

This Godly Hero Proves God Can Use You No Matter What

If David had written an autobiography, I believe he would have emphasized that being the choice of God isn't all it's cracked up to be. Any person seeking to live for God faces excruciatingly tough decisions. Living out that passion for God in such a violent era as David's is what makes his story so raw and so maddeningly complex.

It could be said that because of Saul's failures, God stripped David of his childhood. When most young boys are concerned with games, David was being anointed king of Israel. At the age an average teenager today learns to drive, David cut off the head of a giant.

David's early life is gut-checking. His life makes us rethink the whole question of what it means to be set apart by God for great things. Between David's anointing and his public coronation, decades of waiting and bloodshed, and waiting, and running, and waiting, and deceiving and waiting pass by.

Being a man after God's own heart means living life open and submitted to God's will and timing. It means telling Him, "I'm Yours, and I will trust in You, no matter what."

A Strange Boy

When David first appeared in the story that was to become his, he was a shepherd boy. His life was far from those of the romanticized shepherds of modern stories. In David's day, the shepherd in the family was the runt, the youngest, and often the most despised by his elders, who was made a shepherd because he was not capable of much else.

David had seven older brothers, grown men who were strong warriors. They endured their younger brother—barely. Jesse's

seven older sons thought David was strange, to say the least, and a bragging little liar, to say the worst.

From his earliest days, David's life had a touch of the miraculous. Consider the fact that David was a master musician at a prodigious age. Prodigies are often hated by their less-talented elders. Then there were his accounts of supernatural victories in the wilderness. Imagine an evening meal in David's family home: He has returned with his sheep, cleaned up and joined his older, larger brothers at the kitchen table. Challenged by their mother to be nicer to David, they fire off questions between bites.

"What did you do today, little brother?" one asks before immediately turning to his mother to make sure she noticed his "effort."

Guileless as the child he is, David answers without hesitation. "Today I killed a lion."

Imagine the ridicule, the mockery he must have endured.

Perhaps Eliab, the eldest, led the verbal assault. "Killed a lion, did you? Wow! That must have been dangerous business. It's a miracle you weren't killed."

"Yes," agrees the naïve child. "It was a miracle. A great miracle."

"How did you kill the ferocious beast?"

David, oblivious to the sarcasm, answers, "I punched him." Imagine the laughter. Gales of laughter.

David begins to realize he is being mocked, but he presses on. "Yes, he ran at the sheep, and I hit him with my fist."

"And he died? Just like that? Wow!" By now, everyone is up to speed on the conversation. The brothers are laughing together, and Jesse and his wife are smiling awkwardly and shaking their

heads.

“Yes, he died. Just like the bear.”

“Oh, a bear too. A lion and a bear. What a warrior. What a mighty slayer of beasts is this sweet singer of songs.”

After what feels like an eternity to David, his father, Jesse, raises his hand, and the laughter ceases. “OK, David.

Are you saying you killed a lion?”

“And a bear,” Abinadab adds. “Don’t forget the bear, Father.”

“And a bear?” Jesse asks. “A lion and a bear?”

“Yes,” David responds quietly.

Jesse looks into the innocent eyes of his youngest and says, “The next time you kill a lion or a bear, why don’t you cut off its head? Bring that head home and show it to your brothers. To all of us. No one calls anyone in this family a liar, and we’re not calling you a liar, son, but next time, bring the head.”

The Prophet Arrives

One day, the prophet Samuel arrived in town. This was a big deal, especially in a village like Bethlehem.

Since anointing Saul as the first king of Israel, Samuel had nearly retired and taken a back seat in the kingdom. His return to the scene, his arrival in Bethlehem, was something of a scary moment. There was serious apprehension.

Samuel doesn’t waste any time upon entering Bethlehem. He tells the elders of the town, “Gather at Jesse’s house for a sacrifice to the Lord.”

“Jesse’s house? What for?”

"I'm going there to anoint a new king," Samuel answers. The elders are shocked—probably horrified.

"Look, uh ... listen, we don't want to argue with a prophet. But we do have just one tiny, maybe important, maybe not, question: What about Saul?"

Without hesitation, Samuel responds bluntly, "What about him? I have nothing to do with Saul anymore. The next king is in Jesse's house."

That said, everyone gathers at Jesse's house. Samuel goes straight to Jesse's oldest, strongest son, Eliab. He is a perfect specimen of a man. *He looks kingly*, Samuel thinks to himself. *He's not Saul exactly, but he's impressive enough.* Samuel holds out the oil, ready to anoint Eliab, when he feels a spiritual check. "This isn't the one."

After going through all seven brothers, Samuel's next words to Jesse prompt one of the funniest exchanges in the Bible:

"Are you sure these are all your sons?"

"Am I sure these are all my sons?" Jesse asks in disgust. "What are you accusing me of? What's wrong with my boys here? What do you mean, are these all my sons?"

"Well, are they?"

Silence.

"Are they? I count seven sons. Is this right, Jesse?"

Jesse becomes quiet and looks away before answering.

"There, well, there is another ... out in the fields somewhere. The youngest. He is ... well ... What can I say?"

Samuel responds, "Let's see what God sees in him."

When David eventually arrives and sees everyone staring at

him, he must have been thinking to himself, *What did I do now?* He has absolutely no idea what's happening, but as the youngest he's used to being left out of the loop.

Perhaps Samuel himself argued with God. "Oh, Lord, no. Not this one, surely not this one."

Samuel listens for the only opinion that matters. "This is the one." Immediately, Samuel pours oil on David and anoints him as the next king of Israel.

His brothers' reactions must have been priceless. All their anger and envy must have made that mysterious evening a bitter pill to swallow.

David has no more idea than the others of what has happened to him. He just came in out of the field and an old man poured oil on his head.

The Next Step: Wait

Perhaps even stranger than this scene with an old man pouring oil over a boy is that when it's over ... it's just over. Samuel goes back to his lonely prophet's retreat, and David returns to his sheep. Everything goes back to normal. Or so it seems.

Yet nothing is ever normal again. God has made His mark on David, and David's story was just beginning. It was time for the next step, but that next step was simply to wait.

God withdrew His anointing from Saul, who was having horrible nightmares and not sleeping well at all. A kind-hearted minion in his camp says to the king, "Hey, I heard about a kid over in Bethlehem who can play and sing better than anyone in Israel. Why don't I go get this kid, and we'll see if he can sing you to sleep?"

Saul is willing to try anything at this point, so he summons David to his camp. Now what could David have been thinking at this point? Not too long before, the most famous spiritual

leader in Israel poured oil over his head and said that David was God's choice to be the next king. Now the current king is sending for him? Did Saul know?

When young David arrives in the king's tent, Saul is tossing and turning and moaning behind a veil. And the captain of the guard simply says to David, "Sit over there, and play and sing for the king. See if you can get him to sleep."

Here's young David, away from home and probably frightened. Secretly he knows he is supposed to be the next king, but he's told to play and sing for the current sleepless and tormented old king. It's a very odd and frightening moment in the young boy's life.

David plays, and at last the king sleeps. In time, David is sent back to Bethlehem. Saul and his army head out for battle, and nothing else happens for David. It's over. He simply goes back to shepherding.

And that's exactly where God wanted him right then.

Promotion Comes From the Lord

Young people today spend way too much time trying to force their way into opportunities. Whether we're fresh out of college or 20 years into a profession, when we see even the hint of an opportunity, our initial instinct may be to push the door open ourselves.

We dare not promote ourselves to our next job. We cannot force others to see what only we can see, or think we see, in ourselves and kick-start our destiny into a higher gear. Promotion doesn't come from us or even from others. Promotion comes from the Lord.

You are where you are right now because that is where God wants to use you right now.

David had an opportunity to serve the king, and he did it

well. That is all God wanted from him at the time. His moment to become the ruling king had not yet arrived.

Follow David's lead. Learn to wait on the Lord. Trust in His timing. Let God work on Saul. Let God work on you.

Wait on the Lord. Let God promote you in His own way and in His own time.

Dr. Mark Rutland is *president of Global Servants and the National Institute of Christian Leadership*. A renowned communicator and New York Times best-selling author, he has more than 30 years of experience in organizational leadership, having served as a senior pastor and a university president.

For More Study...

For too long, we've thought of King David as an Americanized shepherd boy on a Sunday school felt board or a New Testament saint. Dr. Mark Rutland breaks down the famed marble statue to reveal the biblical David in his new book, *David the Great*.