

**CALVARY PANDAN BIBLE-
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

[Adapted from Bethel Bible-Presbyterian
Church, 10 Downing St. Oakleigh, Vic.,
3166]

**DHW BIBLE CLASS
LESSON 11**

**FIRST SAMUEL
CHAPTER 16**

INTRODUCTION

There are many occasions in life when it is wiser to withhold information than to disclose everything. Discretion is the better part of valour. But it does not mean that we can lie. Withholding information without presenting a false picture is not lying. But withholding information with the purpose of misleading another party is deception which is worse than lying.

We seem to be more susceptible to an outward display of pomp and pageantry than to the inward demeanour of simplicity and sincerity. We are prone to look at the physical rather than the spiritual. Many have fallen because they are attracted to outward showiness and appearances!

Sometimes we fail to realise our blessed surroundings and are insensitive to or unaware of the people around us who genuinely care for us. We are too self-centred and inward looking.

In this chapter, the account of Samuel's commission to anoint the new king, David, teaches and illustrates some precious guidelines for us.

COMMENTARY

Choosing Another king—vv. 1-5

It grieved Samuel that Saul had failed miserably as a king. Saul had shown promise in the beginning. He had the potential to become a great king. He failed not because of a lack of talent but because he had turned away and disobeyed the LORD. The LORD told Samuel to stop grieving for Saul. There is an end to every thing. Samuel must not overdo it as if God had wronged Saul by rejecting him as king. There is a time for mourning and a time to stop mourning. It was time for Samuel to move on with God's will and look for a new king!

The LORD had a secret errand for him to go to Jesse (pronounce in Hebrew, *yee-shah-ee*, = "I possess") the Bethlehemite.¹ The LORD was going to *provide for Himself a king* from among Jesse's sons to succeed Saul. There is a difference in the way the LORD referred to the new king -- that He would provide for Himself a king in contrast to "*make them a king*" (8:22).

The filling of the horn with the sacred oil for anointing had been done once before when Samuel anointed Saul (10:1). This act was an indication that a new king had been earmarked. Samuel remarked that his life would be in danger if Saul came to know about it. Samuel's fear of Saul intimated the amount of power that Saul had given to himself in Israel and his determination to hang on to power. Even the fearless Samuel was wary of him, though not for his own life but

¹ Jesse was the son of Obed, who was the son of Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:17, 22). They belong to the clan of Nahshon, who was the chief of the tribe of Judah in the time of Moses (Numbers 2:3).

that the plan of God be not jeopardised.

The LORD had a solution. He told Samuel to take a bull with him and say that he had come to make a sacrifice to the LORD. He was to invite Jesse to the sacrifice and then the LORD would show him what to do next. We are faced with an apparent ethical problem. Is the LORD teaching Samuel to tell a lie, a half truth? The answer is an emphatic “No”. God is the God of truth and He “desires truth in the inward parts” (Psalm 51:6). How then can we explain the LORD’S instructions to Samuel? There is a vast difference between telling a lie and withholding information. Not everything need to be told to another who has requested for information, especially someone who has forfeited his right to know because of his hostile attitude and moral standards. Saul had disobeyed and rejected God. He had forfeited his right to know the purpose of Samuel’s errand to the house of Jesse. Saul was also on the war path to thwart God’s plan of finding a new king to replace him. It was heavenly wisdom to prevent a mad man like Saul from spoiling God’s spiritual plan for the salvation of mankind. Remember that the Lord Jesus Christ will ultimately come from David’s line.

Samuel did what the LORD told him to do. In spite of the danger to his life, Samuel obeyed the LORD. He trusted the LORD. He made his way to Bethlehem. The elders of the town did not give him a rousing welcome. Instead they were so fearful of him that they “trembled at his coming”. They asked him (16:4): “Do you come in peace?” This indicated the extent of Samuel’s

reputation as a no-nonsense prophet and judge of the LORD. In addition, it evidenced his loneliness as a servant of the LORD, always faithful and true to Him.

Samuel answered that he came in peace and had come to make a sacrifice unto the LORD. He told the people to sanctify (set apart) themselves, in other words, to prepare themselves to worship the LORD. They were to stop whatever they were doing and to gather together to worship the LORD. It also involved the usual ceremonial washings and purifications.² Samuel also called specifically for Jesse and his sons to attend the worship service.

The Spirit of the LORD Came upon David—vv. 6-13

Jesse and his sons came to the worship service in response to Samuel’s invitation. As Eliab the eldest son came, Samuel was impressed with his appearance and thought that he was the appointed candidate. He was good looking and tall just like Saul. But outward appearance could be deceptive as evidenced in Saul’s case. The LORD cautioned Samuel that He does not see as man sees. Man is impressed with the outward appearance whereas the LORD looks into the heart.³ From the LORD’S

² Exodus 19:14 And Moses went down from the mount unto the people, and sanctified the people; and they washed their clothes.

³ Compare, 1 Chronicles 28:9 And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

perspective, a man's heart is more important than his physical appearance.

Jesse got his sons to appear before Samuel, one by one. After Eliab, it was Abinadab, and Samuel said that it was not the LORD'S choice. Then Jesse made Shammah to pass by Samuel. He too was not the LORD'S choice. Then four other sons of Jesse were made to pass by Samuel. All of them were not chosen. Samuel asked Jesse whether these were all the sons he had. The reason why Samuel asked Jesse was because the LORD had clearly told him that He would provide for Himself a king from among Jesse's sons. There had to be at least one more son. Jesse answered that the youngest was tending the sheep. Jesse did not present him because he must have been very young, probably a teenager, and because he had to look after the family's flock. Someone had to tend the sheep while the father and the older brothers were at the worship service. The youngest son was usually chosen for such a task.

Samuel said that he would "not sit down" (turn around or leave) until the youngest son be brought before him. So Jesse sent for his youngest son, David, to be brought before Samuel. David arrived. He was described as ruddy (the word means "red" or "reddish-brown") and with a "beautiful countenance" (Hebrew, literally, fair of eyes = showing good mental and spiritual qualities). He was also "goodly to look to" which did not necessarily mean handsome, but pleasant or agreeable to look at. And the LORD told Samuel, "Arise,

anoint him: for this is he" (16:12). Just in case some think that to be godly you have to be ugly, God describes David as good looking.

Samuel carried out the LORD'S instructions accordingly. He took the horn of oil and anointed David by pouring the oil on his head and immediately the Spirit of the LORD came upon him. This anointing signified that David had been separated unto the LORD for His service and that he would be empowered to carry out the work he had been chosen to do. It was performed before his brothers. Having done what the LORD had instructed, Samuel left the place straightaway to return to Ramah.

There was a great contrast between David's and Saul's anointing. David's anointing was not accompanied by any miracles whereas Saul's was accompanied by three clear miracles. Saul was never in doubt about his anointing. David's anointing was simple and straightforward without a word spoken by David whereas Saul had a lengthy conversation with Samuel. It is as if God is telling us that Saul was given more than enough to succeed as king but he threw everything away because of his self-seeking pride. David, on the other hand, was quiet and his humility was genuine. His calling was subdued but no less real.

The Preparation of David to be the New king—vv. 14-23

The Spirit of the LORD, who came upon Saul when he was anointed (10:6), now departed from him and an "evil spirit from the LORD troubled him" (16:14).⁴ The timing of

⁴ Compare the dire consequences that Samson suffered when the Spirit of the

the departure of the Spirit of God from Saul and the coming of the Spirit upon young David was significant. The old must give way to the new as God had already replaced the old. The rejection was final and realized. Some people today may find this inconsistent with the character of God. First of all, the word "evil" used here is the Hebrew word "*ra*" which can be translated in various ways depending on the context – (adjectives) evil, tormenting, injurious; (noun), calamity, disaster. The word "evil" here should be read in the sense of "injurious" or "tormenting".

When Job suffered the loss of his children and possessions, he declared to his wife (Job 2:10b), "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil (disasters, calamities)?" God has revealed to us that He is sovereign, and that He exercises His sovereignty in the affairs of men. There are times when He disciplines the people for their sins against Him and His people. God Himself declares in Isaiah 45:6-7, "*I am the LORD, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil (calamities): I the LORD do all these things.*" As far as king Saul was concerned, he suffered these mental maladies after his confrontation with

LORD left him (Judges 16:20-21): "And she said, The Philistines *be* upon thee, Samson. And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the LORD was departed from him. But the Philistines took him, and put out his eyes {put out: Heb. bored out}, and brought him down to Gaza, and bound him with fetters of brass; and he did grind in the prison house."

Samuel over the question of disobedience to the LORD's command. This suggested that his illness was due to his rebellion against God. He was therefore responsible for his actions.

Saul's servants were concerned for him whenever he suffered these mental depressions. He needed help. He was surrounded by good servants. They asked for his permission to look for a musician who could play the harp (lyre which is a smaller and portable version). So whenever Saul was afflicted with his mental trouble, the musician would play the harp and the music would be able to restore his peace of mind. In those days, music was regarded as a form of therapy capable of bringing relief to a man's hurting mind and heart. Saul instructed his servants to go ahead and bring a musician to him.

One of the servants knew that a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite could play the harp. He was not only a skilful musician but a brave and powerful man of war. He was also prudent in matters and well-favoured. The reason why David was so successful was because the LORD was with him (16:18). This was God's way of bringing David into the kingly realm and be exposed to the work and ministry of kingship.

Saul summoned his messengers to Jesse and commanded him to send (imperative mood) his son, David, to him. As no one appeared before the king empty-handed, Jesse sent David off to the king with some produce from his farm. David arrived at the court of the king. Straightaway, Saul loved him greatly. David must have been a lovable lad. Saul made him his armour bearer. Saul requested Jesse to let David serve him.

Whenever Saul was troubled, David would play his harp and Saul would be refreshed and well and the evil spirit would depart from him. In this way, Saul was dependant on David.

PRACTICAL VALUE

Samuel loved Saul and he mourned for Saul. Their relationship had turned for the worse because of Saul's disobedience to God and his refusal to confess his sin and admit his culpability. Saul had become proud and insensitive to his own sins. Samuel mourned for Saul not in the personal sense but more in the religious sense. As a prophet of God who had anointed the first king of Israel, he felt a great burden when Saul turned bad. It could be likened to a pastor who had ordained another who later turned out to be a crook; or to a pastor who had performed a wedding ceremony for a couple whose marriage later ended in divorce. The pastor might feel that perhaps things would be different if he had done a little bit more. But we must never over "mourn" the way Samuel had done. God had to intervene to get Samuel to stop mourning and continue with his duties.

We also learn from Samuel to trust and obey God. He knew that his life would be in danger and the ministry of God would be jeopardised if people came to know about the anointing of David. But the LORD had a plan. His plan was religiously legitimate and served its purpose. It was not a deception. The offering was genuine as it was for the purpose of anointing David as the new king. A deception is where some information was held back leading the hearer to a wrong

conclusion. God did not ask Samuel to do that.

The next lesson is that God looks at the heart of man rather than his outward appearance. This is a very valuable principle to follow when we have the intention to build a lasting relationship of trust and commitment. How do we choose an elder, a deacon, a leader or a friend? Do we place more emphasis on his academic laurels, his social position, his financial resources, his status and his standing in society? These things are not wrong in themselves but if these are what we look for in a person then we, like the world, are definitely wrong. Instead, we should look for evidence of honesty and integrity, faithfulness to the Lord, "a man after God's own heart" and other biblical and spiritual qualifications (compare 1 Timothy 3). Such a person will be godly. The wrong criteria will have disastrous consequences. We are warned against the deception of external appearances. The fact that God sees the heart and not the external appearance is a great comfort to Christians. We recollect the testimony of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 2:25): "*And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man.*"

As the LORD had chosen David, He provided opportunities for him to receive his training to be the next king. And there was no better way than to serve Saul in the palace. David learned by observing how a king behaved. He learned to emulate the good things and avoid the bad ones. He was Saul's armour-bearer and this was the best position to observe all that the king did as he would always be by his side. David knew that he would be the next king.

But he waited for God's timing. Meanwhile he served the king as a musician. It is no wonder that he wrote half of the book of Psalms!

Amen.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

Monday: 1 Samuel 16:1-5; 1 Chronicles 2:10-15; Proverbs 29:11.

Tuesday: 1 Samuel 16:6-10; Jeremiah 17:9-10; Matthew 6:1-2.

Wednesday: 1 Samuel 16:11-13; Jeremiah 23:3-8; Matthew 4:18-22.

Thursday: 1 Samuel 16:14-18; Genesis 39:2-3, 21-23; Joshua 6:27.

Friday: 1 Samuel 16:19-23; Matthew 12:43-45; Proverbs 22:29.

Analysis

Text	Practical Value
1 Samuel 16:1-5	
1 Samuel 16:6-13	
1 Samuel 16:14-18	
1 Samuel 16:19-23	

Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever over mourn for someone such that you gave the wrong impression to the people around you? Cite examples.

2. How can we look beyond the external when we cannot see the heart? Is it true that the external is all that is available to deduce a person's character?

3. Do you agree with God's instruction to Samuel to offer a sacrifice in order to hide the fact that he was there to anoint David?

4. What kind of reputation do you have in your office? Samuel was known as a no-nonsense prophet. Is this good?

5. What kingly benefits did David gain by serving Saul?
