

The Books of 1 and 2 Samuel, Teacher's Guide

Lesson 9: God Chooses and Anoints David

1 Samuel 16:1-23

Teaching Aim (Teacher Orientation)

The aim of this lesson is to let the class see God as He truly judges, by the heart, and to lift their eyes from David to the greater Son of David, Jesus the Lord's Anointed. Begin with the comfort and the challenge of 16:7: God is not fooled by impressive exteriors, which means our polished surfaces cannot earn His favor and our hidden hearts cannot escape His gaze. This both humbles the proud and lifts the overlooked. Help the class feel how counter-cultural this is in a world built on appearances, and how freeing it is to be known truly by the One whose opinion finally matters.

Handle the doctrine of God's choice with care. David's election is God's sovereign call to a covenant purpose, to shepherd Israel and to carry the royal line toward the Messiah. It is not the Calvinistic idea of an unconditional, individual decree of who will be saved and who lost. Make this distinction explicitly if needed: God chose David for a task and a covenant role, not as a proof that a fixed few are saved apart from response and obedience. Keep the focus where the text keeps it: God delights to use the humble and overlooked, He equips by His Spirit, and He is moving history toward Christ. The heaviest weight (Question 9) belongs on the anointing and kingship pointing to Jesus, the true Anointed who reigns now at God's right hand over His church (Acts 2; Colossians 1:13), not on a future earthly throne.

Finally, hold the bright and the sober together. The Spirit comes upon David; the Spirit departs from Saul. This is not arbitrary favoritism but the unfolding consequence of two different hearts and two different responses to God's word. Teach the warning gently and the hope warmly: persistent disobedience drains the life God means us to have, while a heart that seeks God is filled and equipped by Him. Drive the lesson home as formation: through this passage the Lord Jesus is shaping in us the kind of heart God looks upon with delight.

Question 1

Student Question:

What does God's correction of Samuel, "the Lord seeth not as man seeth... the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7), reveal about how God evaluates people, and how it differs from the way we judge?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter pivots on God's correction of His own prophet. As Jesse's sons pass by, Samuel, the man who hears God, still nearly chooses by sight. Eliab is tall and impressive, and Samuel

concludes, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him” (16:6). Even a seasoned servant of God defaults to the eye. God’s reply is one of Scripture’s great revelations: “the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (16:7).

This exposes the gulf between God’s sight and ours. We read height, beauty, confidence, credentials, charisma. We are swayed by the surface because the surface is all we can see. God reads the interior, the loves and motives and loyalties that no one else perceives. He is never deceived by an impressive exterior, and never dismisses a humble one.

Both halves of this truth are weighty. It is humbling, because our carefully managed image counts for nothing with God; He sees past it to what is actually there. And it is freeing, because we can finally stop performing for an audience that only sees the outside, and rest in being fully known by the One who sees all and still calls.

Consider how this reframes the whole chapter. Saul looked every inch a king (head and shoulders above the people) and failed. David looked like the least of his family and was chosen. The lesson is plain: God’s verdicts run on a wholly different scale than ours, and that scale is the heart.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Even Samuel defaulted to outward appearance before God corrected him (16:6–7).
- Man sees the surface; God reads the heart and is never deceived by it.
- The truth humbles the impressive and lifts the overlooked at once.
- It frees us from performing, because God already knows us fully and still calls.
- Saul looked like a king and failed; David looked least and was chosen.

Discussion Prompts

- Ask why even Samuel, who heard God, still nearly chose by appearance.
- Discuss what it means, comfortingly and searchingly, that God looks on the heart.
- Have the class name ways our culture trains us to judge by the surface.

Question 2

Student Question:

Where have you recently judged yourself or someone else by outward appearance, and what would change if you measured by the heart instead?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question turns 16:7 on ourselves. We are appearance-judging creatures. We size people up by their clothes, their speech, their success, their social standing, and we size ourselves up the same way, swinging between pride and despair depending on how the surface looks that day.

Samuel's near-miss with Eliab is a gentle rebuke to our snap judgments. The person we dismiss may be the one God is preparing for great usefulness; the impressive figure we admire may be hollow within. We simply do not have the data God has, and yet we render verdicts constantly.

Invite honest reflection on a recent judgment, of another or of oneself, made on the surface. What if you measured by the heart instead? You might extend grace where you withheld it, or see worth where you saw none, or stop despairing over an image and tend the heart God actually sees.

The practical fruit is twofold: humility toward others, since we cannot see their hearts and must not write them off, and freedom for ourselves, since we can stop frantically managing an image and instead ask God to make our hearts what He delights to see.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We habitually judge others and ourselves by outward appearance.
- The one we dismiss may be the one God is preparing; the impressive may be hollow.
- Measuring by the heart produces grace toward others and freedom for ourselves.
- We lack God's data and should therefore be slow to render surface verdicts (James 2:1-4).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask for an honest example of a surface judgment that proved wrong.
- Discuss how measuring by the heart would change how we treat "unimpressive" people.
- Encourage one shift this week from managing an image to tending the heart.

Question 3

Student Question:

What does God's gracious choice of David, the overlooked youngest son out keeping the sheep, teach us about the kind of people God delights to call to His purposes?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

God's choice falls on the least likely candidate. David is the youngest of eight, out keeping the sheep, so far from anyone's mind that Jesse does not even bother to call him in for the prophet's visit (16:11). He is the family afterthought. And he is exactly the one God wants.

This is a recurring delight of God throughout Scripture. He calls the younger over the elder, the shepherd over the prince, the small over the great, so that the glory belongs unmistakably to Him and not to human impressiveness. God is not impressed by what impresses us, and He loves to lift the overlooked.

We should be careful here to name what this choosing is and is not. God's election of David is a sovereign call to a covenant purpose: to shepherd Israel and to carry forward the royal line that

leads to the Messiah. It is not an unconditional decree settling David's personal salvation apart from a life of faith and obedience; David will still be called to walk with God, repent, and follow. God chooses David for a task and a covenant role.

For us, the comfort is rich. God still delights to use the humble, the hidden, the ones the world passes over. Your obscurity is no obstacle to His call. The same God who found a shepherd boy in a Bethlehem field can find and use you, wherever you have felt forgotten, for purposes you cannot yet imagine.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- David was the overlooked youngest, not even summoned for the prophet's visit (16:11).
- God repeatedly chooses the small and unlikely so the glory is His (1 Corinthians 1:27-29).
- David's election is a call to a covenant purpose, not an unconditional decree of personal salvation.
- He was still called to a life of faith, repentance, and obedience.
- God still delights to use the humble and overlooked for His purposes.

Discussion Prompts

- Note how Jesse forgot David; ask what that says about how the world measures worth.
- Discuss the difference between God calling David to a covenant task and unconditional individual election to salvation.
- Ask how God's pattern of choosing the unlikely encourages those who feel overlooked.

Question 4

Student Question:

When have you felt overlooked or "out with the sheep," and how does God's choice of David speak to that feeling?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question presses the comfort of David's story into the places we feel forgotten. Many people carry a quiet ache of being overlooked, passed over for the promotion, unnoticed in the family, unseen in their faithful service, out with the sheep while others stand in the spotlight.

David's anointing speaks directly to that ache. God knew exactly where David was. The field where no one was looking was the very place God had been forming and watching him. David's faithfulness with a few sheep in obscurity was preparing him to shepherd a nation. Nothing about his hidden faithfulness was wasted.

Encourage the class that obscurity is not the same as insignificance to God. He is not limited to the visible and celebrated. He sees the heart in the hidden place, and He is often doing His deepest preparatory work precisely where no one else is watching.

The application is to keep being faithful in the unseen places, trusting that the God who looks on the heart sees us there. We need not strive for visibility to matter to God. We need only to be, in the field, the kind of person whose heart He delights to look upon.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Many carry a real ache of being overlooked or unseen.
- God knew exactly where David was; the hidden field was His training ground.
- Obscurity is not insignificance; God sees and works in the unseen place.
- Faithfulness in hidden places is never wasted with God (Colossians 3:23–24).

Discussion Prompts

- Invite class members to share, if willing, where they have felt “out with the sheep.”
- Discuss how David’s hidden faithfulness prepared him for public calling.
- Encourage faithfulness in one unseen area, trusting God who sees the heart.

Question 5

Student Question:

What is the significance of the Spirit of the Lord coming upon David at his anointing (1 Samuel 16:13), and what does it tell us about how God equips those He calls?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

At the heart of the anointing is the Spirit: “the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward” (16:13). The oil Samuel pours is a sign; the reality is the empowering presence of God. David is not left to shepherd a nation on his own resources. God equips the one He calls.

This is a steady pattern: God does not call the equipped so much as He equips the called. David had courage and skill, but the weight of kingship and the line of Messiah were far beyond any natural gift. What made the difference was the Spirit of the Lord resting upon him for the work God had given.

We should read this in its own setting and not collapse it anachronistically into every later experience. In the Old Covenant, the Spirit came upon chosen leaders and prophets to equip them for specific roles. The deeper truth it illustrates, that God supplies what He commands, runs straight through Scripture to the church, where God works in His people both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

The encouragement is real. Whatever God calls you to will outstrip your natural ability, and that is by design, so that you lean on Him and He receives the glory. The God who equipped a shepherd to be king is the God who supplies His people for every good work He assigns.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The oil was a sign; the reality was the Spirit of the Lord empowering David (16:13).
- God equips the called rather than merely calling the already-equipped.
- In the Old Covenant the Spirit came upon chosen leaders for specific tasks.
- The abiding principle is that God supplies what He commands (Philippians 2:13).
- Callings that exceed our ability drive us to depend on God for His glory.

Discussion Prompts

- Ask what the Spirit coming upon David tells us about how God equips His servants.
- Discuss reading this in its Old Covenant setting without over-reading later experience into it.
- Have the class name a calling that exceeds their natural ability and requires God's supply.

Question 6

Student Question:

In what area do you sense God calling you to depend on His Spirit and strength rather than your own natural ability?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question applies David's Spirit-empowerment to our own dependence. We are tempted to attempt God's work in our own strength, leaning on talent, planning, and effort, and then wondering why we run dry. David reminds us that the work God assigns requires the strength God supplies.

Invite the class to locate where they are operating on natural ability alone. A ministry done by willpower. A relationship being managed by technique. A burden carried by sheer grit. These are the very places God invites us to lean on Him instead of ourselves.

There is freedom in this. We are not meant to be self-sufficient. The pressure we feel to manufacture results in our own power is a pressure God never placed on us. He calls us to faithfulness in dependence, not to a self-made adequacy.

Practically, this means prayerful reliance, asking God for the wisdom, strength, and grace each task requires, and then stepping forward trusting Him to supply. The aim is one specific area this week where we deliberately depend on God rather than ourselves.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- We are tempted to attempt God's work on natural strength and run dry.
- The work God assigns requires the strength God supplies.
- Self-sufficiency is a burden God never placed on us; dependence is freedom.
- Prayerful reliance, not self-made adequacy, is the path of faithful service (2 Corinthians 3:5).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask where each person is running on natural ability rather than God's strength.
- Discuss what practical dependence on God looks like in a specific task.
- Encourage one area this week to deliberately rely on God in prayer.

Question 7

Student Question:

What does the departing of the Spirit from Saul and the troubling spirit that followed (1 Samuel 16:14) warn us about the path of persistent disobedience?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The chapter holds a dark counterpoint to David's anointing: "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him" (16:14). As the Spirit rests on the new king, it withdraws from the old. The contrast is deliberate and sobering.

We must read this carefully. The withdrawal of God's empowering Spirit from Saul is the unfolding consequence of his persistent, willful disobedience, the rejection announced in chapter 15. This is not God toying with a victim; it is the just outworking of a heart that repeatedly set aside the word of the Lord. The troubling spirit that follows is described as under God's sovereign hand, yet the root cause traces to Saul's own choices.

The warning for us is real. Persistent disobedience does not leave us where it found us. It drains the peace, joy, and steadiness that come from walking with God, and it opens the door to torment of soul. Saul, who could have been filled and equipped, becomes a troubled, jealous, fearful man. Sin always costs more than it promises.

The contrast between the two kings preaches loudly. The same God stands behind both scenes. The difference lies in two hearts and two responses to His word. One sought to follow God and was filled; the other persisted in self-will and was emptied. Persistent disobedience is a downhill road, and Saul shows us where it ends.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- As the Spirit rested on David, it departed from Saul (16:13–14).
- The withdrawal is the just consequence of Saul's persistent, willful disobedience.
- The troubling spirit is under God's sovereign hand, yet rooted in Saul's own choices.
- Persistent disobedience drains the peace and steadiness of walking with God.
- Two kings, two hearts, two responses to God's word, two destinies.

Discussion Prompts

- Discuss how the Spirit's departure traces back to Saul's repeated disobedience (chapter 15).
- Ask why sin always costs more than it promises, using Saul as the example.
- Contrast the two kings' hearts and their two very different outcomes.

Question 8

Student Question:

Is there a place where your own slow drift from obedience is quietly draining the peace and joy God means you to have, and what would turning back look like?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

This question makes Saul's decline personal. Few of us fall in a single dramatic plunge; more often we drift, one small compromise, one neglected discipline, one cherished disobedience at a time, until the peace and joy we once knew have quietly leaked away.

Saul's emptiness did not arrive overnight. It was the accumulated result of a heart that kept choosing self over God. By the time the Spirit departs, the man is barely recognizable from the humble one who hid among the baggage. The drift was gradual, and so is ours.

Invite gentle, honest self-examination. Is there a place where your walk with God has gone dull, where joy has dimmed, where a low-grade unrest has settled in? Often such symptoms trace back to some quiet disobedience we have been tolerating. The spiritual life does not stay neutral.

The good news is that, unlike the hardened Saul who would not truly repent, the door of repentance stands open to us in Christ. Turning back may be as simple and as costly as naming the drift, confessing the disobedience, and returning to glad obedience. The peace Saul lost is restored to those who turn back to the Lord.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- Spiritual decline usually comes by slow drift, not a single dramatic fall.
- Lost joy and low-grade unrest often trace to tolerated disobedience.
- The spiritual life does not stay neutral; we move toward God or away.
- Unlike hardened Saul, the door of repentance stands open to us in Christ (1 John 1:9).

Discussion Prompts

- Ask where a slow drift may be quietly draining someone's joy and peace.
- Discuss the difference between Saul's false confession and true repentance.
- Encourage one specific act of turning back to glad obedience this week.

Question 9

Student Question:

How does God's choosing and anointing of David, the shepherd who becomes king, point us forward to Jesus, the greater Son of David and the Lord's true Anointed who reigns now, and why does that matter for our salvation?

Commentary and Teaching Notes

Here the chapter opens onto its grandest horizon, and the heaviest weight of the lesson. God chose and anointed a shepherd named David in Bethlehem and filled him with His Spirit to be king over Israel. But David was never the end of the story; he was a signpost. The covenant God was advancing through David pointed forward to a greater Son of David, the Lord's true Anointed.

Centuries later, in this same Bethlehem, another child of David's line was born, of whom the angel said, "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33). The very word Anointed is, in Hebrew, Messiah, and in Greek, Christ. David's anointing with oil foreshadows Jesus, the Christ, anointed with the Holy Spirit without measure for His saving work.

We must be clear about the nature of His reign, for Scripture is clear. Jesus is not a king-in-waiting for a future earthly throne in Jerusalem. He reigns now, raised and seated at God's right hand, having been declared both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:32-36). God "hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). The kingdom is His church, over which He reigns as King today, and His throne shall have no end. This is not deferred; it is present reality.

Why does this matter for our salvation? Because the One God was preparing through David is the One in whom we are saved. As Paul preached, of David's seed God "raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus" (Acts 13:23). David could shepherd Israel for a time and then die; the greater Son of David lives forever to shepherd, save, and reign over His people. To bow to Jesus as the Lord's Anointed, to enter and serve in His kingdom, is to belong to the King whose reign will never end. The shepherd-boy anointed in obscurity lifts our eyes to the Good Shepherd enthroned in glory.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- David was a signpost; God's covenant through him pointed to a greater Son of David.
- Jesus, born in Bethlehem of David's line, is the Lord's true Anointed, the Messiah, the Christ (Luke 1:32-33).
- Anointed means Messiah and Christ; David's oil foreshadows Jesus anointed with the Spirit.
- Jesus reigns now, raised and seated at God's right hand, not awaiting a future earthly throne (Acts 2:32-36).
- The kingdom is Christ's church, into which God has already brought the saved (Colossians 1:13).
- Of David's seed God raised a Savior, Jesus, in whom alone we are saved (Acts 13:23).

Discussion Prompts

- Connect David's anointing in Bethlehem to Jesus, the greater Son of David, born there.
- Discuss, from Acts 2 and Colossians 1:13, why Christ reigns now and not in a future earthly kingdom.
- Ask why it matters for our salvation that the Lord's true Anointed lives and reigns forever.

Question 10

Student Question:

Name one specific way the Lord Jesus is forming your heart through this passage, so that what He sees within you is increasingly pleasing to Him.

Commentary and Teaching Notes

The capstone turns from God's great work in history to His present work in us. The whole chapter has pressed one truth home: the Lord looks on the heart. The aim now is to let Jesus, the true Anointed who reigns over us, form in us the kind of heart He delights to see.

Reflect on where this passage has searched you. Perhaps it is the surfaces you manage while neglecting the heart. Perhaps it is a feeling of being overlooked that God wants to heal. Perhaps it is a slow drift, like Saul's, that needs reversing. Perhaps it is a fresh awe at Jesus, your reigning King, that should reorder your loyalties.

Make it specific. Heart-formation is not a vague aspiration; it lands somewhere. Name one way you will cooperate with the Lord this week so that what He sees within you grows more like Him: a hidden sin confessed, a private prayer life renewed, a quiet act of obedience where no one is watching but God.

Take heart that this is His work as much as ours. The King who chose a shepherd boy and filled him with His Spirit is at work in His people, shaping our inner lives by His Spirit and word. Offer Him your heart, the part only He can see, and ask Him to make it a heart after His own.

Doctrinal / Christian Living Issues

- The chapter's aim is heart-formation under Christ, who looks on and shapes the heart.
- Jesus reigns over us now and works by His Spirit to make us like Himself (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- Heart-formation lands on specifics, including the hidden, unseen places of obedience.
- We offer God the heart only He can see and ask Him to make it His own.

Discussion Prompts

- Ask each person to name one specific way to let Christ shape the heart this week.
- Have the class complete: "Lord, in the part of me only You can see, make me ..."
- Close in prayer asking the reigning King to form in each a heart after His own.