

ANOINTING UNCOVERED

What the eye sees is different
from what God decrees

January 9, 2022

1 Samuel 16:1–13 (NIV) ¹ The Lord said to Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.” ² But Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me.” The Lord said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’” ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.” ⁴ Samuel did what the Lord said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?” ⁵ Samuel replied, “Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me.” Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. ⁶ When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord.” ⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, “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.” ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The Lord has not chosen this one either.” ⁹ Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the Lord chosen this one.” ¹⁰ Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The Lord has not chosen these.” ¹¹ So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?” “There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He is tending the sheep.” Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.” ¹² So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features. Then the Lord said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.” ¹³ So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David. Samuel then went to Ramah.

I'm going to show some optical illusions. Let's see what you think about each of these. Is this a crow or a bunny? It's actually a crow, but it certainly looks a lot like a bunny too! Do these legs look shiny to you? They do, until I tell you that the girl who took the picture got some paint on her legs. The paint gives the illusion that her legs are shiny until you realize it's just paint! Stare at this picture for 30 seconds. What happens to it? It disappears!

Optical illusions are fun. There are books filled with them and all kinds of examples on the internet. It's a reminder that we can't always trust that our eyes are telling us the truth, or that they can see everything. In this section from 1 Samuel 16, we find Samuel struggling with that. **"The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king"** (1 Samuel 16:1 NIV). Samuel had placed all his hopes in the illusion that Saul, the king he had anointed, had been Israel's first and only chance at success. Samuel didn't see any hope for the future, especially as he considered Saul's lack of faith and love for the LORD. Things could only go downhill from here!

The LORD saw the reality of his plan. It was time for Samuel to stop mourning and get to work. The LORD told Samuel to fill his horn with oil once more. Just as Samuel had anointed Saul as king, now he would anoint one of Jesse's sons. The LORD also made it clear to his prophet that he was in charge. **"I have rejected Saul... I am sending you... I have chosen..."**

The LORD knew exactly what was going on, but Samuel couldn't see it. He said, **"How can I go? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me"** (1 Samuel 16:2 NIV). Samuel knew Saul. He had already seen Saul's dark moods, jealousy, and volatile temper. Saul had shown that he was willing to kill one of his own sons if that's what it took to hold onto the throne. Samuel could see the danger he would be in if he followed the LORD's command. If Saul heard what Samuel was up to, Saul would kill him!

The LORD could see clearly what would happen. Saul wouldn't touch Samuel. He didn't even respond to Samuel's doomsday vision. He simply said, **"Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate"** (1 Samuel 16:3 NIV). Once again, the LORD had a plan. "I will show you...the one I indicate." Even though Samuel's grief had nearly consumed him and his fears threatened to drag him down, he listened. He did what the LORD told him to do and went to Bethlehem.

When Samuel arrived, he invited Jesse and his sons for the sacrifice and the meal that would follow. When he caught sight of Jesse's oldest son, Eliab, he said, **"Surely the LORD's anointed stands here before the LORD"** (1 Samuel 16:6 NIV). Samuel thought he was seeing everything clearly. Eliab was tall and kingly looking, just like Saul had been. Samuel was convinced. He had forgotten the LORD's words. **"I will show you...the one I indicate."** The LORD had to rein in his prophet: **"Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him"** (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV). Eliab was not the one. Neither were the others. Seven of Jesse's sons passed in front of Samuel. The LORD rejected all seven. Finally, Samuel had to ask Jesse, "Is that all? Do you have any other sons?"

Jesse's answer showed that he saw an illusion too. He said, "**There is still the youngest. He is tending the sheep**" (1 Samuel 16:11 NIV). Jesse didn't even mention the boy's name! In Hebrew Jesse literally called him "the little one." When Jesse considered the age and the size of his youngest, he didn't even consider him worth bringing to the sacrifice.

What illusions distract us from the work that the LORD is doing in our lives? Is our job the illusion? We feel like it doesn't make a difference for anyone? It looks and feels so unfulfilling. What good is it? That illusion could lead us to give up on a job that the LORD gave so we could provide for our families and have a safe place to live.

Do we see an illusion in our relationships? We look at our spouse, and then look at the person walking by or across the screen and think, "A relationship with that person would have to be better, easier, more fulfilling." Our lack of appreciation for the spouse the LORD gave us leads to disrespect and eventually, if we continue to believe the illusion, a broken marriage.

Is the illusion being seen as "the little one"? Do you feel so insignificant that it seems like no one sees you, no one notices, no one even cares?

Maybe the illusion is seeing hopelessness wherever we look. That was Samuel—so paralyzed with grief that he had given up hope and felt like he couldn't move forward. When we look at life in that way, we run the risk of giving up on God. We end up blaming him for causing the hopelessness and burying us in grief.

It's hard when we can only see outward circumstances. If only we could see the results of our "insignificant" job and the way it touches people's lives in the simplest of ways. How would it affect us if we could see our spouse's heart when our eyes stray or when our words strike? We would see how deeply rejection cuts and that a little bit of their heart dies each time. What might we see in our friends' hearts as we walk down the hallways at school or in our co-workers' hearts as we pass by their cubicles? We might see the hurt they feel as "little ones," ignored and unnoticed.

We can't see their hearts. The LORD does! When Samuel was convinced that Eliab was the Anointed one the LORD told 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**" (1 Samuel 16:7 NIV). Samuel told Jesse to send for the little one. Jesse brought him in. "**David had red hair and striking eyes, and was good-looking. The LORD said, "Get up! Anoint him, because this is the one"** (1 Samuel 16:12 EHV). Samuel couldn't see the right one. The LORD did. He saw David, which means "Beloved," and chose him as "**a man after his own heart**" (1 Samuel 13:14 NIV).

The LORD chose a shepherd—the most unlikely, the most insignificant, the "little one" to be the next king over Israel. How could this kid be the next king? Because the LORD chose him as his Anointed one, and those the LORD chooses he equips to do the work. It must have been encouraging for David to hear the message: "This is the one!" The youngest brother who had been ignored and sent out to do the dirty work was the one! "**So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers. The Spirit of the LORD rushed on David with power from that day forward**" (1 Samuel 16:13 EHV). How could a shepherd boy play his lyre for the current king and survive Saul's attempts to kill him? How could David protect his

sheep from lions and bears with his bare hands? How could David be victorious over a giant and rout an entire army? Only with the Spirit of the LORD's power!

Isn't it amazing how the LORD likes to use individuals in ways that most would call insignificant, or weak, or even foolish? Just look at the gospel for today. John the Baptist came from a priestly family. He looked and sounded like the prophet Elijah. His voice boomed! He called the people to repentance and urged them to be baptized. They saw the illusion that John was the Messiah, God's Anointed One.

Then there's Jesus. He was the carpenter's son. He came from Nazareth, a tiny village in the province of Galilee which most people considered the boonies. The prophet Isaiah described his appearance: **"He had no attractiveness and no majesty. When we saw him, nothing about his appearance made us desire him"** (Isaiah 53:2 EHV). Jesus couldn't be the Messiah—he didn't look like him!

Jesus is the true Anointed One. God the Father chose him and announced, "This is the one!" just as he did for David. When John baptized Jesus, the Father's voice came from heaven, **"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased"** (Luke 3:22 NIV). He wanted everyone to know that Jesus was the man after his own heart that he had sent to rescue the world from sin. In the same way that the Spirit of the LORD rushed on David with power, **"The Holy Spirit descended on [Jesus] in bodily form like a dove"** (Luke 3:22 NIV). This is no illusion—this is God's own Son. His humility, his poverty, the pain he endured, the cross he carried, and the death he died give the illusion that Jesus was nothing but an eccentric preacher who gained a large following for a while and then faded away. No, the foolishness of Jesus' cross is our hope, our salvation! The LORD has given us the opportunity to see with the eyes of faith what these eyes could never see. This is no illusion! Jesus came to rescue us from every illusion, every weakness, every sin.

He accomplished that in a special way for us. He chose us and said, "This is the one!" Then, as the pastor anointed us with water and the Word, God the Father saved us! **"He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior"** (Titus 3:5–6 NIV). In that instant, we became part of God's family. Our baptism vaporized all our illusions. It overpowered Satan and vanquished death. Jesus guarantees that we are important! We are significant! We are precious! We are heirs of the King!

Knowing that helps us see the reality of our jobs as a gift from the LORD. He knows we're there, and he's blessing the work we do, big or small. The things we do make a difference for others. The power plant worker is supplying what we need to turn on lights and cook food and stay warm. The garbage man helps keep our homes and streets clean. The janitor tidies up office space so workers have a clean room in the morning. The postal worker drops letters in a box and helps people pay their bills and communicate with loved ones. You are important!

Jesus looks at our spouse and says, "This is the one!" He or she is significant to him. They are our "significant other." That's a gift to treasure, to work on, and to build up with love and

respect. We can be a “one-man” or “one-woman” spouse because we recognize how significant and important this individual is as a gift from God!

Jesus helps us acknowledge that many times we feel ignored and no one cares. It’s real. It hurts. Then we can take that feeling to Jesus. He understands—he’s been there! All kinds of people ignored him. Many even tried to have him arrested and killed! This Jesus who understands looks at you and says, “You are the one I choose. You are my brother. You are my sister. I love you!”

Jesus helps us see that our hopelessness and grief are also real. He had to watch his loved ones die and stand at their tombs. He didn’t let grief take control. In fact, he used the Word to fight grief. **“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die”** (John 11:25–26 NIV). Jesus destroyed the illusion that when someone dies, death wins and we lose. When someone dies, Jesus wins. They win. We win. That truth helps to dry our tears and ease our grief.

Life may look like a mess and feel like a disaster. Don’t be fooled. God sees the mess and understands the disaster. He sees beyond all those things to the bigger picture. He is working something good, something grand, something incredible for us in the middle of our hurt and insignificance! He’s working for you because you are his child. When our eyes are tempted to believe the outward appearance is too much for God to handle we can remind ourselves, “I am a baptized child of God. I am important. I am significant. I am precious because Jesus loves me!” Amen.

To God alone the glory! Pastor Jon Brohn