

1 Sam 16 Small Groups

Questions for Small Groups

- The Lord's voice is quoted in verse 7, but after this we simply have Samuel speaking for the Lord in terms of his approval.
 - o How do we know that Samuel speaks for God?
 - o Are there examples of his recognition of God's voice or his prophetic calling that can help you understand this?
 - o What about his upbringing? Might there be patterns from his mother Hannah (see chapters 1 and 2), or his time in the temple with Eli that give us a hint?

- In verse 7, God clearly says to Samuel that the Lord does not look on outward appearance, but the heart. And yet, David is described as "glowing," "healthy," "with fine appearance" *and* "handsome." The scriptures appear very concerned with his appearance and even mention it again in verse 18.
 - o Why do you think this is?
 - o Is this a contradiction with God's care for the heart only?

- In verse 11, Samuel awkwardly doesn't let anyone (Jesse or David's brothers) sit until David arrives.
 - o Why do you think this is?
 - o Can you find other examples of standing before a king in the scriptures that might help understand this?
 - o What does this indicate about Samuel's confidence in David's anointing. . . even before seeing David?

- It does not appear that David took the mantle of king in any kind of practical way at this point.
 - o What does anointing actually mean?
 - o What does it mean that the Spirit of the Lord "came powerfully upon David?"
 - o How is this different from the indwelling of the Spirit (Rom 8:14-17)?

- In verse 14, the same Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul?
 - o What does this mean? Can we lose the Spirit of the Lord?
 - o Is this what David prayed about in Psalm 51:11?
 - o How can there be an evil spirit "from the Lord" tormenting?
 - o What is the difference between the spirit of the Lord "coming upon" Saul and eventually departing, and the "indwelling" Spirit of Christ we receive by

repentance and faith? (see John 14:16-17, Eph 1:13-14, Eph 4:30, 1 Cor 1:21-22 - *Hint, we are sealed by the Spirit - He doesn't ever leave!*)

- What is your big takeaway here? How is God revealing himself as the One True Hero? What is He calling you to recognize in yourself, repent of, change, or apply?

Notes and Resources

Summary: This chapter is not so much about Samuel and David as it is about God. It portrays the Lord's infinite and effortless superiority to all things human. The ways of the Lord confound even the greatest spiritual intellects and frustrate all earthly forces that would stand in his way. This chapter provides one of the most fascinating examples of the Lord's inclination to choose "the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are" (1 Cor 1:28). When this story concludes, an unlettered rural shepherd boy has become the Lord's anointed—"a brave man and a warrior" (v. 18) who uses his supernaturally enhanced abilities to overpower even evil spirits.

Robert D. Bergen, [1, 2 Samuel](#), vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 176.

Some Specifics

In the previous chapter the Lord had spoken through Samuel about another; here the Lord spoke to Samuel about Samuel. In the midst of Samuel's mournful depression God gave him a word of motivational reproof (cf. Exod 10:3, 7; Num 14:27; 1 Sam 1:14; 2 Sam 2:26; 1 Kgs 18:21) and a job to do, one that Youngblood terms "the capstone to Samuel's career." Perhaps to dispel doubts that may have arisen in the prophet's mind, the Lord first confirmed the stern prophetic word spoken by Samuel against Saul, the most powerful man in Israelite society: "I have rejected him as king over Israel" (v. 1). Having said this, God then gave the prophet a divine mission spelled out in specific terms. Samuel was first to "fill" an animal horn flask with specially prepared olive oil (cf. Exod 30:23–25).

Then he was to take it along on a journey “to Jesse of Bethlehem” for a specific reason: Samuel was to anoint “one of his sons to be king.”

Samuel’s task was simple yet dangerous. As Israel’s kingmaker and most esteemed servant of the Lord, Samuel’s actions were of great interest to Saul. If Samuel were to make an unexpected journey, especially one to a location outside of his normal judicial circuit, it would likely be reported to the king. Saul would then certainly view Samuel’s actions for what they were—a threat to Saul’s own claim to the throne.

Consequently, the Lord gave Samuel an additional task that would help mask the central purpose of his trip to Bethlehem. Samuel was to make a sacrifice in that region and would “take a heifer” along for that purpose. As a levitical judge, Samuel was authorized to sacrifice such an animal as part of a ritual that atoned for an unsolved murder committed in a rural region (cf. Deut 21:1–9). Thus Samuel’s journey to a rural region with a sacrificial animal accompanying him would not have raised undue suspicions.

Samuel began the anointing ceremony, the central purpose of his trek to Bethlehem. However, as this event began, the prophet was portrayed not knowing the Lord’s will; this is the only time in biblical narrative when Samuel was shown in this uncomfortable position. Samuel was forced, therefore, to initiate the search for “the man after the Lord’s heart” with only the use of his own insight. When he “saw Eliab,” Jesse’s firstborn son (cf. 17:13), he was impressed by “his appearance or his height” (v. 7) and concluded that “the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord” (v. 6). After all, Samuel had previously been led by God to anoint an individual who possessed exceptional height (cf. 10:23).

But before Samuel could uncork the horn and pour oil on Eliab’s head, the Lord ended his silence. First, he informed Samuel that Eliab had been rejected as Israel’s next king. Then, in a particularly memorable statement the Lord uttered one of the most important statements in all of Scripture regarding divine concerns and human capacities. God first affirmed his fundamental “otherness”: “the Lord does not look at the things man looks at” (v. 7). Neither the Lord’s considerations nor his abilities are the same as those of humans; whereas “man looks at the outward appearance” (lit., “the eyes”), “the Lord looks at the heart.” The Lord alone has the capacity to observe and judge a person’s “heart” (Hb. *lēb*),

that is, one's thoughts, emotions, and intents. On God's scales these matters outweigh all other aspects of a human life

Robert D. Bergen, [*1, 2 Samuel*](#), vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 178–179.

A couple different interpretations/understandings for *an evil Spirit from the Lord* (vs 14, 23).

1.

16:14–20 David's new status before the Lord stood in sharp contrast to Saul's. When the Lord rejected Saul as king (15:23, 26; 16:1), "the Spirit of the Lord had departed from" (v. 14) him as well. Saul had lost the empowering reality behind the anointing that had marked his selection for divine service earlier (cf. 10:1, 10). But Saul's condition now was far worse than being without the Lord's Spirit, for "an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him." The Hebrew word translated "evil" (Hb. *rā'â*) has a wide range of meanings from "misery" to "moral perverseness." Thus, it is possible—and perhaps preferable—to interpret the text not to mean that the Lord sent a morally corrupt demon³⁵ but rather another sort of supernatural being—an angel of judgment (cf. 2 Kgs 19:35)—against Saul that caused him to experience constant misery.

Robert D. Bergen, [*1, 2 Samuel*](#), vol. 7, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 182.

2.

The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, as he had done from Samson (Judg. 16:20), and with equally tragic consequences, for Saul became troubled by *an evil spirit from the Lord*. Though 'evil' should be read in the sense of 'injurious' here (so niv mg.), the statement remains problematic to the modern reader, who finds it incompatible with the goodness of God. The writer of the book of Job made the point, 'Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?' (Job. 2:10, niv), while at the same time indicating in the remainder of his book how costly such acceptance can become. On a national level, invasion and defeat by a ruthless enemy had also to be accepted from the Lord, whose

sovereign direction of history involved the discipline of his people: 'I am the Lord, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the Lord, do all these things' (Isa. 45:6–7, niv). As a philosophical problem, the origin of suffering continues to be baffling, but the people of God are encouraged in Scripture to take adversity of all kinds direct from the Lord's hand (cf. John 9:3; 11:4; 2 Cor. 12:7–10), and through such acceptance God is glorified.

In the case of King Saul, it is important to note that signs of mental illness began to occur only after the confrontation with Samuel over the question of obedience to the divine command. This suggests that his illness was due to his rebellion against God; certainly he was held responsible for his actions, and regarded himself as responsible (1 Sam. 24:16–21; 26:21).

Joyce G. Baldwin, [*1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*](#), vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 131–132.

3.

The role of the king represented a more permanent central authority and likewise relied on empowerment by the Lord. The king was an agent of deity and a heavenly functionary just as judges and prophets were. The Spirit did not empower two individuals for the same task at the same time. When David received the authorization for the role as representative, it was taken away from Saul. Just as the Spirit was able to give the positive attributes of courage, charisma, insight, wisdom and confidence, negative results could also be produced by spiritual influence. These would include fear, paranoia, indecisiveness, suspicion and shortsightedness. The term used to describe this spiritual influence in verse 14 does not necessarily suggest something morally evil but has a wide range of negative manifestations (see for instance Judg 9:23; Is 4:4; 37:7; 61:3). Just as God can punish with physical illness, he can discipline by means of psychological affliction.

Victor Harold Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, and John H. Walton, [*The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*](#), electronic ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 1 Sa 16:14.

4.

Unlike David, Saul experiences the departure of the Spirit of God and the coming into his life of an evil spirit. This evil spirit is “from the Lord” in the sense that God permits him to torment Saul and that ultimately he is under God’s control (cf. 1 Kings 22:19–23; Job 1:12). Saul’s jealousy and depression are made worse because of the influence of this evil spirit, and at times he drives Saul to violence (cf. 18:10–11). According to verse 23, the evil spirit affected Saul sporadically.

Herbert M. Wolf, [“1-2 Samuel,”](#) in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, vol. 3, Baker Reference Library (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1995), 203–204.