

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

MONDAY

The Lord directed Samuel to go and anoint the next king of Israel. Samuel was afraid that Saul might learn about that, but the Lord told him to take a heifer and sacrifice it at Bethlehem, and to invite a man there named Jesse to the sacrifice. Arriving at Bethlehem, Samuel met the city leaders who were afraid that he had come to make trouble. He assured them that he was there to make a sacrifice to the Lord.

I Samuel 16:1-5

The Lord asks Samuel why he continues to grieve for Saul when the Lord himself has already rejected him? This rebuke is gentle but clear: you should grieve for the things I grieve for and rejoice in the things I rejoice in. How easy it is to grieve (and to rejoice) for the wrong things. How often we grieve (and rejoice) amiss! When we grieve for a friend or neighbor who is separated from God and headed into eternity that way, we are grieving for something God grieves about! We are, at that moment, a man after God's own heart! Isn't that what life is all about!

TUESDAY

Samuel met Jesse and his sons. As he met each son, Samuel thought, "Surely, this is the one. This will be the next king of Israel." But in each case, the Lord told Samuel that he was not the one. Finally, Saul had interviewed all seven sons of Jesse who were there. With no new king.

I Samuel 16:6-10

Samuel is so much like us! He looks at the seven sons of Jesse as they pass before him, one by one, and judging on their appearance, is certain that this one or that will be chosen to be the next king. The Lord reminds him that God looks at the heart. The point of the story is not that we become heart judges - that's impossible for man! - but that (1) we not judge others by appearances and (2) that we remember that with God, the issue is always the heart. Today, with God, the issue is my heart!

WEDNESDAY

Samuel looked puzzled for a moment and then asked Jesse, "Are these all your sons?" Jesse told him that there was one more - the baby - who was out in the fields tending the sheep. Samuel said that he needed to be called at once. When the youngest arrived, Samuel saw a very healthy, good-looking young man with remarkable eyes. God told him immediately that this son, David, was the one, and anointed him with oil. And the Spirit of God came upon the young man from that moment.

I Samuel 16:11-13

We read that God looks on the heart, but that doesn't mean that outward appearances mean nothing. There is nothing intrinsically good about being sloppy. The whole point is that internal things matter more to God! It was not David's appearance; that had nothing to do with it at all! It was his heart that God searched. And it was David's heart that God saw and approved! Why not offer God your heart this day? He's the searcher of the heart.

THURSDAY

Because Saul disobeyed God and then refused to deal with sin in the way that God prescribed, the Spirit of the Lord departed from him. And he was troubled by evil spirits. An advisor suggested that Saul find someone to play music to soothe his troubled soul. Saul heeded his advice and ordered a search for such a person. A servant stepped up and said that he knew of one: David, a shepherd boy.

READ: I Samuel 16:14-18

The *Spirit of God* came upon, first Saul, and then later, David, to rule as king, we read. When Jesus was about to offer Himself on Calvary, He told his disciples that He was sending the Holy Spirit to be with them in His absence, and that the Spirit would stay with them. That's our story, too: we do not need to worry about God's Spirit leaving us. He will not. But it is possible that we may grieve Him by ignoring His leading or rebelling against His direction. That happens when we take control of our lives away from Him & hang onto it ourselves. But it doesn't have to be that way! We can and must yield ourselves to the Spirit's control.

FRIDAY

Having heard about David, King Saul sent for him. With his father's blessing, David went, and took some gifts for Saul. As David played his harp for the king, (1) the evil spirits bothered Saul less and less, and (2) David came to love Saul. David came to find favor in Saul's eyes, and was made his sword bearer.

READ: I Samuel 16: 19-23

The care of God is seen here. God cares for Saul and provides help for him. God cares for David and puts him in the best place to prepare him for what's ahead. God's care includes His control, and that is clear here, too! David gets into the palace -- right into the throne room -- where he can observe and learn the business of a king. The things of God he learned in the fields outside Bethlehem stay with him even in the royal court! How is God preparing us? Or working in us or through us? We don't know the half of it!! But we know He's doing it!

SATURDAY

The Philistines gathered an army and set up camp on a mountainside in the region known as Judah. The army of the Israelites was sent out to meet them. They camped on an facing mountain, with a valley between them.

READ: I Samuel 17:1-3

The Philistines are still hanging around. They still bother Israel. Why? Because Israel did not obey God and deal with them. Back in the days of Joshua, God told Israel to eliminate them, but she did not. In chapter 14, Saul had the opportunity to crush them but wasted it foolishly. Now he, and all Israel, must pay the price. Sin has consequences and they are not easily escaped. The Bible tells us with good reason to keep ourselves from sin. If we do not, it will find us out. Just ask Saul!

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