



God's Champion

David's Triumphs and Tragedies

An Athlete's Study

WEEK 1

Intangibles

One of my favorite awards in all of sports is the Walter Payton Man of the Year Award recognizing NFL players for excellence on and off the field. These men have made an impact, not only on their teams, but in their communities. Unlike the cautionary tales of players who veered off their path to greatness due to poor choices, these players seem to possess those intangibles that every coach wants—drive, determination, leadership, and ultimately, character.

These intangibles are often hard to spot. Coaches often must draft players based on externals, height, strength, speed, etc. However, God's not taken in by superficial appearances. God's focus is on the heart. He knows that what matters about a person are the intangibles, those things that can't be seen from the outside.

1 Samuel 16:5b–12

⁵ He replied, "Yes, in peace. I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." So he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they arrived, Samuel noticed Eliab and said to himself, "Surely, here before the LORD stands his chosen king!" ⁷ But the LORD said to Samuel, "Don't be impressed by his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. God does not view things the way men do. People look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and presented him to Samuel. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one, either." ⁹ Then Jesse presented Shammah. But Samuel said, "The LORD has not chosen this one either." ¹⁰ Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these." ¹¹ Then Samuel said to Jesse, "Is that all of the young men?" Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest one, but he's taking care of the flock." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and get him, for we cannot turn our attention to other things until he comes here."

¹² So Jesse had him brought in. Now he was ruddy, with attractive eyes and a handsome appearance. The LORD said, "Go and anoint him. This is the one!"

Study Notes

(See Back)

Discussion

Icebreaker

What do you consider to be the most important "intangibles" for players on any team?

Observation

1. What does the Lord look at when making an assessment of people? (7)

2. How does the author describe David? (12)

Interpretation

3. To what does "heart" refer in verse 7? How does it differ from "outward appearance"?

4. Why does the author draw attention to David's outward appearance (12), right after the Lord has said that he looks at the heart, *not outward appearance*? (7)

Application

4. How does a person receive a "pure heart?" Have you done this, and if not, what's holding you back?

This study may have raised some questions or new ideas for you. If you have questions about your relationship with God, don't wait. Talk to your coach as soon as possible.



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The GM

On a professional sports team, it's the job of the GM, or General Manager, to hire, supervise, and possibly fire, athletes, coaches, and staff. Essentially, a GM will handle the business side of any sports team. The GM is selected by the team's owner and works as the decision-maker for the team's present situation and future possibilities.

Stepping back in Israel's history to the time of the kings, there was a unique position in God's organization—the prophet. Prophets were a little like GM's. They worked at the discretion of the owner (God), and they served God's head coaches (kings) by interpreting the present situation and sometimes declaring what God had shown them of the future. And as we'll see today, sometimes they were responsible for hiring and firing.

God's GM in our passage today is the prophet, Samuel. Initially, God used Samuel to hire a man named Saul as king of Israel. However, Saul had some character issues and did something he had specifically been told not to do (see 1 Samuel 13). After this incident Samuel told Saul, *"You have made a foolish choice! You have not obeyed the commandment that the Lord your God gave you. Had you done that, the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever! But now your kingdom will not continue! The Lord has sought out for himself a man who is loyal to him and the Lord has appointed him to be leader over his people, for you have not obeyed what the Lord commanded you"* (1 Samuel 13:13–14). In other words, "You're fired!"

Although Saul remained king, his firing meant that his throne would not be passed on to his children, but instead, passed on to someone else. For obvious reasons, Saul wasn't happy with this, but as many coaches know, the Owner always gets his way.

God's Champion Should Possess a Pure Heart

Our passage today picks up with God's GM, seeking out the next head coach in God's organization. Although Saul had all the externals, God was looking for someone with intangibles, with character, someone with a pure heart.

We meet Saul's replacement in 1 Samuel 16. The Lord informed Samuel that he had chosen one of Jesse's sons as Saul's successor. When Samuel arrived at the house of Jesse, he and his sons were shocked at God's GM showing up unannounced. He had come under the guise of making a sacrifice.

Really, however, as Samuel surveyed the draft class of Jesse's sons, one stood out. **Samuel noticed Eliab and said to himself, "Surely, here before the Lord stands his chosen king!" But the Lord had a different game plan and said to Samuel, "Don't be impressed by his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him."**

It's unwise for a GM to question the owner for fear of losing his own job, however, this just didn't make sense. Couldn't God see how fitting Eliab looked—tall and handsome, stately even? However, **"God does not view things the way men do. People look on the outward appearance [literally, "the eyes"], but the LORD looks at the heart."**

A Pure Heart Is God's Highest Priority

Soon, Jesse paraded his sons before Samuel, but the Lord rejected them all—that is, all but one. Samuel asked, **"Is that all of the young men?" Jesse, probably confused by the question, replied, "There is still the youngest one, but he's taking care of the flock."** Samuel had Jesse send for his youngest, David. Finally, Jesse presented this shepherd boy, **ruddy, with attractive eyes and handsome**, and the Lord told Samuel, **"Go and anoint him. This is the one!"**

What did God see in David's heart? We'll seek to answer that question throughout our study, but for now, we see part of David's heart in Psalm 19, **"The law of the LORD is perfect, The LORD's precepts are fair, The LORD's commands are pure, The commands to fear the LORD are right and endure forever. The judgments given by the LORD are trustworthy and absolutely just. They are of greater value than gold, than even a great amount of pure gold; they bring greater delight than honey, than even the sweetest honey from a honeycomb"** (Psalm 19:7–10, selected).

As you can see, David loved the Word of the Lord. But what if we asked you the same question, "What would God see if he inspected your heart?" Would God see this kind of love and treasuring of his Word?

As we study David over the course of the semester, we'll see with great clarity that he was far from perfect. Although God's standard is perfection, he understands the effects of sin better than we do and he knows that we could never be perfect on our own. That's why God would eventually send his Greatest Champion—a descendant of David, who was perfect, who could do battle and conquer sin, death and the devil—that Champion was Jesus Christ. But knowing about God's Champion isn't enough, each of us must receive his free gift of grace and invite him to purify our hearts. That kind of heart is God's highest priority.