



Honest to God

David: Profiles of an Authentic Life

Session 3 – Authentic Devotion

UCLA's legendary coach John Wooden knew a thing or two about devotion: "Be more concerned about your character than with your reputation. Your character is what you really are, while reputation is only what others think you are." David had a fine reputation but character is what shaped him into a man of prayer. He lived life out loud and prayed his prayers even louder.

David was such an unlikely candidate for king that nobody saw it coming. Not even Samuel. Certainly not Saul. But God knew exactly what He was looking for and found it right there in David. In God's eyes, David was the whole package. And what God sees matters most.

Goals for this Session:

- Discover what made David a man after God's own heart.
- Consider why God uses the ordinary and least likely to accomplish His plan.
- To examine how we respond to disappointment and avoid false expectations.
- To pray honest prayers that lead to authentic devotion and renewed power.

Ice Breaker

What is most likely to give you a good first impression of someone? What qualities do you look for in a leader?

Day One – The Big Picture

Read **1 Samuel 16:1–23** to get the overall picture. Follow the story line closely but without getting bogged down in details.

1. What is the central topic? State the main point of this passage in a sentence or two.
2. What insight does this chapter give you into God's ways and our relationship to Him?
3. The Bible shapes our core beliefs about God and our conduct toward others. Share one takeaway lesson from this chapter and how you can apply it to your life.

Day Two – Samuel’s Assignment, God’s Plan

Read 1 Samuel 16:1–5.

Saul’s disqualification triggered a personal crisis for Samuel. The king had been his protégé, in some ways like a son. But now, Saul was on a destructive course and unfit to lead the nation. Saul couldn’t see it. And Samuel couldn’t see a future beyond it.

1. No wonder Samuel was dejected, given their history. Samuel had successfully led Israel with integrity for many years. One day, key influencers (elders) came to Samuel with a new plan. Read the account in 1 Samuel 8 if you like, but essentially they told Samuel, “You’re old, your sons are an embarrassment, and we want to be like our neighbors—they have a king.”

- a. How had Samuel responded and what did God tell him? (See 1 Samuel 8:6–9.)

- b. After breaking with Saul, a lesser man might have declared the king experiment a failure and taken back control. Not Samuel. He went home. Maybe he thought about retiring. Sorrow has a way of magnifying the “if-onlys” and “what-ifs” of life. Samuel needed to process the situation. We aren’t told how long Samuel mourned, but the Lord said it was long enough.

Failure (our own or someone else’s) may send us into a slump, but when it’s time to move on, God has the final word. We can trust Him. What does He want you to know?

Psalm 37:23–24

Isaiah 43:18–19

Philippians 3:13–14a

- c. Have you ever, like Samuel, been stuck in a hard place? In what way has the Lord helped you to move forward? What new thing is the Lord working in you as a result?

2. Samuel thought of the risk in anointing a new king while Saul was alive. Common sense told him it wasn’t a good idea, and he said so. Can you imagine telling God that His plan isn’t a good idea? When was the last time following your instincts proved more reliable than God?

- a. What did Samuel end up doing? How is his response an example of authentic devotion?

- b. Read the following scriptures and state what is always true about God in every situation.

Isaiah 46:9–10

Proverbs 3:5–6

3. “So Samuel did as the Lord instructed.” If you wrote an epitaph for Samuel’s life, this phrase sums it up perfectly. The child Hannah so fervently prayed for was nearly eighty years old and still going strong.

As a boy, Samuel learned that God speaks to the one who will listen and obey. That became the lifelong habit of his soul. Someday the epitaph of your life will be written. What do you want it to say?

4. What do you observe about Samuel in this chapter? Saul saw a stubborn old man set in his ways. The worried town elders saw trouble. David saw a spiritual hero. God saw a faithful servant determined to follow, listen, and obey—an example of authentic devotion.

Who has been an example to you of authentic devotion? How have they influenced you?

Memory Verse

Write the verse and let it be part of your prayers every day. Ask the Holy Spirit to work it into your heart and mind.

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:3–4 NKJV

Think it over . . .

Does trusting God come easily for you? Why or why not?

Day Three – What God Sees

Read 1 Samuel 16:6–13.

God chooses Saul's replacement and sends Samuel to anoint the new king. So the old prophet goes to Bethlehem, a small village where grain fields and grazing sheep dot the rocky hillsides. Samuel will look for God's choice among the sons of a man named Jesse.

1. Samuel assumed that Eliab was the Lord's choice. He was impressive and had the advantage of being the firstborn son. But as each son is introduced to Samuel, what does God tell him to keep in mind?

2. "Do not look on his appearance" means: (Check all that apply.)
 - a. Close your eyes. _____
 - b. Looks aren't important but be sure he has a great personality. _____
 - c. Figure out what's in his heart. _____
 - d. Monitor your first impression with prayer. _____
 - e. Wait until God speaks before you act. _____

3. Evidently it never occurred to Jesse to bring his youngest boy to the feast. He was left out in the field where he was tending his father's sheep.
 - a. In your observation, what expectations or ambition did Jesse have for David?

 - b. By comparison, think of God's plans for David. What traits and qualities were already developing in David?

 - c. What qualities do you look for in others when you try to see what God sees?

 - d. What qualities would you want others to see in you?

4. What did God see in David? He certainly had talent and abilities. But God saw something else in David that made him “the kind of man I want. He will do all I want him to do” (Acts 13:22 NCV). God looks for this same quality in us. What will a person after God’s own heart pursue?

Deuteronomy 6:5

2 Chronicles 16:9a

Philippians 3:8

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:3–4 NKJV

Think it over . . .

What comes to mind when you think of *dwelling*? And *feeding*?

Day Four – David’s Assignment, God’s Plan

Read 1 Samuel 16:14–23.

Saul still wore the crown but he no longer had God’s blessing. God gave the people what they were looking for when Saul was chosen and he had disqualified himself. This time, the Lord would give the people the kind of king He was looking for.

Look back at verse 13:

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. Then Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.

1. Do you see it? An amazing, unforgettable event in David’s life is followed with a mundane detail. Samuel anointed him and then . . . *he went home*. David went home too. Back to open fields and smelly sheep. He still had chores to do.
 - a. Faithfulness in little things is a big thing. How was David’s ordinary work training him for greater responsibilities? List what comes to mind.
 - b. If you have ever prayed *Lord, use me* and waited for His answer, you know how David must have felt. We hand our bucket list to God and He gives us a laundry list in return. Where are you using your God-given skills to do small things faithfully (Colossians 3:23)?

2. Briefly describe the circumstances that brought David into service for Saul.
 - a. A skillful musician was needed, and David came highly recommended (verse 18). The Hebrew word for *skillful* describes more than technical ability—it calls for discernment and perception in relating to peoples’ need. What effect did David’s music have on Saul?
 - b. Worship music has a way of settling our heart and resetting our focus. What is currently your favorite worship song and why? What is an all-time favorite?

3. God put David in the right place at the right time. David did not maneuver himself into a position. He served faithfully and waited for the Lord to open doors. In today’s world, does that sound like a risky career path? Why or why not?

Memory Verse

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Think it over . . .

How has God been faithful to you this week? Think of at least two examples.
 How does God’s faithfulness increase your capacity to be faithful?

Day Five – David’s Prayer

David saw Saul’s affliction up close and personal, like few others. He showed compassion and respect, even when forced to run for his life. But if Saul’s madness pummeled David’s soul, it also instructed his character. The lessons found their way into songs. Our memory verse this week is from Psalm 37. (Read the whole psalm if you like; there are no discussion questions for it.)

Later in life, David wrote a psalm, not directly related to Saul but the shadows are there. Psalm 37 wrestles with an age-old problem: Why do people who live as though God doesn’t exist seem to prosper? David frets and feels angry. He prays honest emotions but doesn’t stop there. David’s prayer teaches us to remind ourselves what is true about God’s character and His desires for every person who will, like David, run after Him with all their heart.

**“By self-indulgence a man’s character is wrecked.
 By self-discipline a man’s character is made.”**

**Alan Redpath
*The Making of a Man of God***

“The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delights in his way.” —Psalm 37:23

Memory Verse

Trust in the Lord, and do good; dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness.
Delight yourself also in the Lord and He shall give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:3–4 NKJV

Think it over . . .

Delight is a delicate sounding word that means “luxuriate” or “pamper yourself.” Or you may prefer “drench yourself.” Set aside ten or fifteen minutes sometime this week just be with the Lord. Play worship, take a walk, go for a run—whatever—and just be with the Lord.

After His Heart

“The eyes of the Lord search the whole earth in order to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him.” —2 Chronicles 16:9 NLT

“God found in David a man who would stand in the gap, a man whose heart was fully committed to Him. Will He find that in you?”

Greg Laurie

For you personally, what has been the most important discovery or insight from this study?

How will you put living it into practice in the days ahead?

Prayer Requests
