

Jesse and his eight sons lived in Bethlehem 3000 years ago. As the youngest, David was given the responsibility to care for the sheep. When the prophet Samuel visited Bethlehem, he sought to find the successor to King Saul. God led him to Jesse's home. As Samuel looked at David's brothers, God said, *do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.* (1 Samuel 16:7)

1. Keep Your Heart Right with God

In those days, the Spirit of the LORD left Saul, and a disturbing spirit haunted him. Search was made for a suitable musician to sooth his troubled spirit. Jesse's son David was recommended.

He is a brave man and a warrior. He speaks well and is a fine-looking man. And the LORD is with him.

1 Samuel 16:18

All went well until David conquered Goliath (1 Samuel 17). Soon, women were attributing more battlefield success to David than Saul (1 Samuel 18:7).

Saul was very angry; this refrain galled him... From that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

1 Samuel 18:8, 9

A short time later, Saul threw a spear at David but David eluded him.

What do you do when you are the target of spears?

A. You can dodge the spears. (Realize you are not the issue.)

B. You can return the spears. (You begin to see self-protection as your first priority.)

We may think we know what is right but the LORD is the judge of our motives.

Proverbs 16:2, Contemporary English Version

C. You can show everyone your wounds. (In your mind and with your words, you seek to transform the thrower into evil personified.)

King Saul kept throwing spears, and David ran. Once, David slipped up on Saul and cut off part of Saul's robe. When his followers urged him to kill Saul, he refused (1 Samuel 24:10). Many times, David could have blamed Saul for his problems, but he did not. He kept checking his heart to make sure the spirit of Saul was not in him. David kept his heart right with God.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.

Romans 12:17

David did not let his emotions dictate his reactions. He trusted God.

Truth to treasure: What is happening in your world is not simply about you.

2. Look for God to Work in Your Heart

Later, David's son, Absalom, began to attract the hearts of the people (2 Samuel 15:1-6). Absalom tried to discredit his father in the eyes of the people. He was building himself up by putting his father down.

If I were in responsibility (a judge) then I could do something.

2 Samuel 15:4

Rebels began to surround Absalom as he played the thief, siphoning followers of David and seizing power. David saw two choices: (1) Lose all or (2) Become a Saul by putting confidence in flesh.

David sought God.

If I find favor in the LORD's eyes...

2 Samuel 15:25 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

Romans 12:14

David didn't see Absalom as a *thorn in the flesh* but as the *apple of his eye*. He refused to concentrate on his pain and broken world. Instead, the psalms reveal his ability to walk into his pain as if it were a sanctuary in which God would meet him (You may want to explore some of the psalms written during these periods: *Psalms 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13* etc.)

After David was humiliated by Absalom, the King turned to Joab.

Be gentle with the young man Absalom for my sake.

2 Samuel 18:5

Long before Jesus taught us to take up a cross daily and follow him, David was practicing self-denial. His wounded pride did not dictate angry reactions. His hurt did not curse his son. He extended the kind of unconditional love the Savior would request of his followers.

Question to Ponder: What needs to happen in me to make God more important than the issues that wound me?

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