

“God Chooses the Least,” by Daniel H. Kuhn, Jr. 02060618
1 Samuel 15:34-16:13 and 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17
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Our Old Testament lesson comes from a time when there was a change in leadership of the nation Israel. Saul was out as king. Samuel’s job was to pick and anoint the new king. He was going to Jesse’s house in Bethlehem to choose one of Jesse’s sons.

“Happy Father’s day, Jesse, one of your sons is going to be king!” Imagine what Jesse felt like on that day. He was filled with pride. He thrust his chest out so that his buttons were almost popping (if indeed, buttons had been invented at the time).

“One of my sons is going to be king!” But which son? *His* favored one, and Samuel the king-maker’s favorite, would have been the oldest, Eliab. He looked good: a walking Gold’s Gym advertisement. Oldest sons were always favored back in those days. They usually got the greater portion of the inheritance. Eliab, however, was not the one God wanted as the new king.

Samuel went through seven of Jesse’s sons, but God had not picked any of them. He asked Jesse if he had any more sons. Jesse, surprised, said “Yes, there’s the littlest one, the youngest one, but he’s out tending the sheep.”

Samuel waited for him to be brought to him. When he came, sure enough, David, the youngest and the least, was the one God wanted to be the new king of the nation. This one did not come from the Harvard School for Kings. He came from the fields where he tended sheep.

You may not think you are worthy enough material for God to call you into leadership. You might doubt your education, your skills, or your time. Think again. The record shows that God has called the young, the way Jeremiah was called; the speech impeded, the way Moses was called; the women, the way Deborah was called; and the uneducated laborer, the way Peter was called.

To what work is God calling you? What are your gifts? Who are the people you see every day who need to know of God’s love?

The key to it all is in verse seven: “The LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”¹ Too often we look on the outward appearance when we choose someone to follow: the person with a beautiful body, the person with money, or a good suit; the person who looks young and energetic. These are all outward appearances. The beautiful body will wrinkle and age. The wonderful clothes and the money cover up imperfections. The young and energetic may lack wisdom or commitment.

Looking at the outward appearance will lead us astray. What is in the person’s heart? That is the question God asks, and it is the question we should ask when choosing our leaders. Is the person fair? Does the person care about the greatest good for the greatest number of people? Does the person care about what God wants? Does the person care about the least the way God does? The least are those without power. They are the ones who can not hold a job down. They could get a job if they could get *to* the job, but when the job is in Glen Raven and they live out Vaughan Road way in East Burlington, and they don’t own a car, it is pretty hard to get to the job!

Remember, Jesus said that the kingdom of God is open to those who treat the least of their brothers and sisters as if they were Jesus himself. God, the God of David the sheep-tender, the

¹1 Samuel 16:7

God of the carpenter from Nazareth, often chooses the least.

Parents can be unfair. A father might be proud of one child, and shower all kinds of attention on that one. Another child looks on, trying to excel at everything she does, to get the parent's attention; to get approval and recognition: "Look at me, daddy."

We miss a lot when we focus our attention on the child we like. When we do that, we neglect the others that God also loves. As parents, we must strive above all else to be fair to our children and make each one feel loved. Fathers, parents, spend time with your children. They won't care about how much money you made, or how many gadgets they had, or what kind of I-Pod they owned. They will care about whether you showed them how to hammer nails, or to play "Sorry" or to make a sandwich. They will care about whether you stopped to listen to them when they wanted to talk about something important to them.

There's one other thing to point out about the call of David to be king. Somehow, even though he was the youngest, his father Jesse must have taught David a lot about wisdom, courage, commitment, and diligence. David was able to go from shepherd to giant-slayer to musician, to king because he had been trained. What are we doing to train our young people for leadership? What are the values that our young people are receiving? Do you want the future leaders of the church, the community, and the nation, do you want the future mothers and fathers of our society, to get their values from movies, video games, and television? Or, is God calling you to help train our children in the values of God's commandments— the values of fairness, and of everybody being a winner, the value of service, the value of kindness, the value of peaceful negotiation in dispute settlement.

What will you do for your part in instilling these Christian values in the next generation's leaders? God chooses you, perhaps least in your own eyes, to do God's will and to help bring God's kingdom on earth.