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# Looking for a Leader

## Studies in Samuel and Kings

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### David: the Lord's anointed

This study covers the next major section of the book of 1 Samuel; chapters 16-31. It is the section of the book where David is introduced but Saul remains king. At the outset the reader learns that David has been anointed to become God's king—but Saul and his men do not know this. There is no smooth transition of power as Saul becomes increasingly hardened and hostile towards David. He means to kill God's anointed in order to hold on to his own position of power.

Saul's introduction to David centres around two events: (i) the evil spirit<sup>1</sup> which torments Saul, and (ii) David vs Goliath<sup>2</sup>. This introduction sets the tone for all the events which follow.

### Saul's rejection

Read 1 Sam 16:6-20.

1. Look back at 1 Sam 13:13-14 and 15:22-23. Why has Saul been rejected as king of Israel?
2. How are the spiritual conditions of Saul and David contrasted in 1 Sam 16:13-14?
3. What do you think might be the significance of this information for the events of chapters 16-31?

Previously, Saul had been changed and equipped by God's Holy Spirit to carry out his role of King (1 Sam 10:9-10; 11:6-8). But with his rejection, this divine enabling for the role of king is withdrawn. David is now the Lord's anointed, empowered by the Holy Spirit for the role: this is the key to a mature understanding of the well-known narrative of David and Goliath.

### David's empowering

**Each person in the group should quietly read 1 Sam 17:1-54 for themselves.** As you read, note the sections or verses that you consider most important. When you have all finished reading the text, share with the group the sections or verses you thought significant.

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<sup>1</sup> The text does not give much explanation of this evil spirit. We know that God allows Satan to test humans (eg Job 1:6-12) but that God himself does not tempt or lead us into evil (Jas 1:13). Further, God's purposes can also be achieved through the activity of the Evil One. Certainly the cross of Christ is an example of this principle. Although the exact nature of this evil spirit that comes to Saul is unclear, its effects appear very much like a mental illness such as paranoia or depression

<sup>2</sup> It is possible that the author of 1 Samuel has reversed the order of these two events in order to highlight the significance of David's victory over Goliath.

4. Look at the description of Goliath in vv4-11. Why do you think the text gives so many details about Goliath and his challenge to Israel? What is the effect of this information on you, the reader?
5. Goliath defies Saul and the army of Israel for 40 days (v 16). Can you think of other periods of 40 days in the Bible? What might they have in common with this period of 40 days?
6. From what we have read in 1 Samuel so far, who would be the best-qualified and most likely Israelite to take up Goliath's challenge? (If you get stuck, consider the following : 1 Sam 8:20; 9:2; 10:23-24)

*Of course this assessment would only be looking at outward appearances and would ignore the spiritual reality that David was now God's anointed and that God's spirit had been withdrawn from Saul. Saul's inactivity in this passage is telling.*

7. So eventually David confronts Goliath's challenge and defeats him. As the readers, whom do you think we are meant to identify with in the narrative and why?

*The answer that you give to question 7 will determine how you understand the entire David vs Goliath narrative. Since we are not God's anointed (as David was), this study suggests that we are most like the army of Israel. We ought to identify with them. If this is true, how might we apply this scripture to our lives?<sup>3</sup>*

*If we identify ourselves as David, we will fall into the trap of allegorically reading our own lives into the story. We make ourselves the heroes. This is not a 'story' included in the Bible merely to teach children that 'us little guys' can beat 'big guys', or to encourage us to face up to our fears. Instead, we learn something of what God does for his people through his anointed king.*

### **Our response to the Lord's anointed**

8. How do you think that this episode in the life of David prepares us to understand more about Jesus as God's anointed King?
9. As a group, give thanks to God in prayer for his Anointed!

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<sup>3</sup> A suggested answer: Like the army of Israel, we are powerless to fight the forces who oppose God's rule. We need God's anointed to rescue us from those who reject God and his rule.