

Adult Teaching Resources

March 22, 2020



Lent / Easter / Pentecost—All Things New

Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7 —“A New Choice”

Genesis 12:1-4a—“A New Start”

Psalms 95—“A New Song”

1 Samuel 16:1-13—“A New King”

Ezekiel 37:1-14—“A New Life”

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A New King

1 Samuel 16:1-13

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Bible Background

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 does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

In a few months we will go to the polls and choose our leaders. We will hear debates, read reports, pay attention to the news, look at what is worn, and listen to what is said. It's a lot for us to do in order to choose the right person for the right job.

Many years ago, it was time for a new king. Samuel was chosen by God to select the next ruler. Fortunately, God led Samuel to the right place and the right person. Today, we explore that journey.

Opening

After everyone arrives, keep your large group together. Move to the front of the room and ask your group to think about the qualities and attributes they desire in a leader. Our Lesson Writer lists some: “Appearance: Experience: Ideology: Trustworthiness: Speaking ability.” What else would your group include? Write all the suggestions on the board.

Next, ask your group to rank each attribute in order of important.

Finally, even with all the attributes we have, and the rankings we have given them, discuss what is ultimately the deciding factor(s) in choosing our leaders.

Reading the Bible

What is troubling Samuel? (he is grieving over Saul) Why? (Because God rejected him being king)

What did God tell Samuel to do? (fill your horn with oil) For what purpose? (He is to go to Bethlehem to see Jesse and his sons. One of his sons will be king.)

What was Samuel's concern about this plan? (Saul would kill him if he found out)

How was Samuel to present himself to Jesse? (with a heifer so he could make a sacrifice)

When Samuel arrived in Bethlehem, how did the city elders greet him? (trembling) What was their question to Samuel? (Do you come peaceably?)

What did Samuel say when Jesse and his sons came to the sacrifice? (Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord.)

What did God say to Samuel? (Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.)

How many of Jesse's sons were rejected? (seven)

Where was Jesse's youngest son? (out keeping the sheep)

How was the youngest son described? (Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome.)

What did God say about the youngest son? (anoint him; for this is the one)

What did Samuel do? (took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers)

Making Connections

What have you been asked to do, that was a really important job, that you dreaded doing? How did you feel about being asked to do it? What did you ultimately do?

When Samuel was concerned that Saul would be upset when the truth of his trip to Bethlehem was revealed, our Lesson Writer says that, "God offered an appropriate excuse, telling Samuel to take a heifer with him and make it known that God had sent him to Bethlehem to offer a sacrifice." When has God offered an excuse for you for something difficult or controversial? How did you feel about falling back on God in that way?

Share a time when you started something for God and didn't exactly know what you would do next or how it would end. How did you know where to find God in your process? What did God provide for you? How did everything end?

Have you ever had your religious motives questioned? What was your intention? Who questioned you? What was their fear? How did things turn out?

Making Connections *continued*

How much stock do you put in first impressions? What do you notice first about someone? When have you been wrong about someone because of your first impression?

What do you think God means when our text says, “The Lord looks on the heart.” Why do you think the heart is the most important quality for God?

When have you followed God’s instructions and still not had a resolution to the situation? What did you want to happen? What was yet to be provided? When did God finally “close the deal?” What was the outcome?

When you think of “the chosen one,” what comes to mind? What does the “chosen one” look like? How does the “chosen one” act? What gifts do the “chosen one” bring to the world? How does the “chosen one” get in the position of authority?

Would you rather spend quality time with someone who had all the great physical attributes, or who had a great heart? Why do you say that?

So What?

Move back to the board at the front of the room so you can make a list for the group to see. Ask everyone to consider what qualities would make “the heart” so important to God. What are those things that aren’t visible to the world that God loves so much?

As your group shares their ideas, write their answers on the board.

Then, like you did at the beginning of the lesson, ask your group to rank the qualities.

Finally, start discussion by asking these questions:

How often do you find all of these heart qualities in a leader?

How often do you find the top five heart qualities in a leader?

How often do you find the top two heart qualities in a leader?

When you consider someone for leadership, how many of these qualities do you want from him/her?

Why is having a good heart in a leader important to you?

The Challenge

This week, take one of the top five heart qualities and work on incorporating it more into your life. What do you need to do to be more “heartful?”

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for today’s story about choosing David as the next king. You have given us an important responsibility to choose our leaders on the local and national level. Help us to look to the heart, like you did, and not rely on outward appearances. Amen.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Samuel’s fear—Samuel’s concerns about going to Bethlehem were well grounded. His home in Ramah was less than a day’s walk to the north, but Bethlehem was in the tribal land of Judah, the southernmost tribe and apparently not overly supportive of Saul.

Saul had fallen victim to mental illness, exhibiting symptoms of a bipolar or manic-depressive disorder. The narrator attributed his condition to an evil spirit, the ancients’ standard way of explaining emotional or mental illnesses (1 Sam. 16:14).

Samuel had recently derided Saul in public, declaring that God would give the kingdom to “a neighbor who is better than you” (1 Sam. 15:28). Samuel feared that this would make Saul even more paranoid: if word got out that he had traveled to Bethlehem to meet with the elders there, Saul might think he was fomenting rebellion among the southerners and arrange to have him killed.

On the other hand, the Bethlehemite elders were not happy to see Samuel, either. They may have thought that Samuel was on a mission from Saul, sent to spy out any disloyalty or to pronounce some doom on the town. Thus, when Samuel arrived, they came out “trembling” and asked “Do you come peaceably?”

The small artifice of claiming he had come to offer a sacrifice provided Samuel with an inarguable rationale for his travel to Bethlehem: God had sent him to offer a sacrifice, and he had a heifer in tow to prove it.

Appearances—Samuel should have known that looks can be deceiving. Saul was such an unlikely choice when chosen by lot that he was not even present, but hiding among the people’s baggage. After being persuaded to come out, “When he took his stand among the people, he was head and shoulders taller than any of them.” Even Samuel appeared to have been initially impressed, and declared to the assembly: “Do you see the one whom the LORD has chosen? There is no one like him among all the people” (1 Sam. 10:23-24).

Saul must have been as handsome as he was tall, but those attributes were no guarantee of success.

The eighth son—In biblical thought, the number seven sometimes indicates completeness or something special. Beyond the Bible, superstition has sometimes led people to believe that someone who was a seventh son—or even more so if the seventh son of a seventh son—might have special powers.

As the *eighth* son, David may have been considered as one beyond the bounds of the seven, a visionary who could see beyond the limited horizons of ordinary people.

Digging Deeper *continued*

God's own heart—In 2002, Mark George published an academic article on the subject of how David was a man after God's own heart. In *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* ("Yhwh's Own Heart," *CBQ* 64:2002, pp. 442-459), George argued that the primary purpose of 1 Samuel 16–2 Samuel 5—usually called the "History of David's Rise"—was not to provide a political justification for David to replace Saul as king, as typically argued, but to demonstrate in word and deed just what was so special about David's heart that God was inspired to choose him.

George concluded that two primary characteristics of David's heart set him apart:

First, he pointed to the many instances in which David inquired of God before making a decision, which suggests an active prayer life and an ongoing dialogue between David and God.

Second, he noted that while Saul's relationship with God seemed to focus on carrying out cultic observances, David's relationship with God was made evident not only through inquiring of God, but through declaring his trust in Yahweh (p. 453).

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

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How did David “inquire of God”?

The biblical narrators insist that David habitually “inquired of God” when making major decisions. In 1 Sam. 22:10, David asked the priest Ahimelech to inquire of the LORD for him regarding his next move in fleeing Saul. When Saul heard about it and accused the priest of treason for inquiring of God in David’s behalf, Ahimelech described David as a faithful servant of the king, and added “Is today the first time that I have inquired of God for him? By no means!” (1 Sam. 22:15).

Saul ordered that all the priests be killed, but Ahimelech’s son Abiathar escaped and joined David’s band of refugees from Saul’s wrath. In that capacity, he served as an intermediary to inquire of God for David. He inquired of the LORD regarding whether to attack the Philistines that threatened the city of Keilah (1 Sam. 23:2, 4). When Amalekites burned David’s adopted city of Ziklag and took the women and children hostage, David inquired of the LORD before pursuing them (1 Sam. 30:8).

After Saul’s death, David inquired of the LORD whether he should go up to one of the cities of Judah, presumably to offer himself as a new king, and again to determine which city (2 Sam. 2:1).

After becoming king, David continued to seek God’s guidance in military matters. Both 2 Sam. 5:19, 23-24 and 1 Chronicles 14:9, 13 describes instances in which David “inquired of the LORD” regarding the advisability of engaging the Philistines in battle, and was given a positive response.

In a time of famine, David inquired of the LORD to determine the cause of the famine and what could be done about it (2 Sam. 21:1).

But how did one go about “inquiring of the LORD” in this fashion, and why were priests involved? One could simply pray, or offer sacrifices and hope God might speak in a dream, but the more common practice was to have the priest use the Urim and the Thummim as a means of determining God’s will.

The Urim and Thummim were sacred lots, apparently made of stone, bone, or clay. They would have been identical in shape and size but of different colors or designs, and kept in a pouch in the high priest’s breastplate (Exod. 28:30). A good guess is that it worked like this: the priest would hold the pouch in his hand while asking God for one of two possible answers, with Urim representing one and Thummim the other. He would then put his thumb over one of the objects and cast the other into his lap. Whichever lot emerged was thought to be God’s answer.

The Hardest Question *continued*

Examples of when the Urim and Thummim were specifically mentioned in such decision making include Samuel's choice of Saul in 1 Sam. 10:17-24 and Saul's effort to determine who had broken his oath in 1 Sam. 14:36-46.

David's frequent decisions to "inquire of the LORD," at least prior to his downfall in 2 Samuel 11, indicated his desire to follow God's will and not just his own.