

Lesson 6 – “David as a Young Man”
Taken from 1 Samuel, Chapters 16 & 17

Today we begin our in-depth study of David, the shepherd boy who would become the greatest king of Israel. It is important to remember that there are many facets to the person of David. He was a musician, a tender of sheep, a psalmist, a giant slayer, a warrior and, above all, he would come to be known as the *“man after God's heart.”*

- The name “David” is of Hebrew origin and means “beloved”. It is such a popular boys name that since 1880 when data first became available, it has been ranked in the top 10 to 35 most popular. Even in the secular world, the name David is always associated with the underdog story of David and Goliath
- David was born into the tribe of Judah, house of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth
- He was the youngest of eight sons
- Over the course of his life, at least 73 of the psalms in the bible were written by him

We first read about young David in 1 Samuel 17:10-13 when King Saul loses favor with God due to his disobedience, and God instructs Samuel to go the house of Jesse and anoint the new king of Israel. As we know, all of Jesse's sons are paraded before Samuel, all of them hearty and with a kingly look about them, but none of them had God's approval, much to Samuel's surprise. And don't we love what God tells Samuel here in vs. 7: *“For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”* What a lesson for us. This goes beyond the saying the world uses: *“Do not judge a book by its cover.”* We're talking about not judging people by their outward appearance, but by their heart. And how can we do that unless we try to know that person's heart? And what about us, personally. I know most of us invest time and concern in how we look on the outside, but what is in our hearts? Are we taking care about what state our hearts are in? What does God see when He looks into our hearts?

When God rejected all of Jesse's sons, it prompts Samuel to ask Jesse if he has any other sons. The fact that David was out tending sheep instead of sitting at the feast along with everyone else may be due to him either 1) preferring to be with the sheep; or 2) perhaps not having been deemed important enough by the others to be there. There are not many characters in the bible for whom a physical description is given, but we have one for David when he came and stood before Samuel: *“ruddy, with bright eyes and good looking.”* The KJV says *“ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to.”* “Ruddy” here means that he either had a reddish complexion or red hair, or both. Remember, at this point, he was still a boy. Many bible scholars believe that David was between 12 and 16 years of age at the time of his anointing.

Since this is a study of David's younger days, it's appropriate that we delve into the life of a shepherd, since this was David's vocation. Though being a shepherd was not considered a very noble job, it served David well. It was here, leading sheep, that he learned many traits that would prepare him for leading a nation.

It's hard for us, in this modern day and age, to imagine the life of a shepherd. There is not a microwave world of rush, rush. They don't have the luxury of driving to work, and they do not enjoy coffee breaks or ordering a pizza delivery for lunch. When we visited Israel in 2006, one of the things I saw that stood out to me were the Bedouin shepherds with their flocks of sheep. There they were, guiding them along the hillsides, much like David did a thousand years before the time of Jesus. The shepherd is responsible for the care of the sheep 24 hours a day, and he must be ready at all times to protect them from predators. A shepherd is also their provider; he has to lead them to areas that are lush with grass so that they can feed. Sometimes the journeys take them through hills and valleys and not so pleasant terrain, but all the while, the sheep follow their shepherd because they know his voice and they trust him. This is how he keeps them all together. Is it any wonder then that David saw his vocation as a metaphor for the way God cares for His sheep? We see and understand this in Psalm 23, one of David's most beloved writings. He chronicles so eloquently the relationship he came to know with God as his personal shepherd. David had a personal, intimate walk with God, and it is one that we should try to emulate. God does not want to be part of a memorized prayer recited over and over, nor does He want us to call on Him only when we need Him. He wants, and deserves, our praise, our obedience and our devotion. David knew this, and he put it into practice from a very young age.

It has been said that David was a type of Christ, like Moses and Joseph and others in the bible. This is certainly true in his role as shepherd. A good shepherd loves his flock, protects them, and is willing to give his life for his sheep. David had been sent out into the fields by his father to shepherd his father's flock, and he cared for them and protected them. Jesus, too, was sent into the world by His Father to shepherd His Father's flock ... He loved us, cared for us and gave His life for us. In John 10:11, Jesus says, "*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.*"

In addition to Psalm 23, David composed many other psalms, another example of his love and devotion to God, and a testament to the time he spent alone in worship and prayer. As a youth, many of these psalms were hymns of praise to Almighty God for his goodness, mercy and power. We sing many of them today as worship songs. Later he would write psalms of supplication during his times of exile and persecution. How remarkable that at so young an age, David learned to pour his heart out to God through these psalms. He may have become a mighty warrior later, but the tenderness and passion with which he wrote these psalms have stood the test of time as a source of inspiration to hope and trust in the Lord.

The young David also had the gift of music. He was known for having mastered the art of playing the harp. We find that this talent served him well when King Saul became plagued by an evil spirit. The account is in Chapter 16:14-23. How ironic: when the Spirit of the Lord came upon David at the time of his anointing, the Spirit left Saul, and he was sent, instead, a "*distressing spirit.*" A "for such a time as this" moment arrives for David as he is called upon to minister to Saul by playing his harp for him. Whenever he played, the troubling spirit would leave Saul, and he would be "*refreshed.*" This, of course, gave David favor with Saul, so much so, that Saul persuaded his father Jesse to leave David in his service.

Being able to minister the peace of God to others is a gift that is available to all of us. What does it require? It doesn't mean you have to be able to sing or play an instrument. It requires a heart that is willing to pray for someone when they feel they are too weak to pray for themselves.

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” James 5:13-14

And now we come to the story for which David is probably most famous for as far as young Christian children are concerned: the killing of Goliath! The story is told in Chapter 17 of 1 Samuel. It’s a long and detailed account that tells how young David, sent by Jesse with supplies to his brothers who are serving with the army of King Saul, overhears the champion of the Philistines, a 9 ft. giant by the name of Goliath, threatening and taunting the Israelites. David is not only appalled at Goliath’s taunts, but also that no one seems to be willing to confront him for God. He offers to, but is not taken seriously. As a matter of fact, he has to practically spew out a resume about himself and what he has had to do in order to protect his sheep from predators in the field. Reluctantly, Saul allows him to go forth against Goliath, but not before fitting him with his armor, which proved to be far too heavy for David. Instead, David takes his sling and five smooth stones. This is his only defense against a warrior who obviously outweighed him and towered over him. David did not feel the need for armor ... his trust was in name of the Lord. As he wrote in Psalm 20:7: *“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”*

Let’s pick up the story in Chapter 17:45-51. David had told Goliath that he would cut off his head, and so it was. Not only does David cut off Goliath’s head, but he uses his (Goliath’s) sword to do it! It’s interesting to note that after all this, King Saul does not even recognize David when he is brought before him with the head of Goliath still in his hand.

“David, the Shepherd Boy”

He howled and growled with confidence that victory was near,
Boasting, bragging how mighty he was, filling all Israel with fear.
The nine feet tall gigantic Goliath’s challenges went unopposed,
Until David, the shepherd boy, confronted and exposed.
Goliath had been yelling for a challenger for 40 long days,
Timidity shattered Israel’s ranks, a daily scene replayed.
All in Israel were afraid to confront this giant of a man,
Armored breastplate, metallic shield, brandished with muscular hands.

David visited his siblings, who fought for Israel’s King,
Asking the King for permission to fight with stone and sling.
The King smiled in admiration at the courage he displayed,
“You are an experienced shepherd boy, this is too much for you,
We are experienced soldiers, son, we’ll figure out what to do.”

David decided to return to the King after no challenger came,
From within his kingdom provinces, embarrassing his name.
A humiliation to King Saul and to his fighting men,
David came and offered to fight and told the King his plan.
“I’m a brave fighter who fights lions and bears, defeating in God’s name,

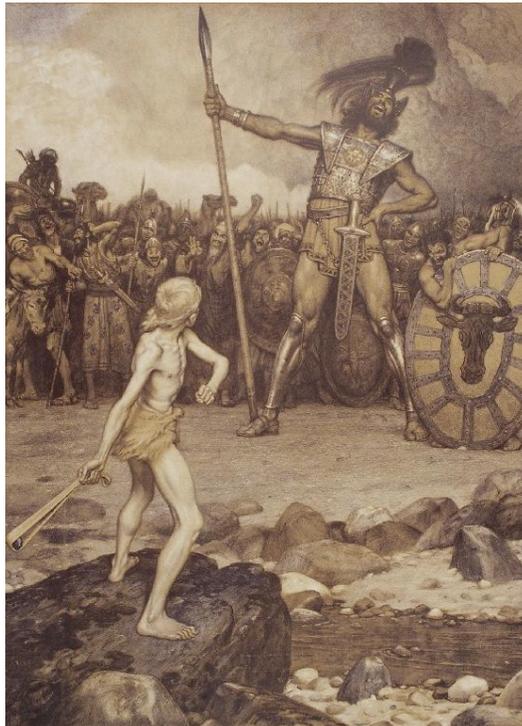
And I will challenge bragging Goliath, their armies will be tamed.”

David approached the giant, who pulled out a very large sword,
Continuing his bragging fete, helmeted with an iron gourd,
Throwing up his hand to celebrate with his gigantic sword.
In that shiny helmet of iron, that was vented for Goliath to see,
David aimed accurately at this giant as big as a tree.
As his sling went round and round, Goliath was hit with a blow.
The children of Israel shouted with joy at David’s accurate throw.

Goliath fell as if dead on the ground with a rumbling thud,
And Israel shouted for victory in the name of God.
David pulled Goliath’s sword, and one chop removed his head.
All Israel who were terrified, now knew Goliath was dead.
The Philistines were pursued and defeated in that war,
David came out victorious, as God’s shining star.

The Poemeater, 2011

What is the “Goliath” in your life today? Is it causing you fear? Are you shrinking away from it; afraid to confront it? Maybe your Goliath is something going on in your life that seems insurmountable, and you don’t know how you can possibly get through it. May we be encouraged today by this look into the life of young David who, in spite of his youth, loved the Lord with all his heart and knew how to trust Him and put all his faith in God being able to give him the victory.



“Then all this assembly shall know that the Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord’s, and He will give you into our hands.”

1 Samuel 17:47