The Shaping of a Godly Heart **January 4, 2026**
1. Anointed **Colin Smith**
1 Samuel 16:1-13

Please open your Bible at 1 Samuel 16. The title of our series is "The Shaping of a Godly Heart." We are looking this month at the early years of the life of David, and God willing will continue the series later in the year.

David is introduced to us as *a man after God's own heart.* Speaking about David, Samuel said,

> *The LORD has sought out* ***a man after his own heart****,* (1 Sam 13:14).

What does that mean? In the New Testament, we read that,

> [God] *raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse* ***a man after my heart, who will do all my will****'* (Acts 13:22).

A man or woman after God's own heart is a man or a woman who truly loves God and wants to do the will of God. David had a **godly** heart, and I want us to see how that heart was shaped.

- How did David become a man after God's own heart?
- And how can we have godly hearts?
- How can we become people who truly love God and desire to do His will?

We begin today with the story of how David was anointed.

> *The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for* ***I have provided for myself a king*** *among his sons"*
> (1 Samuel 16:1).

'Fill your horn with oil and go to Bethlehem, because in Bethlehem, I have provided a king.'

Samuel was a prophet: He received and spoke the Word of God. He was also a judge, and this meant that he dealt with offenses against the law of God. As the judge in his time, he had a regular schedule of where and when he would hear and judge the cases that were brought to him.

> *Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life. And he went on a circuit year by year to Bethel, Gilgal, and Mizpah. And he judged Israel in all these places. Then he would return to Ramah, for his home was there, and there also he judged Israel*
> (1 Samuel 7:15-17).

Some of you will be planners. You probably have a schedule laid out. Samuel followed a predictable schedule for the year. Ramah, Bethel, Gilgal, Mizpah, and back home to Ramah again. This was the pattern of Samuel's life, and he kept to it faithfully. But here we're told about something quite different. God breaks in and sends him not to one of these regular places but to the little town of Bethlehem. So it's not surprising that when Samuel, the judge, arrived in Bethlehem the elders of the city were alarmed.

> *Samuel did what the LORD commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him* ***trembling*** *and said, "Do you come peaceably?"* (1 Sam 16:4).

"Is there a problem that led you to come here? Have you come to deal with some offense in our town? Is there something we have done? *Do you come peaceably?*"

> *And he said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.*
> *Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice"* (1 Samual 16:5).

Samuel had not come to Bethlehem as a judge. He came in peace. He came to offer a sacrifice. He called the people of the town to consecrate themselves to the Lord, (that is, to dedicate themselves, to give themselves to God). How would Samuel know the king God had provided? God gave Samuel a very special promise that we can take to our hearts today for our encouragement,

> *"I will show you what you shall do* (1 Samuel 16:3).

If you will walk with God in faith and in obedience to His Word, He will show you what to do.

> *"I will show you what you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you"* (1 Samuel 16:3).

All of this points forward to our Lord Jesus Christ. God has provided a King. He sent His Son, the great King, into the world. God is the One who tells us who He is.

> "*You shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you*" (1 Samuel 16:3).

God declared Jesus to be His Son at His baptism (*"This is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased")*, in His transfiguration (*"This is my Son, listen to him.")* and He declared it supremely by His resurrection from the dead. We are to recognize the One that God has declared to us as King. We are to consecrate ourselves to Him.

One by one the sons of Jesse came before Samuel. The name of the eldest was Eliab. He was tall and his appearance was striking. Eliab looked the part, and when Samuel saw him, he thought, "He's the one!" (1 Samuel 16:6). This must be the king God has promised.

> *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****"* (1 Samuel 16:6-7).

The LORD looks on the heart: What that tells us is that your heart is what matters the most. We are told in verse 12 that David had beautiful eyes and was handsome. But David's appearance was not what made him useful to God. What made David useful in God's service is that he was *a man after God's own heart* (1 Samuel 13:14).

We spend time and money choosing clothes. We spend time and money getting fit. We present an image of ourselves to other people by posting pictures and text. Your appearance, your gifts, your personality and your style will make an impression on other people, but these are not the things that will make you useful to God.

Paul says to Timothy in the New Testament,

> *Train yourself for* ***godliness****; for while bodily training is of some value,* ***godliness is of value in every way****, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come* (1 Timothy 4:7-8).

Your heart is what matters most. The shaping of a godly heart will be a means of blessing in this life and a means of blessing to all eternity in the presence of Almighty God. Let's take this in at the beginning of a new year. Brothers and sisters in Christ, your heart is what matters most. And we all know that as years pass in the Christian life, it is easy for our hearts to grow cold, to lose our first love, to become passive in worship, and complacent in our walk with God, to become aloof from the needs of others, to make a habit of finding fault; to be impatient; easily angered. *The LORD looks on the heart:* That's a challenge to every complacent believer.

But there is also an encouragement here and I want you to see that in these words there is **hope** for a discouraged believers:

> *"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****"* (1 Samuel 16:6-7).

The LORD looks on the heart. That means God knows that you love Him. That however far you fall short of the life you hope to live, God truly knows that you want to walk with Him, and live for Him.

"Yes," you say, "But I'm not the person I want to be. I don't live up to what I desire. I fail in so many ways."

Be encouraged by this: God sees your heart. He knows the desire of your heart. And your desire to live a godly life is the work of God's Spirit in you. And God always recognizes the work of His Spirit.

The LORD sees not as man sees: ***man looks on the outward appearance****, but* ***the LORD looks on the heart****"* (1 Samuel 16:7).

Notice that there is a contrast here between what God sees and what we see.

> *Man looks on the outward appearance but the LORD looks on the heart*

God sees the heart. But the heart of another person is hidden from our view. *Man looks on the outward appearance.* We only see what other people choose to reveal. Samuel was a prophet of God, but he couldn't see the heart. When he saw Eliab, he thought he was the one. He thought that because he couldn't see what God sees. Only God knows the heart.

When King Solomon dedicated the temple, he asked that God would hear the prayers of His people.

> *…then hear in heaven your dwelling place and forgive and act and render to each* **whose heart you know***, according to all his ways (for you,* ***you only****, know the hearts of all the children of mankind)…*(1 Kings 8:39-40)

Only God knows the heart. If you remember that it will keep you from making judgements about other people you should not make. God and God alone truly knows when a heart is truly repentant. God and God alone knows those who truly belong to Him. God and God alone knows where there really is a wicked motive. Only God truly knows the heart.

As we take this is there is an encouragement and a help when we have been let down and we feel

that we have been fooled. Maybe you know what it is to trust someone and then to find to your surprise and disappointment that your trust is betrayed. You were taken in by the appearance, but the reality was quite different. And now you feel foolish. *How could I not have known?* Only God knows the heart. And we are not God. Take some comfort from this and let it guard us against making judgements that we are not equipped to make in regard to the hearts of other people. Only God knows the heart. What we see is the outward appearance.

The sons appear before Samuel

One by one, the seven sons of Jesse appear before Samuel. None of them is the one.

> *Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet* ***the youngest****, but behold, he is keeping the sheep"* (1 Samuel 16:11).

Notice that Jesse, the father, doesn't even refer to David by name. He is simply "*the youngest."* Jesse felt sure that his older sons would do great things. But in Jesse's eyes, David would never be much. But God saw something in David that Jesse did not see. David had a heart for God, and God saw David's heart.

> *And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here." And he sent and brought him in…*
>
> *And the LORD said, "Arise, anoint him, for this is he"* (1 Sam 16:11-12).

This is the king I have provided. This is the man *after my own heart. Arise, anoint him, for this is he.*

How was this godly heart shaped in David? And how can a godly heart be shaped in us today? That's the question, and I want to offer three answers.

A godly heart is shaped by
1. The Word of God

> *Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day* (Psalm 119:97).

The word of God had come to be in David. How did David come to know and love the Word of God, especially early in his life? At the beginning of 1 Samuel, we read that the Word of God was *rare* (1 Samuel 3:1), it was scarce, it was hard to find. But God raised up Samuel, the prophet, and things changed through his remarkable ministry. Samuel raised up and mentored a whole team of godly men who gave themselves to the study of Scripture (the five books of Moses), to prayer, and to a ministry of itinerant preaching.

In 1 Samuel 10:10 we read about "*a group of prophets*." In I Samuel 19:20 we read about "*the company of the prophets."* This is a group of people in all probability who lived in community rather like those in a later generation in the time of Elisha who became known as the "sons of the prophets" or the "school of the prophets." Samuel led this team of prophets who brought the Word of God to the people of God. David would most likely have heard the Word of God first through the ministry of these prophets.

In later years, he would have had his own copy of Scripture. The first requirement for a king among God's people was to handwrite his own copy of the book of Deuteronomy and then keep it beside him all the days of his life. So David would have had direct access to Scripture when he

became king. But in these early years, David would most likely have heard the Word of God through the prophets and their ministry. David heard the Word of God proclaimed in the power of the Spirit of God. The Spirit of God rested on these prophets, and as David heard the words they spoke, he felt that God was speaking to him directly. A desire formed in David's heart as he listened.

- *I want to walk with God!*
- *I want to speak the Word of God!*
- *I want to bless the people of God!*

Pastors hear all kinds of comments after preaching. "I liked your story about the dog." "I'd never thought about what you said before."

The greatest joy for any preacher is when a person says after the service, "God spoke to me this morning." The preacher explains and applies the Word of God, and as he speaks, people hear and discern the voice of God speaking directly to them. Pray that this will be your experience on Sunday mornings. Come expecting that this will happen for you. The Word of God shaped David's heart and if you will receive it that Word will shape your heart too.

A godly heart is shaped by
2. The People of God

At the end of the book of Ruth that comes before this first book of Samuel we have David's family tree.

> *Boaz fathered Obed, Obed fathered Jesse, and Jesse fathered David* (Ruth 4:21-22).

David was the youngest of 8 sons, born to his father, Jesse. Jesse does not emerge well from this story. When the prophet came to town and the family had a feast, David wasn't even invited. Nobody thought it strange that David should be missing. Nobody said, 'Where's David?' When the family gathered, he was overlooked, out of sight/out of mind, forgotten.

Growing up with 7 older brothers could not have been easy for David. We know that the brothers were not kind to him. The oldest brothers served in Saul's army, and on one occasion, Jesse sent David to deliver some food. When David arrived, the men who were minding the baggage told him that the king had offered a great reward to anyone who could triumph over a giant by the name of Goliath. Eliab heard David speaking to the baggage minders, and he was angry.

> *"Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle."*
>
> *And David said, "What have I done now?"* (1 Samuel 17:28-29).

David also had 2 sisters, Zeruiah and Abigail (1 Chron 2:16). These sisters must have been quite a bit older than David, because they had married and also had sons. Zeruiah gave birth to Abishai, Joab and Asahel. Abigail gave birth to Amasa (1 Chronicles 2:16-17), and these boys grew up to be fierce, notoriously violent warriors.

So David grew up with 7 brothers, who seem to have dismissed him, 4 nephews who became notorious men of violence, and a father who didn't think much of him. Some of you will be able to relate to this. You have brothers or sisters who are a long way from being role models. A

father or mother who was absent, or if they were present, didn't seem to have much time for you. David's immediate family was dysfunctional. There wasn't an example to follow there. But there were others who truly lived a life of love.

David's great grandfather was a man by the name of Boaz. His great grandmother was a godly woman by the name of Ruth. David knew the story of how Ruth pledged her love and loyalty to Naomi; how Boaz had shown love and kindness to Ruth, and how Ruth had taken refuge under the wings of God (Ruth 2:12). This beautiful story had gone deep into David's mind and heart. We know this because David quotes the words of Boaz about Ruth taking refuge under the wings of God at least six times in the book of Psalms.[1] In Ruth and Boaz, David had an example of what it means to walk with God. Despite all the dysfunction in his immediate family he was able to look to a man and a woman after God's own heart. What it means to live a life of love.

We live in a fallen world. There will always be people who hurt you and let you down. If you let them shape your heart, you will become cynical, and your heart will be hard. But there are others who live a life of love. Others who walk with God and seek to do His will. Look at them and let their example shape the desires of your heart.

> *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God. Consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith* (Hebrews 13:7).

Some of us need to get our minds and our eyes off the examples of people who have disappointed us. Look at those who have been faithful. Look for people who walk with God. See what has come of their choices, their priorities, their commitments. Let what you see in them shape the desires of your heart.

A godly heart is shaped by
3. The Spirit of God

> *Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward* (1 Samuel 16:13).

David was a man filled with the Holy Spirit of God from that day forward. He lived an extraordinary life, and the explanation of that life is that the Spirit of the LORD rested on him. It was the Spirit of God who enabled him to overcome Goliath. And it will be the Spirit of God who enables you to overcome that which has oppressed you perhaps for many years. It was the Spirit of God who guarded David during the dark years when he was oppressed by Saul. And it will be the Spirit of God who will guard you when you walk through dark and difficult days. It was the Spirit of God who gave him the wisdom he needed to bring the twelve tribes of Israel together and unite them as one. And God's Spirit will give you wisdom for the difficult tasks that you have to accomplish. It was the Spirit of God who blessed him with repeated victories. It was the Spirit of God who brought him to repentance when he sinned. And God's Spirit will bring us to repentance when we sin. It was the Spirit of God who sustained him when his family was torn apart in grief and in sorry. It was the Spirit of God who gave him the words of the Psalms. And when grief and sorrow come to your life it will be God's Spirit who sustains you.

Never underestimate what the Spirit of God can do. God's Spirit rested on David and equipped

---

[1] Psalm 17:8, 36:7, 57:1, 61:4, 63:7, 91:4.

him for every circumstance of life. And as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Spirit dwells in you and will equip you for everything you will face and all that He calls you to do.

A godly heart is shaped by the Word of God, by the people of God, and by the Spirit of God:

- So feed on God's Word.
- Learn from God's faithful people.
- Pray for the empowering of God's Spirit.

Conclusion

This story of Samuel coming to Bethlehem to anoint David as the future king points us very wonderfully to our Lord Jesus Christ. Samuel was the judge in his day. When he came to Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled. *Do you come peaceably?* they asked (1 Samuel 16:4). Samuel came in peace. He said,

> *I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice* (1 Samuel 16:5).

That's the message of Christmas! The Lord Jesus Christ is the judge of all people. He came to Bethlehem, and he came in in peace. He did not come into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17). Jesus came to Bethlehem in peace, and He came to offer a sacrifice. He sacrificed Himself through which we are reconciled to God, when He laid down His life on the cross. And He calls us to consecrate ourselves to God. To each and every one of us, He says "follow Me." And the reason we follow Him is that He is God's anointed King.

© Colin S. Smith
Permissions: You have permission and are encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format you choose, as long as you do not alter or change the wording in any way and do not charge a fee (beyond the cost of reproducing these materials). For posting on the web, a link to this document on our website (www.OpentheBible.org) is preferred. Any exceptions to the above must be approved by Open the Bible, 1-877-673-6365.

Please include this statement on every copy distributed:
By Colin S. Smith. © Colin S. Smith. Website: OpentheBible.org