

David: It's What's Inside That Counts. 1 Samuel 16:6-13, Hebrews 4:12-13

Gratefully adapted from: After God's Own Heart by James D. Thornber @ SermonCentral.Com

If you spend enough time reading the Bible, one of the things you start to notice is that it never flatters its heroes. It tells the complete truth, good and bad, about everyone we meet. This is one of the reasons that I don't believe the Bible was written by humans for our own benefit, because it rarely shows us in a good light. A true and fair light, yes. But always a good light? No.

However, in showing us the good and the bad, the victories and the defeats, the triumph of character or the complete lack of character -- often about the same person within the span of just a few verses -- that gives us a wonderful glimpse into the grace and mercy of God.

Here is a surprising truth, God intentionally chooses to use the imperfect, the weak, the flawed, to accomplish His noblest purposes (1 Corinthians 1:26-29). Unlike comic book heroes, Biblical heroes aren't perfect and certainly not super-human. Instead they are men and women who can at times be scoundrels and liars, but who also over the long run show tremendous strength of faith. You know, everyday people like you and me. As we read about these heroes of faith in the Bible, if we are honest, in many ways it is like reading our own autobiography. You will find this very true over the next few weeks as we look into the life of David.

Here is the truth we need to grasp and claim for ourselves as we study the life of Israel's greatest king ...

God isn't looking for perfect people.
He is looking for men and women
who truly have God's interests at heart

As we follow his story, we will find that David is certainly a very flawed hero, a very real human, yet God's spirit still worked powerfully in and through him.

- David was capable of the most glaring sins, both public and private, as well as private sins that went public.
- He was quite ruthless in battle towards his enemies, yet at other times showed tremendous grace towards them.
- David had a huge faith in God and expressed deep emotions in his worship.
- He showed incredible courage in the face of Goliath-sized odds
- And immense financial generosity when it came to building God's Temple.
- But he was also subject to deep depression, fits of rage, tremendous lust, lying, deceiving,
- and even Academy Award winning acting skills when at one time, to save his life, he pretended to be crazy, drooling on his beard and scratching doors with his fingernails (1 Sam. 21:13).

And this is the man God said was after His own heart? Really God? Did you read this morning's paper about his latest episode with Bathsheba? Shouldn't we kick David out of the church, out of our Bible? I mean, that is what we'd do if he was a president or pastor today, right?

Yet, it seems that God's reason for choosing or rejecting people to be used in His Kingdom is quite different from the leadership choices we would make. So, this morning as we begin with the life of David, let's look for a few of the qualities that God looks for in choosing men and women to be used for His glory.

To set the background for today's story, as Philip shared with you over the previous weeks, God has now rejected Israel's first king Saul because, fearing the people more than he feared God, several times Saul disobeyed God's direct command. Here is another lesson we need to learn, as Samuel explained when telling Saul of God's rejection...

Surely, **to obey is better than sacrifice ...**
For rebellion is no less a sin than divination,
and **stubbornness** is like iniquity and idolatry.
Because you have rejected the word of the Lord,
He has also rejected you from being king.'
1 Sam. 15:22-27

God gave Israel Saul as their first king, because the people had demanded such. And in the people's eyes Saul certainly looked kingly, tall and handsome, standing shoulders over everyone else, but in his heart Saul was self-absorbed and a coward; more concerned about what the people thought of him than about serving the Lord.

So the next time God decided to choose a person, "after his own heart." (1 Sam. 13:14). And God already had such a person in mind even long before that individual or anybody else would ever have thought of him as kingly material. Thus, God sends Samuel down to Bethlehem to anoint one of the sons of Jesse. This is the way the prophet Micah described that place,

"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past" (Micah 5:2).

Now of course we know that two of Israel's greatest rulers came from this tiny village of Bethlehem: King David and his descendant, Jesus the Messiah.

So down to Bethlehem Samuel travels to find God's anointed one, whom God had chosen many years before anyone else even knew it. What then were the qualities of David, even as a very young nobody, this made him **a man after God's own heart?**

SPIRITUALITY, HUMILITY, & INTEGRITY.

These are the same qualities God is still looking for in men and women that would make them people whose heart is fully engaged in following God!

The first quality that God looks for would be **SPIRITUALITY**. I say "spirituality" not because it sounds spiritual, but because there isn't a better word for describing this characteristic; but it needs a clear definition.

- To be a "spiritual" person does not mean you walk around silently like some kind of ancient mystic, listening to the quiet breath of God for instructions on what to say and how to pray.
- It doesn't mean you're always ready to say something prophetic and give a word of knowledge.
- It doesn't mean you can quote a thousand different verses on any given subject.

Instead, try this for a definition: ***spirituality is living your life in harmony with God.*** To be spiritual means you make God's thoughts your thoughts, God's priorities your priorities. What is important to God is important to you. What burdens God burdens you. When He says, "Go right" you go right, you don't ask, "Why?"

A spiritual person is one whose heart is sensitive to the things of God and they follow God wherever He would lead them. As our Bible explains ...

The eyes of the LORD search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are **fully** committed to him." 2 Chron. 16:9

God has always looked for men and women who are completely dedicated to Him. Even as the youngest, overlooked, eighth son of Jesse, David was just such a person: completely dedicated to God in every aspect of his very earthly life.

In Psalm 18:29 David says, "[God] *with your help I can conquer an army. I can leap over walls with a helping hand from you.*" Can you envision a leaping David? Can you see him running, coming to a wall and leaping over it without hesitation and continuing his run ... because he trusted that God would get him over that wall?

Eugene Peterson describes David as "*running toward Goliath, running from Saul, pursuing God, meeting Jonathan, rounding up stray sheep, whatever, but running. And leaping. Certainly not strolling or loitering. David's is a most exuberant story. **Earthy spirituality** characterizes his life and accounts for the exuberance. **Earthy:** down-to-earth, dealing with everydayness, praying while doing the laundry, singing in the snarl of traffic. **Spiritual:** moved and animated by the Spirit of God and therefore alive to God*" (Leaping Over A Wall, pg. 11).

Spirituality means you invited God into your everyday, very ordinary, dull, repetitive sameness and you converse with Him about the dullness, the hopes, the dreams, the disappointments and the surprises, the decisions about what to make for dinner and how to pray for a child with cancer.

The most spiritual people are the most ordinary people. They aren't necessarily the religious leaders we see on television, but the unseen housewives and workers we never see up front who are affecting the lives of men and women all over the world without ever getting their names mentioned in Christianity Today or on the evening news.

A spiritual person is a man or woman who longs to please God. They know going in that loving God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength is not going to please every one of their friends or all their family. It certainly didn't please all of David's brothers.

But spiritual people, although they are concerned with the thoughts of others, do not make what other people think their prime motivation for doing what they do. They know that at the end of their lives they must answer to God,

As Anne Graham Lotz once said, "I'm living my life for an audience of one. I live my life to please God. And I believe if He's pleased, that people like my mother and my daddy, my grandparents, you know, my husband, my children, they'll be pleased."

Spiritual people look to make their every moment count in the sight of God. And when they fail, which they will (*although hopefully, not quite as dramatically as David failed*), they turn quickly to God, grieve over their wrongs, and allow His grace and forgiveness to guide their future actions. A spiritual person is an everyday person who chooses to put God first in everything they do.

According to this definition, who might be the most spiritual person you have ever met?

The second most important quality would be **Humility**. It is hard to be proud when you are the eighth of eight sons; forever you will be the baby brother. Also, being the eighth out of eight boys, you learn to be humble in a hurry. For humility, it's been said, comes through humiliation.

When Samuel arrives in Bethlehem, he asks Jesse to assemble his sons. So Jesse, starting with the oldest, parades his sons in front of the prophet Samuel who, at God's instructions, is looking for the next king. When Samuel sees Eliab, the eldest, he says,

"Yep. That's our man!" You'd think Samuel would have known better than that; he was again looking only at his height and appearance, which is exactly all that Saul had going for him (1 Sam. 10:23). So God had to remind 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. 1 Samuel 16:7

So Samuel continues to on down the line of Jesse's sons. When the seventh son appears and Samuel still has no instructions from the Holy Spirit, he begins to think something is wrong. So he asks Jesse, *"Are you sure these are all the sons you have?"* Seven sons!! Because seven is the number of perfection, this was the perfect lineup, who could ask for more?

Well, Samuel asks for more. And Jesse, scratching his beard says, *"Oh yeah. I got one more. Forgot all about him. He's the youngest and all he's good for is tending the sheep."* Of course when sent for and David finally appears the Lord says, *"This is the one; anoint him."*

You see, even when your family forgets you, even if your dad doesn't invite you to the party when the greatest prophet of the times comes to your house, God remembers you. We see two things taking place here:

1. God doesn't forget who you are or where you are
2. and God sees what others don't.

The world is all about having the right look and sufficient degrees and who you know that makes you popular and acceptable. Of course, this attitude isn't something new.

When Paul was in Corinth, speaking to both Jew and Gentiles. The Jews there were looking for a miracle, for a sign that proved he had the power of God. They wanted the same thing from Jesus. The Greeks, however, were looking at surface impressions. They weren't concerned with the inner life as much as they were brains and beauty.

So Paul has to refute both these attitudes, in his letter to the Corinthians he wrote, Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, so that no one might boast in the presence of God. (1 Corinthians 1:26-29)

When the whole world is enamored with power, beauty, strength and royalty, it takes a humble spirit to answer the call of God. Everyone in Israel was going to compare little David to big Saul who stood head and shoulders above everyone else. But God makes His choices differently from the way people make their choices. We chose the rich and famous to be our friends because it might make us into somebody admired by the world. But God chooses nobodies and makes them into somebodies. Regular people. Sinful people. Earthy people. You know, the ones Jesus identified with.

Think about David. He's a huge man of faith and a total mess at the same time. He's so human! And remember this: the story of David anticipates the story of Jesus, which is why Jesus is often referred to as "Son of David."

Really? David? You'd think Jesus would identify with a better character. I mean, David was too human and had a very questionable ancestry; grandson of Ruth the Moabitess, great grandson of Rahab the Jericho harlot.

Eugene Peterson says to think about "David fighting, praying, loving, sinning. David conditioned by the morals and assumption of a brutal Iron Age culture. David with eight wives. David angry; David devious; David generous; David dancing. There's nothing, absolutely nothing that God can't and doesn't use to work his salvation and holiness into our lives. If we're going to get the most out of the Jesus story, we'll first want to soak our imaginations in the David story" (Leap Over A Wall, pg. 9).

David reminds us that God uses our everyday selves to serve Him. It should humble us to think of all the ways we are weak, but that in that weakness the miraculous grace of God shines best.

Finally, God is looking for **Integrity**.

Psalm 78:71-72 says of David, *"From caring of the ewes, who gently nurse their young, [God] called [David] to shepherd His people Jacob and to look after Israel, His inheritance. David shepherded them with the honor and integrity of his heart; he led them in wisdom and strong and skillful hands"* (The Voice).

Did you hear that? **With the honor and integrity of his heart** David cared for his people. It comforts me to know that God isn't looking for the spectacular among us. He's looking for down-to-earth spirituality that is humble enough to know they are nothing without God and have the honesty and integrity to stay true to their Lord.

Integrity means to be complete, whole, innocent, sound, unimpaired. It is deep down in your soul honestly. It is the quality that makes you completely reliable to do your job even when your boss isn't watching. It is the quality that encourages you to do your best even if you aren't getting paid enough or paid at all. It is the quality that helps

others know that your word is your bond without you having to sign a contract or say, "I swear!"

This was the heart of David. True, we later find out his actions weren't always noble and sometimes his sin caused the death of others, but when he was confronted he never blamed someone else.

Integrity says, "*The cause of my sin stops here with me.*" When Samuel confronted Saul with not obeying the Lord, Saul said, "*I have disobeyed your instructions and the LORD'S commands, for I was afraid of the people and did what they demanded*" (1 Sam. 15:24). That's not a confession; that's blame shifting; trying to pass the guilt along to others. When Nathan confronted David with the sin of taking Bathsheba and having her husband killed, David didn't add to his confession but simply said, "*I have sinned against the Lord*" (2 Sam. 12:13). That is integrity.

To be a person after God's heart, you need have an honest, real spirituality, you need to be humble with who you are in God's sight, and you need to have integrity of heart. And these things don't happen overnight.

Alan Redpath said, "***The conversion of a soul is the miracle of a moment, the manufacture of a saint is the task of a lifetime.***" When God develops people after His own heart He is never in a hurry. It is a life-long process. Are you in it for life?

Let's pray about this.