Ramah.

Samuel completes David's anointing and returns home. *Ramah* is Samuel's place of origin (1 Samuel 1:1; *Ramathaimzophim* is a variant spelling of the same city). After Samuel's service in the tabernacle at Shiloh and Eli's death, Samuel makes Ramah his home once again (7:17; 15:34; 25:1). The Israelites come to Samuel in Ramah when they need assistance from their judge (8:4), and David comes to him seeking refuge there (19:18).

The abruptness of this text seems to indicate haste.

Conclusion

A. People Think, God Knows

God chose David based on his heart (1 Samuel 13:14; quoted in Acts 13:22). God had both divine insight regarding David's character and divine foresight concerning his faithfulness. Despite human expectations of fitness, God selected the youngest child from an insignificant family as Israel's next king. David is an example of a long-standing tradition in which God chooses to work through unlikely people and circumstances. The Lord loves to select people that the world does not deem valid or worthy. Therefore, we may be encouraged that God can use us too. However, our lesson text should also temper our confidence in human ability or beauty. While God can use these things, they do not qualify us for God's work.

Despite what humans see and perceive, the Lord looks not at outward appearances but at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7). Time and again, we see people in the Bible embracing the first part of this axiom and neglecting the second part. We see it yet today. The perceived importance of appearance and reputation can blind us to God's opinion of what truly matters.

Honesty requires us to admit that too often, we posture, polish, and perform, hoping to gain the attention of those in power. We grapple for authority and social influence. It is easy to look to superficial cultural criteria to evaluate our effectiveness, productivity, or ability.

We do not have a window into other people's hearts, but we do have a window into our own. How is your heart? In what ways are you valuing inner wisdom, peace, and integrity over outward appearance?

B. Prayer

Heavenly Father, help me to trust that your choices are best. Help me to see with your eyes, focusing not on outward appearances but on character—especially my own. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

The Lord looks at the heart.

How to Say It

Abinadab	Uh-*bin*-uh-dab
Amalekites	*Am*-uh-leh-kites or Uh-*mal*-ih-kites
Eliab	Ee-*lye*-ab
Shammah	*Shaw*-mah

Involvement Learning

Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible Student *(from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the* NIV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition*).*

Into the Lesson

Draw a large heart shape on the board or cut out a large heart from paper and post it in your classroom. Have a marking pen available. Say, "We know our physical heart is the organ that pumps blood throughout our body. However, we also use the word *heart* figuratively to refer to the center of our moral and emotional lives. For example, we might ask someone to 'have a heart,' or we might extend 'heartfelt thanks.'" Ask your class to brainstorm other words or phrases that use the word *heart* in a figurative way. Write their ideas on the large heart as students make their suggestions.

Transition into Bible study by saying, "Between last week's lesson and this week's, several years have passed. The people of Israel demanded a king to lead them, and they received Saul. But Samuel now has new instructions from God. He is poised to anoint a new king."

Into the Word

Identify several members of your class who are willing to participate in acting out today's Scripture (*Characters:* Narrator, Samuel, Elders of Bethlehem, Jesse, Seven Brothers, David). Ask the Narrator to read 1 Samuel 16:4–13, pausing periodically to allow the other characters to dramatize each act. Encourage lightheartedness. (*Tips:* Your actors may pantomime, or characters could read their "lines" from the Bible. Encourage your actors and actresses to look puzzled or surprised by Samuel's words and actions. Samuel might cock his head and appear to be listening when God speaks.)

Make a chart on the board. Write *What Happened / What Was Surprising* as the headers of two columns. Down the left side, write: *Elders / Jesse / Samuel / Brothers / David.* Divide learners into five groups that correlate with the characters on the left side of the chart. Ask a volunteer to read the text out loud again. As the Scripture is read, ask each group to listen for the specifics of what happened and what surprised their assigned character(s). After the Scripture reading, give the groups time to summarize and identify what was unexpected in this episode of Samuel's ministry. Bring the groups together to present their conclusions. Write their responses on the board. At the end of the discussion, ask, "What surprised you as you visualized this episode?"

Option. Distribute copies of the "Three-Word Summary" exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have learners complete it individually in a minute or less before comparing conclusions in small groups.

Then ask your class to conduct a quick word search in their Bibles for the word *anoint.* If your classroom has the capability, you might also suggest an online search. Or, consider having research aids like Bible commentaries available. Discuss: Why was it significant for Samuel to anoint David in verses 12–13?

Option. Distribute copies of the "Anointing: Set Apart for God's Purposes" exercise from the activity page. Have learners work in pairs to complete as indicated.

Into Life

Talk about how God saw the potential in David when others did not. Invite learners to close their eyes and ask God to bring to mind someone they know who is dealing with an unexpected challenge or is being pushed to reassess their potential (this might include themselves).

Share how Paul wrote a prayer of thanksgiving for God's ability to see the potential in people. Have students open their Bibles to Ephesians 1:15–23 and ask a volunteer to read it aloud. Distribute paper and pens. Encourage students to craft a prayer of thanksgiving, modeling their prayer after Paul's. Invite learners to use their written prayers throughout the week to pray for the person God brought to mind.