

Anointed!
July 17, 2016
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1 Samuel 16:4-13

Opening question: How might physical appearance factor into the selection of a person for a leadership role?

In his book “Blink,” Malcolm Gladwell coined a term, “The Harding Error.” It’s based on the 29th President of the United States Warren G. Harding. Historians agree that Harding was one of our worst presidents. So, how did he get elected? He LOOKED the part. Basically, he was tall, dark, and handsome.

In reality he was more focused on drinking, gambling, and women than on national policy. His administration is remembered for his extramarital affairs, failed policies, and corruption. Harding had the LOOK of a President but nothing on the inside to qualify him for the job.

This isn’t just the case in choosing a president. Research has shown that appearance can cause employers to make incorrect assumptions about the competency of candidates in the job market. ¹ Author and former fighter pilot, Danny Cox couldn’t get a job with the airlines because their height requirement was 5’8.” He said, “5’8” was my goal...it was a prejudicial thing. They didn’t want passengers saying, “That little guy is gonna fly this big airplane?”²

How does this connect with 1 Samuel chapter 16? In this text God sends Samuel to anoint a new King of Israel to eventually replace Saul. If Samuel hadn’t been in touch with God’s voice, he might have anointed the wrong young man.

This chapter includes a verse with an important message for us. It’s the BIG IDEA: God doesn’t look at outward appearances; he looks at what’s in the heart. A true follower of Christ should follow Him with our WHOLE HEART.

That has implications for you and me when it comes to discerning the hearts of others as well as guarding our own hearts. Let's dive into chapter 16.

- Earlier in 1 Samuel, Saul's selfish, sinful lifestyle caused God to reject him as king of Israel.
- God hadn't yet replaced Saul; but he HAD rejected him.
- Samuel, God's priest, was depressed about Saul's situation.
- Chapter 16 begins as God says to Samuel: *"Stop mourning for Saul. I've rejected him as king and I have a new king picked out. Fill your flask with olive oil and go to Bethlehem. Find a man named Jesse who lives there, I have selected one of his sons to be my king."*
- Samuel said, "When Saul hears about this I'm as good as dead.
- God told Samuel to take a cow along and say he was in town to offer a sacrifice to the Lord. We pick up the story in verse 4.

1 Samuel 16:4–13 (NLT)

⁴ So Samuel did as the Lord instructed. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town came trembling to meet him.

"What's wrong?" they asked. "Do you come in peace?"

⁵ "Yes," Samuel replied. "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Purify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." Then Samuel performed the purification rite for Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice, too.

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Surely this is the Lord's anointed!"

⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

⁸ Then Jesse told his son Abinadab to step forward and walk in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "This is not the one the Lord has chosen." ⁹ Next Jesse summoned Shimea,* but Samuel said, "Neither is this the one the Lord has chosen." ¹⁰ In the same way all seven of Jesse's sons were presented to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." ¹¹ Then Samuel asked, "Are these all the sons you have?"

"There is still the youngest," Jesse replied. "But he's out in the fields watching the sheep and goats."

“Send for him at once,” Samuel said. “We will not sit down to eat until he arrives.”

¹² So Jesse sent for him. He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes.

And the Lord said, “This is the one; anoint him.”

¹³ So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the flask of olive oil he had brought and anointed David with the oil. And the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David from that day on. Then Samuel returned to Ramah.

- I want to stick to our main point without getting on a “bunny trail”, but verses 1-3 include a legitimate question about how God instructed Samuel to explain his trip to Bethlehem and not be killed by Saul. I’ve given you additional commentary at the end of the notes to read on your own.
- Now, back to the main point of this text. Look at verses six and seven:

1 Samuel 16:6–7 (NLT)

6 When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, “Surely this is the LORD’s anointed!”

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

- Samuel almost fell victim to that “tall, dark, and handsome” mistake!
- But, God stopped Samuel in his tracks and reminded him it’s not about outward appearances, “the Lord looks at the heart.”
- God had selected an unlikely choice as the future king, a shepherd boy with a heart for Him (as a bonus, David was also handsome!)
- **What do you think it means for someone to have a “heart for God?”**
- Moses had told the Israelites in Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (ESV)

⁴ “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ⁵ You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

- The key words are “all your heart.” God desires people who love Him with our WHOLE heart.

In 1 Chronicles 28:9 (ESV) at the end of David’s life he challenged Solomon:

9 “And you, Solomon my son, know the God of your father and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for the LORD searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

Jeremiah 29:13 (ESV) the weeping prophet quoted God’s words:
 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.

Psalms 119 mentions the “whole heart” several times. In 119:10 (ESV)
 10 With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!

2 Chronicles 16:9a (NLT)

9 The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

- God doesn’t look at outward appearances; he looks at what’s in the heart. He desires those who will follow Him with our WHOLE HEART.
- Let’s see how this lesson applies in a couple of ways. **How would this apply to a Christian seeking a mate; a business partner; or if you were on the personnel committee of a church hiring a staff member?**
- **Only God can see their heart, how can we discern their “heart condition?”** (Illustration: My personnel committee story.)
- When a decision requires discerning the heart of another we need to ask God for wisdom and clarity. Sadly, sometimes we rush past that step.
- What about our OWN hearts? We’ve said loving God with our whole heart is the goal. But there is a very human problem!

- Jeremiah also told us about that when he said in Jeremiah 17:9 (ESV) ⁹ The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?
- When we follow Christ as Savior and Lord, God gives us a NEW heart.

In Ezekiel 11:19–20 (NIV) God promised the people of Israel:
¹⁹ I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. ²⁰ Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God.

In the New Testament, it's stated in 2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)
¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

- We call that “regeneration” or the “new birth.” When we trust in Christ we’re given a new heart, because the Holy Spirit comes into our soul.
- Regeneration is step one to loving God with your whole heart.
- **Why doesn't that solve our “heart trouble” for good?**
- God’s Spirit living in us gives us the power to resist sin. But, as long as we are on this side of Heaven, our very human heart can be lured into sin.

Proverbs 4:23 (NLT) warns us:

²³ Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

- The health of our Spiritual heart is an ongoing daily process just like taking care of our physical heart. It requires monitoring for problems.
- So, how do we test for heart trouble in others and ourselves?
- When a doctor tests the health of your physical heart they often use a “stress test.” **Why is that a good test of your physical heart condition?**
- They test what happens to your heart over time; and under exertion.
- I believe there is an “over time and under exertion” stress test for our spiritual hearts too.

- We can ask ourselves: How do I respond, from the deepest part of me, to three things: hardships; threats; and temptation?
- When the hard things of life come, what tumbles out of my heart? What about when I feel threatened? What about temptation?
- When I take off my “Sunday School” face and it’s just life, God, and me how do I react deep inside to hardships; threats; and temptation?
- **How can we apply that same test to discerning the heart of others?**
- Only God sees the heart. But, if you spend enough time studying yourself or others, and ask God to reveal some things, we’ll find that the condition of the heart is reflected not in our words, but our actions.

Proverbs 27:19 (NLT) says,

¹⁹ As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the real person.

- **What about us? Once God has revealed the spiritual condition of our hearts, how can we improve it? Thoughts?**

So, What’s the Takeaway?

- First, don’t judge people based on outward appearances. Work to discern their heart. That is especially true of choosing a mate; a business partner; or helping to choose a church leader. Ask God for discernment.
- But enough about THEM, let’s talk about us. How can I take care of my own heart?
- Lesson number one: Only God can change a heart, yours or someone else’s. Stop trying to do His job! Ask HIM to do it for you.
- Lesson number two: Work on your own heart first. It’s amazing how much sweeter life gets when I ask God to clean up MY heart instead of fretting about the hearts of others. Again, they are HIS problem!
- How do we keep a clean, undivided heart? Diet; rest; and regular appointments with the Great Physician.
- Diet: A steady diet of God’s word. It’s how he talks to our hearts. Ephesians 5:26 (NLT) says Jesus gave up His life for His church, ²⁶ to make her (us) holy and clean, washed by the

cleansing of God's word.* We also need to remove from our diet some of the garbage we put in our minds. Cupcakes go straight to your hips. Mental garbage goes straight to your heart!

- Rest: We need to rest on the promises of God we learn from His word. Instead of fuming and fretting, when life gets tough have a storehouse of God's promises in your mind and DECIDE to BELIEVE what He promised.
- Regular appointments with God, your "heavenly heart doctor." Only God can see what's in any heart including my own. We have to spend time with Him listening to what He has to point out about our hearts.
- We need to start every appointment with Psalm 139:23–24 (NLT) ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.
- One more thing. The only way a doctor can listen to your heart is if you are quiet and still. One reason we don't really know our hearts is we don't get still enough and quiet enough to listen. Slow down so God can reveal what's going on in there!
- So, how's your heart? Let's all ask God to show us how to love Him with our WHOLE HEARTS.

Additional Commentary on verses 1-3:

- In addition to the main point of our lesson, (at the risk of a rabbit trail) look at verses two and three. It's clear that God instructed Samuel to create a little deception in order to protect himself. He didn't lie because he WAS coming to offer a sacrifice. But, he didn't tell the whole truth.
- **How can we reconcile that God would instruct him to do this?**
- One commentator states: "God did not tell Samuel to be deceptive, but rather to combine the anointing with the business of sacrificing."³
- Another writes: "God is truthful (15:29), hates lying (Pr 6:16–17; Zec 8:16–17), and expects people to tell the truth (Ex 20:16; Lv 19:11; Eph 4:25; Col 3:9; Rv 22:15). He commanded Samuel to offer a sacrifice, and the prophet was to tell that to anyone who asked without revealing the Lord's fuller intentions. To disclose them would only help Saul and his supporters carry out their

- murderous plans against an innocent man. They were not owed the full truth, and they did not get it.⁴
- One more commentator summarizes: "...lying is wrong, but... allowing the innocent to be murdered is much worse. When there is no alternative, saving a life outweighs deceit, even though under normal circumstances deceit is wrong."⁵
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¹ Lifeway. (2016). *Explore the Bible Commentary 1 Samuel 16*.

² <http://www.dannycox.com/articles/dannycox-siu-2008speech.pdf>

³ Merrill, E. H. (1985). 1 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 448). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁴ Cabal, T., Brand, C. O., Clendenen, E. R., Copan, P., Moreland, J. P., & Powell, D. (2007). *The Apologetics Study Bible: Real Questions, Straight Answers, Stronger Faith* (p. 429). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

⁵ Lifeway. (n.d.). *Explore the Bible Commentary 1 Samuel 16*.