

# CHAPTER 2: RISE

## THE BIG PICTURE

Saul failed as Israel's first king because he would not submit to God as the ultimate source of authority. Up to this point in the story, the prophet Samuel and Saul have been the central characters. As God selects someone to replace Saul as king, we are introduced to David. He will become the central figure in the unfolding drama. David is anointed as The Lord's choice for king, but he will not actually rule until the early chapters of 2 Samuel. Now begins the process that carries David toward the eventual promise of sitting on the throne of all Israel as a man after God's own heart. David's story starts in obscurity, but ends in notoriety as his accomplishments and God's favor advance his position. For this section, read and be familiar with **1 Samuel 16-18**. In these chapters, the author is going to give us a series of stories that illustrate the character of David and emphasize what makes him God's choice for king of Israel.

## ENTER THE STORY:

- I. Read the story of David's anointing in **1 Samuel 16:1-13**. We are introduced to David in a way that emphasizes his humble beginnings. He was a shepherd boy - the youngest son of Jesse. David was so insignificant to his own family that he wasn't even invited to the banquet when the prophet came to town. Contrast this with the way Saul is described in **1 Samuel 9:1-2**. God's caution to Samuel is this: *"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."*
  - Why do you think Samuel needed a caution from God about judging the heart instead of appearance? Who would our culture value more as a leader, the impressive Saul or the humble David? Who would you rather follow? Why?
  - Are leaders born or made? Why? What evidence do you see in the stories of 1 Samuel of David being shaped into the right sort of person for the job?
  - What kind of person do you think God wants you to become? What process is God taking you through right now to form these qualities in your heart?
  - It is a crazy thought to be anointed king and return to tending sheep just like normal. Nothing immediately changes after David is anointed. If you were in his situation, how would you remain patient?
  
- II. One of the most remarkable (and famous) stories in the entire Bible is that of David and Goliath in **1 Samuel 17**. Two armies are at a stalemate in the valley of Elah. The armies are arranged on opposite hillsides with the valley in between them. If either army was to attack, the attacking army would have the tactical disadvantage because they would

have to fight uphill. As the stalemate drags on, some taunting begins. There was an ancient practice to appoint one champion from each army as the representative who would settle the conflict through single combat. The Philistines have a reason to prefer this kind of settlement - they have someone in their army who is undefeated. He also happens to be six cubits and a span tall (which is roughly ten feet). This giant would taunt and humiliate the Israelites each day when they refused to send someone to face him. A common understanding in antiquity was that when two nations did battle, it was as if their gods were doing battle as well. A victory for one would have been the defeat of the other. Into this situation, enters David.

- Note the reason why David came to the scene of the battle. He wasn't there as a soldier, nor did he wake up that morning expecting to fight a giant. He was there on a normal, every-day errand: to bring cheese to the soldiers. He might as well have been running to the grocery store, heading to practice, picking up his kids, reconciling his company's sales accounts, or balancing his checkbook. David is not there to do battle, but when opportunity knocks, he is ready to be used by God. This is an example of God meeting David with something extraordinary right in the middle of something ordinary. Mediate on this question for few minutes: **Is there room in your life for God to interrupt the ordinary with something extraordinary?**
- Notice how David refused to accept Saul's armor and weapons to aid in this fight. He chose to meet Goliath in his own skin: with staff, sling, and stone. This places him at a dramatic disadvantage to the well-armored Goliath. Why do you think David insisted on being himself? How does the long description of Goliath's armor and weaponry add to the dramatic tension of the story? Do you think David felt like the underdog in this fight?

III. Weapons were a sign of status in the ancient world. At one point, the account of Samuel notes that in all Israel there were only two actual swords: that of Saul and his son, Jonathan. Everyone else is using farm tools that have been converted into weapons. The Israelites were at a constant disadvantage against the Philistines because the Philistines had a more advanced grasp of metallurgy and with that the ability to make iron weapons. With this in mind, notice how David collects Goliath's armor and weapons after he defeats the giant. After David uses Goliath's sword to cut off Goliath's head, he is quick to stash the sword in his tent. Eventually, maybe as an offering of worship, the sword ends up with the priests at Nob. This famous sword becomes an important source of inspiration to David later in his life. When David is running for his life in **1 Samuel 21:8-9**, this sword is returned to David. Ahimelek the priest gives David a token of his greatest victory and reminds David that God is at his side despite the

challenges around him. When David goes into his years as a fugitive, it is with the sword of Goliath on his hip.

- Can you imagine what David was remembering and feeling every time he draws Goliath's sword to protect himself or fight the Lord's battles?
- Do you have tokens or items that serve to remind you of past victories? Why do you think it is important to remind ourselves of times when God delivered us from trouble?

IV. There is no more beautiful expression of friendship than between Jonathan and David. Jonathan was the son of Saul, the king of Israel, so he was the crown prince. David was the son of a Jesse, a poor shepherd, but God had chosen him to become King through the prophet Samuel. ***Their expected rivalry provides a dramatic backdrop for their unexpected friendship.*** Jonathan has every reason to see David as a rival and feel threatened by David's success; however, he isn't jealous of David's success - he is inspired by it. Jonathan makes a covenant with David by trading clothes and weapons with him. This is not a small detail; this act had profound meaning. The exchange of clothing was a common practice in making a covenant. The clothes are tokens of the covenant, comparable to rings as symbols of a marriage covenant. The exchanging of clothing can indicate the transfer of authority (like in the case of Elijah's cloak). This act is saying that Jonathan is willing to give his life for David. It means something like: my possessions are yours, my sword is yours, and your enemies are mine. Before you write this off as Jonathan seeking the spotlight (like a groupie of David's success), you have to understand that their friendship will only come at Jonathan's expense. Think of how strange it would be for Jonathan (the crown prince) to be seen walking around in David's clothes, and for David (a poor shepherd) to be seen walking around in the clothes of the prince. **Jonathan's friendship will become a key part of David's rise to the throne and is a very important element in the narrative.**

- Have you ever felt a sense of rivalry with a friend? Have you ever been jealous of a friend's success or status? How can you surrender these feelings to God and replace them with selfless love?
- Read **Philippians 2:3**. How did Jonathan embody the selfless love commanded in this verse? How can you better embody selfless love?
- Read the other accounts of the interactions between David and Jonathan in **1 Samuel 19:1-10**, and **1 Samuel 20:1-42**. Meditate about what it means to be a friend to others like Jonathan was a friend to David.