

# Scripture Guide

## 1 Samuel 16:1-13

## Biblical Context

The beginning of 1 Samuel (originally combined with 2 Samuel) marks the transition from the time of the judges to the time of the kings. In the metanarrative of the Bible, transitions are often marked by Israel's unfaithfulness and God's steadfast faithfulness in spite of His people. This transition is no different.

In chapter 1 we see Samuel is the last of the judges. His sons take the mantle of judge after him, but they quickly fail in the process.<sup>1</sup> Israel's complaint over Samuel's sons leads them to want a king like the other nations. This attitude lies contrary to God's command for Israel to be holy, a nation set apart.<sup>2</sup> And yet, we see God continues to be faithful in spite of Israel's unfaithfulness.<sup>3</sup>

God's faithfulness in the time of the judges also alludes to the story of Ruth, occurring a couple of generations prior to the David story (and in our English Bible wedged between the book of Judges and 1 Samuel). In this story, we see God's provision and redemption on display through God raising up an unlikely hero, in this case a non-Israelite woman, who would one day bring about King David and all future kings including King Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

In 1 Samuel 16:1-13 we see the first introduction of what would be known as one of the key figures in the Old Testament, and one of Jesus' go-to references, David (דָּוִיד, *dawid* meaning “beloved”).<sup>5</sup>

From his introduction we are to infer that David, like his grandmother Ruth, is an unlikely hero. This is most notably seen in his physical description. The Hebrew words used to describe David are loaded with references to earlier Hebrew narratives. He's the youngest of eight sons<sup>6</sup> (the first time we see God favoring the youngest is with Jacob and Esau),<sup>7</sup> he's described as "ruddy" (the first time this word is used is to describe Esau's warrior-like appearance), with "beautiful eyes" (first used to describe Rachel, the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Samuel 8:1-3

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 11:44, 19:2, 20:7, 20:26, 21:8, Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 1:16

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 50:20

<sup>4</sup> Ruth 4:17-21, Matthew 1:5-6. In fact, if you go further back in David's lineage (found in Matthew 1) we see a foreshadowing of his life. In his ancestry, Salmon married Rahab, who was a prostitute who converts into a worshipper of God. Tamar sleeps with her father-in-law in order to procure a son. In ancient times, your family tree was your resume and David's resume was embarrassing.

<sup>5</sup> “In addition to his influence in biblical poetry and in Israel’s early monarchy, David—or the promise of him—is found in more than 1,000 places throughout the Bible. In Genesis 49:10, Jacob prophesied that “the scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his” (NIV). This promise reflects David’s royal and messianic roles. David and his line of royal descendants partially fulfilled the prophecy by ruling over God’s kingdom, and, at times, over other kingdoms. The later promises to David gave exilic and post-exilic Israelites hope that God would restore them through a future ideal king like David (Jer 23:5; 30:9). David’s later Judaeen descendant, Jesus, fulfilled these prophecies about David.” Seevers, B. (2016). [David, King of Israel](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>9</sup> Robert Alter, "David is a kind of male Cinderella left to his domestic chores instead of being invited to the party. He has been excluded from consideration, but the tending of his flocks to which he had been relegated will turn out to give him exactly what he needs both in the Goliath battle and later to lead his people. This David story is also a heightened and stylized playing out of the theme of the reversal of primogeniture that dominates Genesis. Instead of an elder brother, even a younger of the seven sons, the Hebrew number for completion, David is the eighth child and therefore not even there at all."

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 25-27, Malachi 1:2-3, Romans 9:13

one whom Jacob favored over Leah,<sup>8</sup> and is considered “handsome” (literally meaning “good” first used to describe God’s delight in creation.)<sup>9</sup> With these descriptors, the author wants to show us that David will be someone of historical significance in the story of Israel and God’s redemptive purposes.

From 1 Samuel 16 and onward, the author will show the contrast between King Saul and the up-and-coming King David. Saul is outwardly a great king but inwardly far from God while David is considered a “man after God’s own heart.” In nearly every way David will excel in his rise to throne, while Saul will fail. The line in 1 Samuel 16:7 then becomes the lens for understanding the theme and foreshadowing the tension we will see between Saul and David, “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.”

God’s command to Samuel leading up to the anointing of King David provides a mini-commentary on this tension as well. We are first introduced to Samuel “grieving” over King Saul’s spiritual descent and military defeat.<sup>10</sup>

### **Connection and Application**

God keeps His promises despite our unfaithfulness. Over and over again the true hero in this story, and the rest of Scripture, is God. Despite Israel’s unfaithfulness, despite human failing, God pursues a people for Himself. He uses unlikely means and unlikely people to woo the hearts of the broken and faithless.

God cares about our heart for Him more than our appearance or actions. David is described as a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam 13:14).<sup>11</sup> God selecting David (prior to anything he had done) was due to this radical heart posture. Likewise, God is looking to raise up people for His kingdom work who have such a heart posture apart from anything they have done.<sup>12</sup> A heart that is willing to say “yes” to God no matter what He says. This is what sets Saul and David apart and reveals their hearts. Saul consistently doesn’t wait on God but takes matters into his own hands and reaps the consequences. David on the other hand does whatever is right in God’s eyes and consistently waits on His timing.

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<sup>8</sup> Genesis 29:17

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 1:4, 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:21, 1:25, 1:31

<sup>10</sup> Grieve” - abal - אבל - mourning, generally over the things of God. Interestingly enough, this word is first introduced to describe Jacob upon hearing the news that his favorite son, Joseph, is murdered - even though God is working behind the scenes to bring about Israel’s redemption (Genesis 37:34) Ironically in the passage, God commands Samuel to stop mourning over King Saul because God is working behind the scenes to bring about Israel’s rescue, which is similar to Joseph’s words at the end of the Joseph narrative in Genesis 50:20, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.”

<sup>11</sup> “...the heart is the centre not only of spiritual activity, but of all the operations of human life. ‘Heart’ and ‘soul’ are often used interchangeably (Deut. 6:5; 26:16; comp. Matt. 22:37; Mark 12:30, 33), but this is not generally the case. The heart is the “home of the personal life,” and hence a man is designated, according to his heart, wise (1 Kings 3:12, etc.), pure (Ps. 24:4; Matt. 5:8, etc.), upright and righteous (Gen. 20:5, 6; Ps. 11:2; 78:72), pious and good (Luke 8:15), etc. In these and such passages the word “soul” could not be substituted for ‘heart.’” Easton, M. G. (1893). In [Easton’s Bible dictionary](#). New York: Harper & Brothers.

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 2:8-9