

The Life of David		
What made David so special? What can we realistically learn from his life?		
Date	Focus	Chapters & Themes
April 16 th	The choosing of David	1 Sam 16 God looks on the inside
May 7 th	David, Goliath, Saul & Jonathan	1 Sam 17-20 Champions, enemies and friends
May 21 st	David on the run	1 Sam 21-2 Sam 1 The testing of faith To kill or not to kill?
June 4 th	David made king	2 Sam 2-5 & 8-10 What kind of king is this?
June 18 th	David and Bathsheba	2 Sam 11-12 How could he do that Why did God stick with him?
July 2 nd	David's family troubles	2 Sam 13-21 How could it all go so wrong?
July 16 th	David and the psalms	2 Sam 6-7, 22-24 & Psalms A man after God's own heart

Session 1 Why is David such an important person in Jewish & Christian faiths?

David is referenced more than any other person in the Bible apart from Jesus.

Person in the Bible	Times referred to in OT	In this many verses	In this many books	Times referred to in NT	In this many verses	In this many books
David	3814	1380	17	181	87	10
Moses	2659	1315	20	180	105	12
Abraham	985	364	16	230	111	11
Elijah	373	117	4	46	34	6

Revered as Israel's greatest king, though not their first, nor longest reign (~38 years, 1008-970 BC).

David's kingdom never as large or influential as Egypt, Assyria or Babylon in period 1000-500 BC.

What he is most remembered for is hardly enough to justify the high regard in which he is held.

So, what is it about David that makes him so revered and so important?

And how are we meant to respond to what we read about him?

Are we meant to try and be like him? And if so, in what ways?

Five things about David we should pay attention to:

- his understanding of God
- his heart and character that were rooted in that understanding
- his patience in waiting for God to fulfil His promises, even under severe testing
- what God chose to do in and through him
- the specific promise God made to him

Some background

When do we first hear of David in the Bible?	Ruth 4:17 & 22
What do we know about David's ancestors?	Matt 1:1-6
Other relevant passages	Gen 38, 1 Chr 2:4; Gen 46:12; Num 26:21; 1 Chr 2; 1 Chr 21:11, Lk 3:33, Josh 2; Ruth

Our first proper look at David comes in 1 Sam 16 when Samuel (the effective spiritual leader and judge over the 12 tribes of Israel) was commanded by God to go and anoint a new person of God's choosing as their king after God had rejected Saul the current king.

The calling and anointing of David - 1 Sam 16

Saul had forfeited the privilege of kingship because of the attitude behind two of his actions:

- i) exceeding his calling and authority in offering up a sacrifice to God before going into battle against the Philistines (1 Sam 13:1-14). Note: Samuel declared that '**God has sought for himself a man according to his own heart** and has appointed him as leader over his people, because you have not kept what God commanded you.'
- ii) for arrogantly rebelling against God by failing to destroy the Amalekites and all the plunder taken from them as God had commanded (15:1-31)

Three things noteworthy from David's anointing:

1. **v1 Despite Saul's failure, God already had a plan to fulfil His purposes for His people.**

God was not surprised by Saul's failure. He knew what He planned to do about it.

Relevance for us: Firstly, God is not put off by, or afraid of our failures. His plans are not scuppered by them. Rather, he knows about them and works in and through them. Secondly, when significant things go wrong, God will have a ready response. Are we attentive enough to God to learn what He'd have us do next? Don't dwell on mistakes and failures, look to God for how to move on from them.

2. **V6-7 God chooses people to fulfil His purposes based on what they are like on the inside not what can be seen on the outside.**

Samuel assumed the honour of kingship would be bestowed on Jesse's eldest son, who his culture saw as the most important child. But Samuel had to learn that God is not swayed by such traditions. Note God's choice of Isaac, the younger of Abraham's first two sons; Jacob the younger of Isaac's sons; and Joseph the eleventh son of Jacob. God reserves the right to choose whomever he pleases to fulfil his purposes. He is not bound by our cultural expectations.

Relevance for us: We may question why God apparently works powerfully through some people and not others. We may feel jealous of other people's experience of God and wonder why God has not shown us the same favour. But we should recognise God's right to choose whoever He pleases and beware of the desire to make a name for ourselves. Remember the Tower of Babel.

Samuel looked at Jesse's sons and assumed the strongest, most able, most impressive looking would get the job. But God is more concerned with what people are like on the inside.

Relevance for us: *We often jump to conclusions about who would be the most suitable leader on the basis of things that God considers of lesser importance. Some of us are very good at finding reasons why we would not be a good choice. Cf Moses (Ex 3).*

This whole chapter is predominantly about 'seeing' – more obvious in the Hebrew than in English translations. The Hebrew word *ra'ah* (meaning see, but also *provide*), occurs 9 times in this chapter (vv 1, 6-7, 12, 17-18).

The writer of 1 Samuel wants us to ponder the difference between what we see and what God sees and consequently, how God makes choices that are different from what we might choose.

God told Samuel that, when he looks at people, he looks at the heart. He is much more concerned with character than with abilities or self-confidence. Note Jesus said it is what comes out of someone's heart that defiles them (Mark 7:14-23), and just because people honour him with their lips doesn't mean they are truly following him (Mark 7:6-13). See also John 3:23-24.

Note the contrast in chapter 17:17-31 between David and Eliab, his eldest brother. Eliab humiliated David in front of the other soldiers. Yet we know that God had already chosen David as king, rather than Eliab. And they both knew that too. We're left to make up our own minds about who had the better character and who was the more conceited and wicked in heart.

Relevance for us: *How is your heart today? Are you still focused on becoming more Christ-like in your character? Never mind your age, what you can or cannot do these days, whether you have a role in church or not, or whether you are noticed by those you consider more important than yourself. Are you still looking to God to enable you to overcome in those areas in which you could be more loving, patient, joyful, generous, or self-controlled?*

Back in 1 Samuel 8, when God told Samuel to anoint Saul as Israel's first ever king, He instructed Samuel to 'appoint *for them* a king' (8:22). Here in 16:1 God declared 'I have seen *for myself* a king'. The difference between those two becomes very clear in the following chapters.

3. v13 - The moment David was anointed, the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him from that day onwards

If we're to understand all that happens in David's life, we should see this moment as foundational.

The giving of the Spirit is confirmation of David's appointment as God's king. It was God's empowering from this moment onwards that enabled David to be the significant individual that he was. It was God's doing far more than it was David's.

Relevance for us: *We often think what we do for God is all about us, what we can do, what we're capable of, when actually it's all about God and what He is capable of. When we look for people to take on a role, we tend to focus on what they've already achieved, the qualities they already have. Perhaps we should pay greater attention to the person God wants to choose.*

The Spirit coming on David has an interesting parallel with the moment of Jesus' baptism. For Jesus, the coming of the Spirit confirmed not his kingship but his relationship with the Father, and it empowered him for the ministry the Father had appointed him to do.

Final thoughts on the significance of David

Jesus chose to refer to himself as the Good Shepherd. He was also seen by others who knew him from Nazareth as 'just the local carpenter's son' who surely couldn't be the long-expected Messiah.

Is it just coincidence that, when David was anointed, he was working as a shepherd and considered insignificant? Both were chosen as God's King on earth despite coming from very humble beginnings. Neither of them sought to assert themselves, but allowed God to elevate them in His timing.

When the Spirit came upon David, it also departed from Saul. The angry moods that came then upon Saul led his attendants to seek out someone to calm him down. He was offered David and invited him to enter royal service. It is ironic that, not only did God choose David, so did Saul. The rejected king chose the newly anointed king as the one to keep him from falling apart. And so, the newly anointed king kept the rejected king on the throne for much longer than might otherwise have happened.

Dale Ralph Davis draws a parallel between this and our own experience as disciples of Jesus. Jesus called his disciples the salt of the earth - salt that helps to protect the earth from decay - and yet Jesus said we would be hated by the world. Like David, we act as a restraint on the impact of evil in our world, and yet we suffer condemnation and hatred in doing so.

The Bible is unclear on the time between David being anointed by Samuel and finally becoming king. It was most likely many years. How would David deal with that wait and the tension it created?

Relevance for us: *how long are we prepared to wait between sensing that God has got something for us and us actually receiving what God has promised?*

Perhaps the more important issue is how are we to live while we wait? How proactive should we be in bringing about what we've been promised?

In David's case, the answers to those two questions were not what you might expect.