

Seeing Like God Sees

1 Samuel 16

“For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”

Introduction: Humans are visual creatures, created with eyes to see and enjoy the beauty of creation itself. God did not create in monochrome or black and white, but in full and vast colors, textures, and forms. We do not have to have a definition of beauty to have our breath taken away in Yosemite, nor do we have to be trained in art to enjoy a sunset over the ocean. We are designed to behold beauty as a means of enjoying God Himself, the creator, designer, and creative genius behind every bit of splendor.

However, in the fall of man into sin, not only has beauty been distorted, a wrong emphasis has been put on it. Humanity now values externals NOT as means to worship but TO worship. Each culture has decided what defines beauty and chases after it as an ultimate means of satisfaction and standing. We see it in our culture. There is an emphasis on how women look and dress, with billion dollar industries created to artificially enhance external looks by adding plastic or vacuuming out cellulite so that one can LOOK like someone else. The image a person presents is paramount, making sure one has the right look, wears the right brand, or has the right physique. Not only this, but the proliferation of **social media** has upped the comparison game, as someone can post a picture of themselves for evaluation, and if they don't look quite right, can use *filters* to make a nose look thinner or complexion less blotchy. All of this is done because how someone **sees** us has bearing on our own identity.

If we think this thinking has not invaded the church or Christian community, we are sorely mistaken. Pastors are now supposed to have an image, and instead of being appalled and embarrassed in trying to act like the world, some have embraced worldly standards and philosophies. In a 2019 NY Times article, Rick Rojas asked the question, “*should pastors wear \$5000 sneakers?*”, to which my first comment was, “*they make \$5000 sneakers??!!!* John Gray, a pastor in South Carolina, tried to justify wearing a \$5000 pair of Air Yeezy' 2's, and Chad Veach, who preached in our own backyard of Los Angeles, had a \$1900 Gucci bag and wore \$795 pants. **Why???!?** Because outward image matters to people, and if the pastor is dressing and living large (don't get me started on the cars some pastors drive), they too might have God's blessing. Far from the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, pastors and churches that emphasize the **external side of life**, whether physical or mere keeping of standards, miss **how God sees us**, what He desires, and what the gospel ultimately does in our life.

As we continue on in 1 Samuel, we find ourselves as a transition from Saul to David, the portrait of a faithful king, who would bring Israel to the height of its significance and strength, ushering in a golden era in history. God makes **His choice** in David, rather than accommodating Israel's choice of Saul, and in so doing, shows us **how He truly sees us**. 1 Samuel 16:7 becomes a theme verse for all of 1 & 2 Samuel, giving the counter-cultural way that God builds His kingdom. Our goal is to understand how God sees and in understanding this, cultivate **a heart for God through the means He provides**.

The Narrative – God's Choice in David

The story starts with a depressed priest as Samuel was grieving the loss of Saul. Obviously, Saul was NOT dead, but had been rejected by God since he refused to repent. This resonates with anyone in

ministry (which means all of us) or parent when we pour our life into someone we love only to see them reject the Lord, faith, or gospel. But God does not allow us to stay down on the mat very long, and encouraged Samuel to move forward with hope since He was **providing for Himself** a king among the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite (v. 1). Clearly, Samuel was not only sad but keenly aware of the political instability of the day as he knew if Saul was aware that another king would be anointed it could mean the end of his life. God reassured Samuel to go and simply say he was making a sacrifice, which he was, and not tell the final intention of the visit. As he brought the sacrifice to Bethlehem, the animal was butchered, a feast was prepared, which left time for Samuel to meet Jesse's sons and anoint the one of God's choosing.

As Jesse presented his seven sons to Samuel, each one looked the part, especially the first named Eliab. Samuel thought for sure this was the one, since he had the stature and look like a king. But Samuel fell into the same trap as Israel did before with Saul, valuing the **external look rather than what resided in the heart**. After each brother was rejected, it was told there was one other one, David, who was off caring for the sheep. When David walked in, the LORD said *"Rise and anoint him, for this is he!"* (12). Samuel anointed him with oil and the Spirit of the LORD rushed on him from that day forward. But then the story takes a most unexpected turn.

David did not take the throne, nor was there any public announcement. In fact, this anointing was kept hidden for a considerable time until God saw fit to make it known. Now as the Spirit ascended on David, it ceremoniously **departed** from Saul, and replaced by a harmful spirit from the LORD, which tormented him. This tormenting spirit could come and go, responded to David's music, and was from the LORD. When Saul's servants realized this spirit was upon Saul, they recommended Saul commission someone to come and play for him, *"Provide for me a man who can play well and bring him to me"* (17), which sounds a bit like an advertisement for a local sports team, but one that was needed to aid Saul's condition. As God would providentially provide, the man who was recommended to Saul was none other than David himself. David entered Saul's service and not only played well, but became Saul's trusted armor bearer – a valued position. The text says that Saul **loved David greatly** (21), showing that not only God chose David, but Saul did as well! David remained in Saul's service and found favor in Saul's sight, serving Saul well in this phase of his life. This will set the scene for David's throw down encounter with Goliath in the next chapter.

That's how the story goes. But we want to look back at **two specific areas of the story** – *how God valued David differently than Saul in terms of his character, and then evaluate how God sees us in terms of our heart.*

The New King – God's Value in David's Character

Now, let's come back and scan the text in a different way. Notice first the main verse in the chapter: *"When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, 'Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.'"*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 a summary of the chapter and the book. Let's look at how God looked at David differently than Saul, who Samuel had said was *"better than you"* in 15:28.

- **David was a better shepherd than Saul** – If you remember way back to 1 Samuel 9 when we first met Saul, he was on a mission by his father to find some lost donkey's. The mission was a

complete failure. They searched and could not find them. Why was that narrative in the text? Partly to bring Saul into the city where Samuel was, but also to illustrate a weakness of Saul's ability to **shepherd**. David is presented as one who was **keeping the sheep**, and we will see that he protected them from wild animals with his own life (1 Sam. 17:36). Is this reading a bit too much into the text? Not at all. God's heart for leadership is to **shepherd his people, be it religious or political leader**. In Ezek. 34, God condemns the shepherds of Israel for failing at their appointed job, and described that job as:

*15 I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I myself will **make them lie down**, declares the Lord God. 16 I will **seek the lost**, and I will **bring back the strayed**, and I will **bind up the injured**, and I will **strengthen the weak**, and the **fat and the strong I will destroy**. I will **feed them in justice**.*

What a beautiful picture of God's shepherding in OUR lives. He gave Israel priests and kings to do this, and to the church we have pastors/elders (1 Pet. 5:1-3; Acts 20:28-29). David was to be prince among them (Ezek. 34:24) and be an under-shepherd on behalf of God Himself. Christ is our great shepherd, not only in leading and caring, but laying His life down for us (John 10:15)

- **David had external attributes, but that did not define him** – Saul was known for his physical attributes and the people loved the way he looked in a suit of armor, which in the Lord's eyes was negative. Let us be clear, there is nothing wrong with beauty or looking good (phew!). In fact, notice David's description was striking: *ruddy, beautiful eyes, and handsome*. Is God being fickle and whimsical in His standards? By no means. Not only was David not KNOWN by his looks, he was **overlooked** by all his brothers, being the youngest. His older brothers **looked and fit the part**, and by comparison, David was left down the ranks.

It's not hard to see the parallels to how people saw Jesus. Though He was a man of utmost gentleness, kindness, and love, he had *"no form or majesty that we should look at Him, and no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not."* (Isa. 53:2-3) Jesus did not look the part. He was not the king that the people wanted when He presented Himself to Israel. He was the TRUE KING, the ONE who was worthy to make the ultimate sacrifice on their behalf. But the beauty of Jesus was NOT external but in His nature, as He was crushed by the Father for us, giving His life for ours (Isa. 53:10).

- **David was a man of known character** – A person's character is NOT what they tell you about themselves or what they think about themselves, but who they are over time, proven by actions and attitudes under pressure and in ease. David WAS known for the following attributes: *skillful in playing the lyre, a man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, a man of good presence, and the LORD is with Him* (16:18). Now, if that were said of any man in this church, we'd be blessed! This shows David was disciplined, brave, skilled, wise, and appropriate. He carried himself well. Remember, Saul only surrounded himself with men of valor (14:52), masking what was lacking. We will see he was not a brave, lacked wisdom, and ultimately, the LORD was not with him.

To the young this morning: **character rules!** Focus on the development of your character, not your trophies or awards. Value the unseen qualities that grow over time rather than the external parts that

only fade over time. One of the beautiful realities of marriage is that I can confidently say that my wife gets MORE BEAUTIFUL over time, because God continues to develop her into the woman He wants her to be, and her qualities of kindness, care, and faithfulness only grow over time. In a world that only sees what's on a screen or that can be captured in a moment, we want to be people who value what God shapes over time.

- **David proved his humility** – Finally, David showed a remarkable amount of humility, the quality that rules them all. Saul built a monument to himself when he thought he had finished the task God gave him (15:12), even though he fell woefully short of the command. David was anointed king, but no one seemed to know it. Not only that, but he was called into service of the **present and rejected king**, helping comfort him during times of demonic oppression. David had to wait. He had to serve even though Saul continued to make bad decision after bad decision. Twice David would have an opportunity to end Saul's life, and he refused to take it, because he humbly followed and trusted the Lord. **He was willing to become a servant before the LORD, and thus willingly served a rejected king.** THIS IS HUMILITY ON DISPLAY! It reminds us once again, as does this whole chapter, of our great Savior and LORD:

*Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, **by taking the form of a servant**, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, **he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross***

Philippians 2:5-8

The ultimate example of humility and service is found in Jesus Himself, who never stopped being God but added humanity to become like us in every way, yet without sin. He took on the FORM of a servant, embodying the nature of a servant to lay down His life. It was humility that Jesus displayed, what David manifested, and what we are called to.

Now, let us go back once again to the theme verse of this section and try to bring all of this together. God does not look on the outward appearance of man, although He is the One who created beauty. We want to unpack the phrase **"the LORD looks on the heart"**, since it is **foundational and fundamental to the entirety of our Christian life**. We must understand what God desires, what we lack, what He does, and how we can cultivate a heart that God looks at with approval and delight.

The Nature of the Heart – God Sees the Heart of Man

The **heart** is described Biblically as the **inner person**, the seat of emotion, intellect, and volition. It denotes the secret person from where character is derived, where motives are formed, and where choices are made. This is what God wants from us, since it out of the heart that the mouth speaks (Matt. 12:34) and our treasure is revealed (Matt. 6:21)

WHAT GOD DESIRES FROM US OUT OF OUR HEART

God made mankind to glorify Him by enjoying Him through the entirety of creation. He created beauty, marriage, food, sex, cultivating the land, birds, sun, stars, and relationships to be enjoyed before Him. In this, God wanted ALL the glory, ALL the praise, All the worship. This is why He commanded:

- Israel to love Him with **All their heart**, and to keep His words and commands on their heart (Deut. 6:5-6)
- Joshua called Israel to serve God with **all their heart and souls** as they conquered the Promised Land, and to yield their hearts to Him (Josh. 22:5; 24:23)
- Jesus called His disciples, including us, to **love Him with all our heart** (Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27)

This is why we say the call to follow Jesus is an all in command, yielding ourselves to Him with all of ourselves, not part, since God does not deal in partialities. He knows our hearts (Acts 15:8-10) and one day all the motives and intentions of our **hearts** will be revealed, brought to light, and those things hidden will be disclosed and judged.

OUR PROBLEM AT THE LEVEL OF THE HEART

The problem with our heart is obvious, but let's confirm it with Scripture anyway. It does not take long in life to realize that we have a problem that is sourced in our heart. We can give a child all the advantages, nurturing, music, and oils that want, their true heart will always be revealed loud and often. Why? Since the Fall of mankind in Genesis 3, man is on a downward trajectory in terms of his sin, because we are all born with **sinful hearts**

- The Flood was needed since the world was so bad that **every inclination of the thoughts of mankind was evil continually** (Genesis 6:5)
- Our hearts are filled with malice (Ps. 5:9), deception (Ps. 12:2), and pride (Obad 3)
- Our hearts are deceitfully wicked and desperately sick, who can understand it? (Jer. 17:9)
- Our hearts are foolish, since it argues there is NO GOD, either by word or deed (Ps. 14:1; 53:1)
- Even when we go through spiritual motions, our **hearts can be far from God** (Matt. 15:8-9), and out of the **heart comes evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness and slander. These are what defile a person.** (Matt. 15:19-20)

We stand condemned before God because we failed to glorify Him (Rom. 3:23) because our hearts are wicked, sinful and full of evil. That is categorical, universal, and pervasive. What we all needed was a **heart transplant, and that's exactly what God gave us.**

THE NEED OF A NEW HEART

Adding Jesus is never sufficient because salvation demands transformation, a complete and new heart. When the light of the truth of Jesus breaks through so that we can see the gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4) and when we believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 10:9-10), we are justified. But something else happens, that **Ezekiel 36:26 promised:**

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

This is a promise to Israel that will be finally fulfilled one day, but it was also extended to us non-Jews through the work of the Spirit and sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Notice that a **new heart** is the equivalence of being a NEW CREATION (2 Cor. 5:17), in that He had to **remove the heart of stone and give us a**

responsive heart of flesh. This new heart, along with the indwelling Spirit and living Word, allow us to now fulfill what God had originally called us to.

CULTIVATING THE NEW HEART

This is why we must cultivate our new heart that God gave so that we can worship, obey, and enjoy Him. A heart of flesh can be covered in fat, get lazy, and thus easily get unresponsive.

- We are to be obedient from the heart (Rom. 6:17) so we must apply our heart to understanding (Prov. 2:2) and let wisdom enter into it (Prov. 2:10)
- We seek Him with our whole heart (Ps 119:2, 10), storing up His Word in our heart (Ps. 119:11), delighting in His commands with our whole heart (Ps. 119:34-35). We ask God to enlarge our heart (Ps. 119:32), to incline our heart (119:36), and make his testimonies the joy of our heart (119:111). We trust Him (Prov. 3:5) and guard our heart (Prov. 4:23)
- We let Christ RULE in our heart (Col. 3:15), singing with gratitude in our hearts (Col. 3:16)
- In our hearts, we **honor Christ the Lord as holy** (1 Pet. 3:15)
- We surround ourselves with others who will exhort our hearts (Heb. 3:12-14)

The point with this is: our new hearts are designed to be cultivated, to grow, since this is what God sees. It also means that when we find ourselves in situation and circumstances of harsh working conditions (Eph. 6:6) or hard marriages (1 Pet. 3:1-6), we know that God is using them to **craft our hearts as precious commodities before Him**. This is what matriarchs like Sarah realized, even as her husband did not always protect her:

*Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— 4 **but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious.** 5 For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, 6 as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord*

So we want to see as God sees, knowing that our hearts are precious to Him, when we trust Him completely, believe His Word, obey His commands, and cultivate our new hearts before Him. May we be people who love God from the heart, all of it, as we yield ourselves to the Lord of our hearts.