

David – Learning to be King

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God made the promise of Messianic descent to David while he still had much to learn. David early in his life grasped the significance of his calling by God. David looked beyond his physical circumstances and saw the true spiritual nature of the Plan of God. **David made many mistakes; he committed many sins;** but **God never rejected him.** God worked carefully with David throughout his life to prepare him for his calling. (Ps8:3-4, 139:15-17, 86:11, 38:17-18, 59:16-17)

David the Shepherd Boy: David spent much of his youth tending sheep in the hills around Bethlehem (1Sm17:34-35, 16:11a). **David learned a lot in those years** – the management of sheep taught him to **“prince over my people”** (2Sm7:8, 24:17). **David became the “type” of the “Good Shepherd,”** Jesus Christ (Jr23:3a,4a,5, Ez34:15-16a, Mt2:6, Jh10:14-16). Alone with the sheep, David developed a relationship with YHWH (Ps8:1-9). **David grew to know YHWH and developed an understanding of the Nature of God, the Way of God, and the Plan of God** – this is demonstrated throughout the Davidic Psalms.

David’s Education: We have no specific information on how formal education was performed in the time of David, but clearly **David had natural abilities** and **he was well educated:** (1Sm16:14,17-19,21)

- David could read and write – we have some 73 Psalms ascribed to David: there was a long tradition of “poetic” writing in the Ancient Near East, with which David was clearly familiar
- Hebrew poetry was a well-established genre (Genesis 49, Exodus 15, Numbers 21, Deuteronomy 32 and 33, Judges 5)
- David created a new “genre” taking Hebrew poetry to a new level in the Psalms
- David was intimately familiar with the Writings of Moses (Ps103:7)
- David was well versed in the history of Israel (Ps68:7)

David’s Readiness: David was well prepared and when the opportunity came for him to demonstrate his desire to serve YHWH, he took full advantage of it (1Sm17:4,8-10,17,20a,23,26). **David was not constrained by his limitations,** “you are but a youth”. **David acted in faith to accomplish the work God set before him,** “YHWH will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1Sm17:31-37).

David in Saul’s Service: Saul clearly does NOT recognize David when he kills Goliath at the Battle of Elah (1Sm17:55-58). Obviously, **the Battle of Elah occurred before David was recruited fulltime as a “lyre player” for Saul** (1Sm17:31-37). After the Battle of Elah, David goes into “part time” service for Saul, but he returns to his sheep where Samuel finds him and anoints him king (1Sm16:11-13). **God saw in David a person with whom he could work** (1Sm16:7). **This is the story of every person called by God** – the episodes are different for each one of us, but God is careful to ensure that we learn the Way of God so that he can grant us the gift of eternal life (Ph1:6).

The Wandering Years: David did NOT remain in Saul’s service long – Saul was overcome with jealousy, which became paranoid (1Sm18:8-9,17b, 22:7-8). Soon after fleeing from Saul, **David makes the mistake of attempting to take refuge with Achish,** the Philistine King of Gath (1Sm21:10-13). As with David, God works with us far more than we probably know to recover us from our mistakes (Ps56:1-3,12-13, 34:19-22). The most famous incidents of the Wandering Years are the times when **David was in a clear position to kill Saul,** but due to Saul’s position as the anointed King of Israel, David did not harm him (1Sm24:2-6,8-11). David tried to convince Saul that he was no threat to him – **David was a “peacemaker”** (Mt5:9). David understood that his only hope was to trust in God to work things out according to his plan (Ps57:1-3, 142:1-3,5-6).

An Object Lesson: For several years, David and his “army” of 600 men roamed relatively freely in the area south of Hebron: they became “protectors” of the people in the area. This is demonstrated by **the “Nabal incident”** (1Sm25:1b-8). David is rightly displeased with Nabal, but his intention to wipe him out is a great mistake: with God’s help, David has secured the trust of the people by protecting them, now he is going to turn on those very people (1Sm25:9-13a,21-22). **David wisely listens to Abigail,** Nabal’s wife – he spares Nabal and his household (1Sm25:3a,14,17-18,23-24). As always, when David recognized he was going wrong, he quickly repented and went the right way (1Sm25:32-34). Then God saw to it that everything worked out according to his Plan (1Sm25:38-41). **The Object Lesson: trust God to work things out according to his Plan; do NOT attempt “working salvation with my own hand”** (Ps38:19-20, 39:2-3a, 17:3-5, 32:5).

Learning to be King: God has a great purpose for each and every person that he calls (Ex19:5b-6a, 1Pt2:9a, Rv5:9b-10). To be a King, **God will provide a “crown,” the gift of eternal life** (Jm1:12, Rv3:11). We are now “in training”, as David was, **“learning to be King”** – David’s experiences and wisdom are recorded to help us in that learning.

God looked into the heart of David and saw a person with whom he could work. David had many grievous faults; he committed many sins; but God worked with him throughout his life to see that he learned to make his heart right before God. **God looks into the heart of each person he calls.** In each person he calls, he sees someone, like David, with whom he can work. God works with each of us through our life experiences to see that we, like David, learn to make our hearts right before God.

This material is based on the paper “David – a Man After My Own Heart” available at <https://mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/>

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