



Finer Grounds Bible Study

1 Samuel

Lesson 9: 1 Samuel

1 Samuel 15 ends on a bleak note. Saul rejected the word of the Lord and the Lord rejected Saul as king. While Israel celebrated victory over the Amalekites, Samuel mourned the spiritual loss of the Israelite's king. God would not let him mourn for long. He had a plan to install a new ruler over Israel; a ruler after his own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). However, His plan would take time, as God had to prepare the future king for his duties. As you read through this portion of 1 Samuel, consider the similarities and differences between Saul and the new king.

Read 1 Samuel 16:1-7

What was Samuel to bring with him on his journey?

What was he to do when he reached Bethlehem?

What about Eliab caused Samuel to think that he should be king?

Read 1 Samuel 10:23-24. Who else had physical features like Eliab's?

Why was Eliab not fit to be king according to God?

Eliab's Saul-like appearance was no coincidence. God used his physical similarities to Saul to make an important comparison. Just like the Israelites, who were pleased with Saul's looks when he was announced as king, Samuel also was tempted to consider Eliab's similarly striking appearance to be a kingly trait. Saul's reign proved that looks can be deceiving. On the outside, Saul was the complete package. He offered sacrifices, he made vows to God, he consulted priests and prophets, and he even looked the part of the king. What Saul lacked was a heart for God; his apparent acts of devotion were merely motivated by self-interest. In 1 Samuel 16:7, God summarized the reason that Saul was rejected as king and why the newly appointed king would succeed. God's new king would have a heart aligned with God's will, a heart that both Saul and Eliab lacked.

In 1 Samuel 13:14, Samuel prophesied that God would replace Saul with a man "after God's own heart." As you read about this man, David, consider what it means to be a person "after God's own heart."

Read 1 Samuel 16:8-13

Begin a character study of David. What were some of David's physical features? Where did he fall in the birth order?

What happened to David when he was anointed king?

To the surprise of all present, David was chosen to be the future king. Even though his own father



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didn't think he was important enough to meet the honored Samuel, God thought David was kingly material.

The story of David's selection reminds us that we must be careful to see others through "God-filtered" eyes. We tend to hold people in high esteem because of their success, their wealth, or even their looks, instead of esteeming those traits that God values. At the same time, it is easy to look down on a person because of their age, physical ability, or means. While we make judgements based on appearance, God wants us to value the contents of one's heart.

Read Luke 6:43-45. How can we discern what is in a person's heart?

Think of a time that you have misjudged someone because of their appearance. What did you learn from this experience?

Read 1 Samuel 16:14-23

As David received the power of the Spirit of God, the Spirit left Saul and "one that harms" tormented him. The idea of God sending an evil spirit seems inconceivable; would God, who is all good, really send an evil spirit? A better way to understand this passage is to consider that God allowed the evil spirit to torment Saul. This is not the only time that a demon or even Satan himself hurt someone after receiving God's permission.

Read Job 1:6-12, Luke 10:17-19, and James 2:19

Who has authority over Satan and his demons?

God has authority over Satan and his demons. They are at work only because God has allowed them

to do so. While we may not fully comprehend why God allows this, we can trust that God will always has a good and perfect plan. In this case, God used the effects of the demon to provide a need for David's presence in Saul's court, thereby preparing David for his future role as king.

How was David described in verse 18?

The servant knew that the Lord was with David. What a compliment it is when someone recognizes God's work in you!

In what ways do people see evidence of God's work in your life?

Reread verse 21. What position did Saul give David? What was Saul's view of David at this time?

The word used for love in verse 21 is used elsewhere in the bible to describe the love between a father and son (between Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:2 and Isaac and Esau in Genesis 25:28). As we will see in later lessons, Saul's love for David did not last. At this point though, Saul did not see David as a threat to his throne, but as an encouragement and help in his distress. Saul's view of David was so positive that he gave him a place of honor amongst his armor-bearers.

Little did Saul know that he was preparing the young boy to take his place as king. The military training and experience David gained by being the armor-bearer would no doubt aid him in the battles he waged later in his life. Being present in the king's court also allowed David to gain insight into the political workings of the kingdom. When David



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finally assumed the throne, he would be known for his military prowess and his shrewd political decisions. While these early experiences were extremely valuable to David, his most important asset was identified by Saul's servant; the Lord was with David.

How has God prepared you for good works?

What experiences and wisdom have you gained that help you effectively serve Christ?

How can you allow God to use these assets for His work this week?

Read 1 Samuel 17:1-3

The Philistines decided to attack the Israelites again by invading the territory of Judah. As the Israelites prepared to meet them, the two sides ended up entrenching themselves on two hills facing each other, with the Valley of Elah between them. They were at a military impasse; neither side could attack without relinquishing the high ground and being at a disadvantage in battle.

Read 1 Samuel 17:4-11

Who broke the stalemate and what deal did he propose?

Goliath was the ultimate warrior. Standing 9 feet 9 inches tall, his height alone would have been intimidating. Goliath not only towered over his enemies, he was impressively armed as well. From his helmet to his toes, he had armor, including protection for his head and legs. He carried a huge javelin, a

mighty sword, and was further protected by his shield-bearer. The only thing that he didn't have was a face mask. This was practical omission for Goliath; the face guard limited vision, and at his height, few people could reach Goliath's face with a sword (Tsumura 442).

Based on physical appearance and battle experience alone, who should have volunteered to fight Goliath? (see 1 Samuel 9:2).

Saul would have been the most obvious champion for Israel. He was battle tested, and probably the only Israelite who was even close to matching Goliath's height. However, he was unwilling to take on the challenge.

Considering what you have learned about Saul, what are some possible reasons why Saul chose not to fight Goliath?

Read 1 Samuel 17:12-27

Why does David go to the battle? What does he bring with him?

What are the two armies doing when David arrives?

What do the Israelite warriors say that Goliath is doing? What do they suggest will happen to the man who kills Goliath?



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David, most likely because of his standing as an armor-bearer of Saul, was chosen by his father Jesse to check on his three oldest, battle-aged, brothers. When David arrived, both armies were lined up for a battle, but neither was willing to be the first to attack. Again, Goliath came out to mock the Israelites. One must wonder whether this was a ploy by the Philistines to incite the Israelite army to make a poor strategic decision. If no one was willing to fight Goliath, the Israelites would have to relinquish the high ground to attack. The Philistines were in a win-win situation. Goliath would crush any man who fought him. If the Israelites decided to attack in full force, the Philistines would have the military advantage.

Compare Saul and his army’s reaction to Goliath’s challenge (v. 11) with David’s reaction (v. 26).

While the Israelite army feared Goliath’s strength, David only concerned himself with the honor of the army of “the Living God.” David’s use of this name for God shows the depth of his faith. He knew that God is alive, present, and powerful. David’s trust in God was the reason he decided to accept the challenge, and it was the reason he succeeded.

Read 1 Samuel 17:28-37

Both Eliab and Saul tried to dissuade David from battling Goliath. What reasons did they give for David to back down?

How did David answer his critics?

We may never know exactly why Eliab tried to stop David, but familial rivalry might have had something to do with it. Saul’s reasons for questioning David’s fitness for battle seem more

rational. David is young, and Goliath was known as a champion warrior (17:4). David was not deterred. He felt that God had prepared him for this moment through his experiences tending to his father’s flock. He did not take credit for the accomplishments of fighting the lion and bear. Instead, he said that God delivered him from both. David knew that Goliath would fall by the power of the living God.

Read 1 Samuel 17:38-39

What does Saul try to give David?

What does this show about Saul’s confidence in God?

While David was confident in God’s protection, Saul seemed less sure and tried to “even the odds” by giving David armor. David would not take the armor because it was untested; while it would provide some protection, he wasn’t used to fighting with it. However, He was used to fighting with God at his side!

Read 1 Samuel 17:40-47

What did David bring to the battlefield?

What was Goliath’s reaction to seeing David?

Goliath was offended by the Israelite’s champion. Most likely still in his teens, the unarmed shepherd boy came only with the things he used to defend his flock; a staff and a slingshot. In fact, Goliath was so angry by the perceived slight that he cursed David, invoking the name of his false gods.



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The two champions then exchanged pre-combat “trash-talk,” which was, and still is, common in this situation. Notice the similarities and differences between how the two speak to each other.

Compare Goliath’s speech and actions in verses 43-44 to David’s speech in 45-47.

David said that a Philistine defeat would accomplish two things. What were they?

David knew that when, not if, he achieved victory, the power of God would be known to both the Philistines and the cowering Israelite army. The unbelieving Philistines would know that even their giants are not greater than the God of Israel. At the same time, the weak faith of the Israelites would be strengthened when they saw their God provide deliverance through an adolescent shepherd boy.

Read 1 Samuel 17:48-54

David’s experiences thus far prepared him for this moment. He had practiced using the sling to the point of having deadly accuracy. He had faced strong foes before in the form of lions and bears. Most importantly, he had developed his faith to the point that he relied on the power of God to provide him with power and protection as he carried out His work. Even though he had these advantages, he risked so much as he walked to the battle line. If he missed with his first stone, Goliath could have easily overwhelmed him. If David lost, not only would he die, but the whole nation would be subject to an enemy power.

When he stepped onto the field of battle, David felt assured that he had already won. He believed that God would not allow a heathen to curse His holy name. David knew that the battle was the Lord’s.

David hit the giant in the one spot left unprotected; his forehead. After Goliath fell to the ground dead, David ran over to him and decapitated him with the giant’s own oversized sword. The rest of the Philistine army, who were supposed to be the Israelites’ slaves according to Goliath’s proposed deal, retreated in fear. Their army, which was in Israelite territory, retreated all the way back to two of the five major Philistine cities, Gath and Ekron. The Philistines were not only defeated, they were humiliated.

David took the head, sword, and armor of Goliath as trophies of war. The head eventually ended up in Jerusalem, but at the time of the battle, Jerusalem was still inhabited by the Jebusites, one of the Canaanite peoples. David probably brought the head to Jerusalem after he became king; he eventually captured Jerusalem and established it as his capital city (2 Samuel 5:6-10). The author of 1 Samuel, who wrote the account several years after these events took place, inserted this note here to let us, the readers, know that it eventually ended up in Jerusalem. We will read in 1 Samuel 17:57 that David did not take the head to Jerusalem right away; he had it with him when he met with Saul after the battle.

David completed his meteoric rise from shepherd boy to champion of a nation while he was still an adolescent. We must remember that while his rise to prominence seems sudden, God had been preparing him for this day for many years.

What skills, experiences, and divine help did David receive before he faced Goliath?

How does God prepare us for His work?



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What can you do to prepare for the work God has planned for you?

Read Ephesians 2:8-10 and James 2:18.

Our salvation is accomplished through belief and faith in the work of Jesus Christ. Even though we are not saved by works, God created us for good works that He wants us to complete. He is constantly preparing us for these plans. We must be willing to live out our faith through these works. God's providence provided David with the skills he needed to win; David just had to make the faithful choice to get on the battlefield.

What is your spiritual battlefield? How has God prepared you for this fight?

Take some time to recognize the gifts, whether they be spiritual or physical, that God has entrusted to you. Make the intentional choice to practice them in faith, knowing that God is the one who has equipped you to do his good works. At the same time, develop your faith. Rely on God for the wisdom, strength, and guidance needed in every situation. Trust him, not yourself, for the ability to succeed. Then, you will be able to step out by faith onto any battlefield knowing that God has prepared you to be part of His victory.

Samuel, Saul, and David all play important roles in 1 Samuel 16-17. Take some time to work on your character studies. For Samuel, consider his reaction to Saul's sin, his reaction to God's calling to appoint another king, and his personal thoughts on what a king should look like. For Saul, consider how his relationship with God changed after being rejected as king. Also, what does his reaction to David's bravery tell us about Saul's character? For David, be sure to fill out basic information like tribe, family background, and occupation(s). Begin to describe his

relationship with God. Remember to note the chapter and verse where this information is found.

Tsumura, David T. *The First Book of Samuel*.
Eerdmans, 2009.