

Life Lesson 63
Preparing a New King
Text: I Samuel 16, 17:34-36; Psalm 23,

Introduction

Do you ever think your life is boring? Maybe sometimes you don't know why you have to go to school and do chores and other things you really don't like to do. Our story today is about a boy who always was stuck with the most tiresome jobs. We'll see, though, how every one of those disappointing days prepared him for a very special future.

The Story

The prophet Samuel was sad -- so sad that he couldn't help but cry and mourn. He loved King Saul and had high hopes for him, but Saul kept on rebelling against God.

"Quit crying," God told Samuel. "Saul is never going to straighten up and be the king I wanted him to be. Go to Bethlehem to the house of a man named Jesse. I want you to anoint one of his sons to be the next king."

Samuel dried his eyes and went to Bethlehem and found Jesse.

Jesse had eight sons. The youngest was a boy named David. Do you know what happens to boys who have seven older brothers? Often the youngest gets stuck with the job none of the others want to do. That's what happened to David. He had the most boring job of all. He had to watch the sheep.

For one thing, sheep are not smart. He had to find good grass for them to eat. They are also very easily scared. They were even scared of running water. David had to find still water for

them to drink so they wouldn't die of thirst. Most of all, sheep are defenseless. David had to be on guard to make sure that no hungry animals took one of his sheep for dinner!

The sheep needed David to watch them, but it was such a boring job! There was no one to talk to, nothing to read, nothing to do. How could David serve God stuck out in a field with a bunch of dumb sheep?

God had a plan for this time that seemed wasted. David had lots of time to think, so he thought about God. He remembered the verses he had learned and spent lots of time talking to God.

He also had plenty of time to practice playing his harp. Soon the two things -- his music and his thoughts about God -- came together. He began writing songs about God and singing them to his Heavenly Father. Do you think that pleased God, to hear special songs written and sung just for Him? I think so! Many of those songs David wrote are in the Bible today. We can find them in the book of Psalms.

Let's look at one the songs David made up and sang to God. Psalm 23 says, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters."

How do you suppose David knew that the Lord took care of him just as the little shepherd boy took care of the sheep? He learned it by thinking about God and praying as he was out on the mountains doing his boring job. If he had the more exciting jobs in the family, he would never have had the time to get to know God so well. He wouldn't have been such a good harp player, either. All those lonely, boring hours weren't wasted for David at all.

There were other things God had in mind for David, too. He learned a lot from those silly sheep. One day he learned an exciting lesson. He was watching the sheep when he noticed something -- a big, scary something! It was a lion, looking for lamb for lunch.

Now, lions sometimes like to eat boys as well as lambs. Do you think David said, "I believe I'll just spare one lamb and let the lion have it?" No, he trusted God to help him, and he killed that lion with his own hands. God was with David and helped him to protect the sheep.

That was an important lesson for David to learn. It was so important, that God gave David another chance to make sure he learned it. A bear came looking for a lamb to eat, too. David again trusted the Lord to help him and he killed the bear.

So David learned to be watchful, to make sure the sheep's needs were met, and that God would help him defend the sheep. Do you think those things were important for a king to know? Yes, every one of those boring things and dangerous things was an important part of David's training.

When Samuel came to David's house and announced that he was there to anoint the next king, the whole family must have been excited. Jesse lined up all the boys. Samuel looked at Eliab, the oldest.

"He looks just like a king should look," Samuel thought.

But God said, "Not this one. Man looks on the outward appearance, but I look on the heart."

God is more concerned about what is on the inside than what the outside of a person looks like.

Samuel looked over each one of the sons, but God said, "no."

“Don’t you have any more sons?” Samuel asked.

“Well, just the youngest,” Jesse answered. “He’s out watching the sheep.”

Naturally -- David was always out watching the sheep when interesting things were going on! But this time, he didn’t miss the excitement.

“Go get him,” Samuel said.

When David came, God told Samuel, “This is the one.”

How surprised everyone in the family was when Samuel anointed little David the next king of Israel!

Do you know what happened to David next? He went back to watching the sheep! He still had more time of training before he was ready to be king.

But how could someone who spent all his time with sheep know how to run an army? How could he know the manners of the palace? God didn’t forget about that part of David’s preparation either.

King Saul had gone from bad to worse. He threw such bad fits that his helpers tried to figure out something to help him.

“Maybe if we found someone who could play and sing beautiful music, it would calm him down,” someone suggested.

“I heard a shepherd boy who could sing and play the harp beautifully. We could get him,” someone else said. Maybe that person knew David’s family, or maybe had been passing through David’s hometown of Bethlehem and heard him sing.

They sent someone to get David, and David moved from the sheep pasture to the palace. Now his life was exciting enough! When the king threw a crazy fit, he would sing for him. At

other times, he would watch the king and his helpers. David learned the manners of the palace people. He learned how a king orders his army. While there in Saul's palace, he learned many things he needed to know to prepare him to be king.

Then King Saul, for some reason, didn't need or want David anymore. And it was back to the sheep again! It must have seemed especially pointless and boring after an interesting interlude in the palace of the king, but God's timing was perfect. Soon David would leave the sheep for good and take on the role for which God had spent years preparing him.

The Life Lesson

God has a plan for everyone's life -- including yours! Even the things that seem pointless and boring are things He has arranged for your training for what He wants you to do. I hope you will be like David and make the most of your growing up time. Everything in your life is there for a purpose -- the sad things and the tiresome things as well as the good. Who knows what exciting things God might be preparing for you?

Review Questions

How many brothers did David have?

Seven

What was David's job?

Taking care of the sheep.

Was it a fun, exciting job?

No.

What did David do while watching the sheep?

He practiced his harp, thought about the Bible verses he had learned, and made up songs about God.

What book of the Bible has many songs that David wrote down?

Psalms

Tell me one of the songs we have in the Bible that David wrote down?

Psalm 23

What exciting things did happen to David while he was a shepherd?

He killed a lion and a bear.

What did David do for King Saul?

He sang and played the harp to calm the king's angry fits.

What important things did David learn while he lived in the palace?

He learned how a king ruled the country, ran the army, etc. And he learned the manners and ways of the palace.

What did David do after King Saul didn't need him anymore?

He went back to tending the sheep.

Did God have a purpose in the long, boring hours David spent watching the sheep?

Yes, it prepared him to be king of God's people.

