

How do we normally choose our leaders? I want to present you two candidates and think through which one the average church would choose.

Candidate 1 comes from a great Christian family of ministers. He went to Bible college and started preaching in his 20's. He planted a church that went from a few people to thousands. He founded a successful Bible college and preached at revivals that gathered thousands. He has also been married for over thirty years. Oh, and he is also musically talented and can lead worship.

Candidate 2 comes from a family with some public scandals. He has no formal education and has worked a manual labor job. He has been involved in the church since he was a child, but never held any formal position. He is single and still lives with his parents, but he is sure God has called him to preach.

Which would the average church choose?

Well, Candidate 1 is Jimmy Swaggart, who is best known for several prostitution scandals, and Candidate 2 is Jesus.

Now sure, I'm cheating a little in how I described it to you.

But we just have to look around at the state of the church or our world to see that humanity does not do a good job picking our leaders.

Turn with me to 1 Samuel 16 and we are going to see how God does it. And maybe we can learn how we should do it.

I. God does not anoint leaders like we do (v. 1-13).

God does not choose leaders the way the world does.

And when I say the world, I do not just mean those sinners out there.

I mean that God does not choose leaders based on human logic.

God does not choose the people that even we, as good mature believers would want to choose.

He often chooses people that do not make sense.

Even to us.

And this is the classic passage of why.

Verse 1, **"The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."**

There is a time to grieve and lament.

And then there is a time for action.

God is ready to find a new king.

I love the way God describes it.

He says that He will provide for Himself.

God is the provider of leaders.

And He will do it when He is ready.

And He does not need us.

He does not need a great crop of candidates.

He can make one when he wants.

So, he tells Samuel that this king will come from Jesse's sons.

Verse 2, **"And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." And the Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.'"**

Samuel objects because this is treason and dangerous.

He cannot anoint a new king by himself.

Any king would kill him.

This is precisely why Herod later tries to kill Jesus.

Kings cannot allow challengers to go unopposed.

God tells him to just go and sacrifice.

Verse 3, **"And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you."**

God will tell him what to do.

And God makes it clear that Samuel is not choosing.

God is the one who will choose.

And God will tell Samuel which son it is to be.

God could have told him ahead of time.

But he wants Samuel to wait like us.

Because God wants to teach us all a lesson about how God chooses leaders.

Verse 4, **"Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?"**

The last time Samuel and Saul were together, it was not good.

Saul has been publicly rejected by God.

Samuel is not keeping things secret or hidden.

So the elders are right to be afraid.

They want to know what Samuel's business is.

And whether he is coming to raise up another king or stir division.

Verse 5, **"And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice." And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice."**

He tells them to be ready to worship.

To make themselves holy.

Not just to clean themselves up physically but spiritually.

Verse 6, **"When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before him."**

Samuel does what we all would.

He is trying to figure out who it must be!

We would do the same thing as we sought God's will.

And the answer immediately seems obvious!

Verse 7, **"But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."**

This is the key verse.

God does not choose how we do.

Samuel has judged on a first impression.

It must be this son, look at him!
But God says no.
He has actually been rejected by God.
God chooses based on the heart.
God is not looking for the things that we do.
He is looking for something deeper.

This was Israel's problem with Saul.
They chose a king based on appearance.
They got the tallest, most handsome, richest king.
They got one that looked incredible on the outside.
He had all of the credentials, but his heart was wrong.
God is looking for a different kind of a king.
God does not choose how we do.

Verse 8, **"Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.'**
Another son passes, but it is not this one.

Verse 9, **"Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, 'Neither has the Lord chosen this one.'**
A third son comes by, but it is not this son.

Verse 10, **"And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, 'The Lord has not chosen these.'**
Seven different sons pass by.
But none of them have been chosen by God.
Also, I want you to see that Samuel is telling Jesse this.
It seems that Samuel has made it clear to Jesse why he is here.
He has told Jesse that one of his sons will be king.
So, it is not just that Samuel thinks the first son must have been the king.
Jesse is literally bringing his sons in order.
He is passing them one by one probably in the manner of which son he thinks is most likely to be king.

But Jesse runs out of all seven sons.
And none of them are it.

Verse 11, **"Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here."**

This is a really funny statement to me.

Samuel is asking if he is sure they all came because none of these are the sons God has chosen.

There is only the youngest son.

The least likely.

Not just because he is the youngest.

But Jesse did not even think to bring him.

And he is busy.

He is busy keeping and shepherding the sheep.

There is some great irony here.

We were introduced to Saul as a failed shepherd who has lost donkeys.

David is introduced to us as a good shepherd who is with the sheep.

And he has not lost any.

Verse 12, **"And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he.""**

Finally, David comes.

And God says this is the one I choose.

Now we may have a question because David is introduced.

We are told he is good-looking and handsome.

He has great eyes.

But why would it tell us this if God doesn't pick on the outward appearance?

Because David still looks good outwardly.

I think at least part of this is so we don't go overboard.
Part of this is so that we don't think because God doesn't look at the outside than anything that looks good on the outside is bad and swinging way too far the other way.
We could become like extremist monks who would reject anyone who is good-looking and only accept the hideous and ugly.
God didn't mean that.
But he didn't mean the word is not what God looks for.
It's incidental.

David is handsome, but he still wasn't who anybody thought would be, including his own father.
We also get this description of his appearance that he is ruddy.
This is the same Hebrew word that is used to describe one other person in the Old Testament.
It is used to describe Esau, who is red and hairy.
There is a sense in which David looks like the man who was given an incredible blessing in his birthright and forsake it.
Yet, even though he looks like Saul, he will not, and the blessing of kingship will be in the line of David forever.

Verse 13, **"Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah."**

The Spirit rushes on David.
The Holy Spirit does not fall on everyone in the Old Testament.
That is a gift in the New Testament after Pentecost for believers.
Here it comes only to some.
Usually just to prophets and sometimes to kings.
The Spirit has come to Saul.
But look closer.
The Spirit rushes on David.
But it stays with David from that day forward.
And we do not see the Spirit depart from David.

David will fail.
David will make bad decisions and doubt.
But David will always have the Spirit of the Lord.
And this is what qualifies David.
God is the one who does it.

We need this regular reminder that God does not choose like we do.
And this is how God still chooses.
Look at how Christ chose His disciples.
He did not choose the brightest and the best.
He chose a tax collector.
He chose an arrogant hothead with a possible violent past like Peter.
He chose a doubter like Thomas.
He chose fishermen and laborers.

And this is how God continued to choose leaders in the church.
God chooses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise.
God loves to choose the most unlikely and often unqualified people to do his work.

When you look at the qualifications for elders for pastors, there is nothing about the outward appearance.
There's almost nothing about competence.
The only thing it says is they gotta be able to teach.
They have to have the abilities to teach about Jesus. It doesn't even say they have to be good at it.
It definitely doesn't say they have to be charismatic and awesome.
But it does say a whole lot about their hearts and their character.

So when we look, and when we evaluate,
We have to be careful.
This is where churches get into big trouble.
When we start evaluating our leaders only based on appearance and competence and what things look like, we will be in trouble.

And we start evaluating whether somebody is or isn't a person we should trust based on the quality of their YouTube video or TikTok.

We are in trouble.

We need to remind ourselves that we do things differently.

We are not just like the world, except we just really care about character.

Sometimes God picks and God uses the most unlikely people.

This is a core part of the kingdom of God.

It is a core part of the gospel itself.

After all, why do you think God chose us?

II. God does not appoint leaders like we do (v. 14-23).

God anoints and chooses leaders differently.

But here, we see that God places them in power differently too.

That is what I meant by appoint.

David has been anointed as king.

But he is not the king yet.

And it will be some time before he gets there.

Verse 14, **"Now the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the Lord tormented him."**

The Holy Spirit leaves Saul.

Remember this is the Old Testament.

Only some people get the Holy Spirit.

And Saul has had him, but does not any more.

Because Saul has repeatedly ignored the voice of the Holy Spirit.

He has grieved the Holy Spirit.

He has refused to repent.

So God the Spirit departs.

And God sends a harmful spirit instead.

Some translations may say "evil."

The Hebrew word is "ra or רָע" which has a lot of possible meanings.

I don't think this is a demon that God is sending to Saul.

I think this is an angel of judgment.

This is a consequence of Saul's sin.

It is a spiritual punishment for ignoring God and living under God's rejection.

Verse 15, **"And Saul's servants said to him, "Behold now, a harmful spirit from God is tormenting you."**

The people recognize what is happening.

They can see that Saul is under God's judgment.

It is obvious even to the lowest servants.

And they tell Saul.

How should Saul respond?

The way one should respond is repentance.

Prayer and lament.

Saul should be asking God for mercy.

But we have seen that is not what Saul does or will do.

But what do we expect to happen next?

David is filled with the Spirit and anointed.

The Spirit has left Saul and now God is tormenting him.

We would expect Saul to be removed and David made king.

This is the perfect time for it to happen.

This is when all of us would do it if we were God.

But it is not how God works.

Keep this in the back of your mind as we go through the story.

We will come back to it.

Verse 16, **"Let our lord now command your servants who are before you to seek out a man who is skillful in playing the lyre, and when the harmful spirit from God is upon you, he will play it, and you will be well."**

Instead of repenting, they are suggesting music.

They should find someone good at playing to make it better.

He should try to help his physical condition instead of his spiritual.

I love music.

I love to listen to music when I am down, or depressed, or just need a good cry.

It can help me feel better.

But there is no music that can substitute for the Holy Spirit.

Verse 17, **"So Saul said to his servants, "Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me."**

And Saul likes the idea.

He asks for a man to be provided.

I think the Bible uses the word again intentionally.

Early on, God said He will provide a king.

Now Saul wants someone provided.

And God the Father will provide the man.

Verse 18, **"One of the young men answered, "Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence, and the Lord is with him."**

David is introduced.

And look at the way he is described.

He is from Bethlehem.

Which will come to be known as the city of David, where our Savior is born.

It is musically talented.

Not usually something we look for in a king.

He is also a man of valor and bravery.

He is skilled in war and fighting.

He does not run his mouth and speaks wisely.

He is someone people want to be around.

His presence brings peace and God is clearly with him.

This is who we want to have as a king.

And he certainly would be better than Saul.

Verse 19, **"Therefore Saul sent messengers to Jesse and said, 'Send me David your son, who is with the sheep.'"**

But this anointed one is still with the sheep.

He is not ruling as a king or over people at all.

He is just caring for animals.

Verse 20, **"And Jesse took a donkey laden with bread and a skin of wine and a young goat and sent them by David his son to Saul."**

So David comes.

And he comes with gifts.

With only bread, wine, and a goat.

The one who God has chosen comes with gifts for the one who is rejected.

The one cast from God's presence is shown grace from the one in God's presence.

Verse 21, **"And David came to Saul and entered his service. And Saul loved him greatly, and he became his armor-bearer. "**

And David comes to serve Saul.

He spends his days and his time under the king.

He should replace the king.

He should overthrow the king.

David should be king.

But he serves the king and does it well.

He does it so well that Saul comes to love him.

Verse 22, **"And Saul sent to Jesse, saying, 'Let David remain in my service, for he has found favor in my sight.'"**

And Saul wants David to stay in his court.

To continue to serve him because he is doing so well.

He has found the favor of the king.

Verse 23, **"And whenever the harmful spirit from God was upon Saul, David took the lyre and played it with his hand. So Saul was refreshed and was well, and the harmful spirit departed from him."**

This is part of David's service.
Whenever Saul is being tortured, David plays.
Now we can tend to focus on the theological questions.
But we need to see how David is acting.
Saul is the cursed king.
He is rejected by God.
David will be appointed by God as king soon.
And God has him serving Saul.
He is serving someone who is lost.
He is serving someone who is actively rejecting God.

He is not getting closer to being king.
He is spending all of his time helping the king he is supposed to replace.
He is helping bless the one whose downfall we would be praying for.

This is how God works.
This is what God is doing
David will not be king until 2 Samuel.
It will be a long time before he is appointed and allowed to be the king.
And for now the way God wants to go about that is as he wants David to serve this king.
For many years, David will serve Saul.
And for decades, David is going to be ignored and mistreated.
For years, Saul will try to kill him and yet God will still not appoint David yet.
God makes David wait.
And we may have guesses as to why God does it.
But the reality is, this is the way that our God works.
He does not work on our timetable.
His timing is not our timing.
And the way he is slow to place David and power is the way that God works in all of our lives.

The entire timing of the kingdom of God is not our time.

Look at how Jesus came.
How did he spend his time?
Jesus the first 30 years of his life working with his hands with wood.
He did almost nothing of note.
He accomplished no great things and did no great miracles.
He did not do any wonderful preaching or gather followers.
He was anointed, but he was not appointed.

And even when he came.
When Jesus revealed himself as the son of God.
When Jesus preached the kingdom and said that he was the Messiah.
He told him that he was the king that was promised.
He was the son of David.
And yet in his first coming, he did not accomplish what they thought.
He took not a throne, but a cross.
He took not a crown of jewels, but a crown of thorns.
He did not come in glory, but in suffering.
He did not come to be served, but to serve.
He did not come to judge and condemn, but to forgive.
And he did not come to kill, but he came to heal.
And then when he finally was resurrected after defeating death on the cross and bringing the forgiveness of our sins, he ascended into heaven and now we wait.
Because he sits on the throne in heaven, we wait for him to sit on the throne here in the new heaven in the new Earth.

But God doesn't work the way that we do.
For 2000 years, we have waited for his return and we may yet wait more.
God does not do things our way.
We need to do things God's way.
And we need to recognize that God's way will rarely make sense to us.