

1 Samuel 9
June 5, 2022

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: What do you think our culture looks for in a leader versus what God looks for in a leader? What would be some compare and contrasts? [Let people engage]

Transition: What our culture looks for in a leader is different than what God looks for in a leader. I Peter 5:1-5 says,

“**5** To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder and a witness of Christ’s sufferings who also will share in the glory to be revealed: **2** Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; **3** not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. **4** And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.**5** In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.”

You will recall that the Israelites demanded to have a king to be like other nations. Samuel went to God with their request, and God allowed it. So today we are introduced to God’s pick for the first king of Israel. Let’s see what kind of credentials Saul had. Let’s begin.

BOOK:

Samuel Anoints Saul

9 There was a Benjamite, a man of standing, whose name was Kish son of Abiel, the son of Zeror, the son of Becorath, the son of Aphiah of Benjamin. **2** He had a son named Saul, an impressive young man without equal among the Israelites—a head taller than any of the others.

3 Now the donkeys belonging to Saul’s father Kish were lost, and Kish said to his son Saul, “Take one of the servants with you and go and look for the donkeys.” **4** So he passed through the hill country of Ephraim and through the area around Shalisha, but they did not find them. They went on into the district of Shaalim, but the donkeys were not there. Then he passed through the territory of Benjamin, but they did not find them.

5 When they reached the district of Zuph, Saul said to the servant who was with him, “Come, let’s go back, or my father will stop thinking about the donkeys and start worrying about us.”

6 But the servant replied, “Look, in this town there is a man of God; he is highly respected, and everything he says comes true. Let’s go there now. Perhaps he will tell us what way to take.”

7 Saul said to his servant, “If we go, what can we give the man? The food in our sacks is gone. We have no gift to take to the man of God. What do we have?”

8 The servant answered him again. “Look,” he said, “I have a quarter of a shekel (3 grams) of silver. I will give it to the man of God so that he will tell us what way to take.” **9** (Formerly in Israel, if a man went to inquire of God, he would say, “Come, let us go to the seer,” because the prophet of today used to be called a seer.)

10 “Good,” Saul said to his servant. “Come, let’s go.” So they set out for the town where the man of God was.

¹¹ As they were going up the hill to the town, they met some girls coming out to draw water, and they asked them, “Is the seer here?”

¹² “He is,” they answered. “He’s ahead of you. Hurry now; he has just come to our town today, for the people have a sacrifice at the high place. ¹³ As soon as you enter the town, you will find him before he goes up to the high place to eat. The people will not begin eating until he comes, because he must bless the sacrifice; afterward, those who are invited will eat. Go up now; you should find him about this time.”

¹⁴ They went up to the town, and as they were entering it, there was Samuel, coming toward them on his way up to the high place.

¹⁵ Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel: ¹⁶ “About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked upon my people, for their cry has reached me.”

¹⁷ When Samuel caught sight of Saul, the LORD said to him, “This is the man I spoke to you about; he will govern my people.”

¹⁸ Saul approached Samuel in the gateway and asked, “Would you please tell me where the seer’s house is?”

¹⁹ “I am the seer,” Samuel replied. “Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart. ²⁰ As for the donkeys you lost three days ago, do not worry about them; they have been found. And to whom is all the desire of Israel turned, if not to you and all your father’s family?”

²¹ Saul answered, “But am I not a Benjamite, from the smallest tribe of Israel, and is not my clan the least of all the clans of the tribe of Benjamin? Why do you say such a thing to me?”

²² Then Samuel brought Saul and his servant into the hall and seated them at the head of those who were invited—about thirty in number. ²³ Samuel said to the cook, “Bring the piece of meat I gave you, the one I told you to lay aside.”

²⁴ So the cook took up the leg with what was on it and set it in front of Saul. Samuel said, “Here is what has been kept for you. Eat, because it was set aside for you for this occasion, from the time I said, ‘I have invited guests.’” And Saul dined with Samuel that day.

²⁵ After they came down from the high place to the town, Samuel talked with Saul on the roof of his house. ²⁶ They rose about daybreak and Samuel called to Saul on the roof, “Get ready, and I will send you on your way.” When Saul got ready, he and Samuel went outside together. ²⁷ As they were going down to the edge of the town, Samuel said to Saul, “Tell the servant to go on ahead of us”—and the servant did so—“but you stay here awhile, so that I may give you a message from God.”

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What did you most like about this passage? What resonated with you? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you least like about this passage? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you find in this passage that you didn’t understand? [Let people engage]

Q: What do we learn about Jesus in this passage? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

God repeatedly made everyday events work for His purposes. He led Saul to Samuel during Saul's search for lost donkeys. You never know how God is at work in our lives to fulfill His purpose through you. Stay sensitive to the leadership to the Holy Spirit.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1993). Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the Old Testament (1 Sa 9). Victor Books.

The nation listened to Samuel and then asked for a king just the same! They wanted to be like the other nations, even though God had called them to be separate from the nations. Chapter 9 explains how Saul was brought to Samuel and privately anointed for the kingship. Note his humility in 9:21, and also in 10:22 when he hesitated to stand before the people. God gave Saul three special signs to assure him (10:1–7). Samuel also instructed Saul to tarry at Gilgal and wait for him to come (10:8). Verse 8 should be translated, “When you go before me to Gilgal”—that is, at some future date when King Saul would have the army ready for battle. This event took place some years later; see chap. 13.

Saul had everything in his favor: (1) a strong body, 10:23; (2) a humble mind, 9:21; (3) a new heart, 10:9; (4) spiritual power, 10:10; (5) loyal friends, 10:26; and most of all, (6) the guidance and prayers of Samuel. Yet in spite of these advantages, he failed miserably. Why? Because he would not allow God to be the Lord of his life.

Merrill, E. H. (1985). 1 Samuel. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures (Vol. 1, pp. 440-441) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

After **the LORD** had agreed to let **the people** have **a king ... like all the other nations**, Saul was introduced in the story. He was a tall and striking **Benjamite** (9:1) who appeared quite naive and unkingly in many ways. He hailed from the town of Gibeah (10:26), where the concubine of a

Levite who had sought hospitality was raped and killed (Jud. 19). Excavations at Tel el-Ful, just three miles north of Jerusalem, have established it as the site of ancient Gibeah. Though a **son of Kish**, a man of some influence (1 Sam. 9:1), Saul had little to commend him to the high position of **king** except his physical impressiveness (9:2). God had to convince both Saul and **the people** that he was the proper candidate.

9:3–11. On a mission to find some lost **donkeys** belonging to his **father Kish**, Saul approached the region of **Zuph** (in **the hill country of Ephraim**; cf. 1:1, the home of Samuel). It occurred to Saul's **servant** that since Samuel was a **seer** he could help **find** the animals. In Saul's day a **prophet** was known primarily as a **seer** (*rō'eh*) undoubtedly because the major thrust of his ministry was associated with receiving divine revelation, even in matters as mundane as finding **lost** animals. Later prophets served more as proclaimers of revelation, spokesmen for God (*nābī'*), though of course all prophets were both seers and proclaimers. Samuel, for example, was expressly described by both terms (9:11; 3:20).

9:12–14. When Saul and his servant arrived in Samuel's **town**, they found that the prophet was on his way to a nearby **high place** (a place of worship on a hill) to offer a **sacrifice**. Undaunted, they continued on until they located him.

4. THE CHOICE OF THE KING (9:15–27)

9:15–27. Meanwhile **the LORD had revealed ... to Samuel** that Saul was on his way and that he was the divine choice for king (vv. 15–17). This does not mean that Saul satisfied God's ultimate requirements but only that He was graciously letting the **people** have their own way. When the two met (by God's providential control), **Samuel** not only put Saul's mind at ease concerning the **lost** beasts but also told him that he was God's choice for king (v. 20). Astounded, **Saul** could only reply that he was unworthy of this high honor (v. 21). The transparency and humility of Saul are evident at this stage of his career. **Samuel** then invited **Saul** to sit with him as guest of honor at the sacrificial feast (vv. 22–24) and then to spend the night in his home in **the town** below. Next morning **Samuel** detained him so that he might communicate with him alone (with Saul's **servant** going **on ahead**) the revelation of **God** about his selection as king (vv. 25–27).

Mathews, K. A. (1998). The Historical Books. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), Holman Concise Bible Commentary (p. 112). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

God Reveals Israel's King (9:1–27). A Benjamite named Saul searched with his servant for the lost donkeys of his father, Kish. Saul's servant knew of Samuel, the prophet of God. They sought him to inquire of God where they might find the donkeys. On the previous day God had informed Samuel that he would meet a man from Benjamin whom he should anoint king over Israel. God reserved the right to choose Israel's king (Deut. 17:15). Saul remained with Samuel to attend a sacrificial feast. The next day Samuel detained him to receive a message from God.

Philbeck, B. F. (1972). 1 Samuel. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), The Teacher's Bible Commentary (pp. 168-169). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Samuel Meets Saul (1 Sam. 9:1–27)

The passage—Once again the modern reader's interest in the mechanics of Israel's political reorganization is frustrated. Nothing is said of the fact that Judah and Simeon were no longer really considered a part of Israel's northern tribal organization (see Judg. 5). The record is likewise silent regarding the regional interests and parochial prejudices which had repeatedly undercut the effectiveness of Israel's weak central government. Certainly, each tribe must have advanced its own favorite son, or sons, as candidates for the throne.

The biblical author, however, again assumes his characteristic theological perspective. God selected Israel's king, first by revealing him to Samuel (chap. 8), and then by designating him before the national assembly at Mizpah (9:17–24). The divine hand is seen running through all of human history. God could use a search for lost donkeys for his own purposes or announce his selection of Saul as king before Samuel even met him (vv. 15–17).

In any case, the new king's selection appeared to be a wise political move. Saul came from a Benjaminite family which had already distinguished itself by its achievements. His tribe was centrally located and hence in a strategic position to unite the north and the south. Moreover, since the tribe was small, other groups would have little to fear or envy in Benjamin's growing influence. Perhaps equally important, Saul looked like a king. Standing head and shoulders above his fellows, he appeared to be a man who could capture the imagination of the people and lead Israel's armies to victory.

Special points—The story of Saul's rise to power is divided into three shorter episodes: his selection by Samuel (9:3–10:16), his presentation to Israel (10:17–27), and his winning of popular support (11:1–15).

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (1 Samuel 9). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.