

# “The Heart of Success”

## 1 Samuel 16:1-23

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### Our society and the measure of success

How do we measure success in our society?

What kind of things is our society looking for in someone, or around someone, in order to gauge their success?

Our society is often looking for the 4 Ps.

Someone is successful if they have:

- an important **Position** in a company
- a big **Pay Packet**
- a great **Postcode**
- and **Peer Approval**
  - "He or she has a huge # of Facebook friends"

Our world loves the 4 Ps.

It is the “air we breathe”.

This kind of thinking is so common that we hardly ever question it.

- The Good Weekend Magazine in the paper on Sunday applauds the 4 P's,
- Parents gently & sometimes covertly encourage us toward toward the 4 Ps
- and the bragging blokes do around the Aussie BBQ usually features the 4 Ps.

But every now and then something will happen which causes us to question "the air we breathe" ... that makes us question the 4 P's:

- I spoke to Sue on Wednesday night. She took 8 children from an elite private school on an excursion. She drove these kids in her own car and at the end of the trip not one of them said, "Thank you Mrs Childs for driving us today"
- There's a guy I have known for 21 years who has autism, he doesn't have the 4 P's, but despite that in all the years I have known him, I have never heard him speak a word of gossip, malice or slander against another person ....

In our society it is all about the 4 x Ps

But is this right?

Is the measure of success really about accumulating one P after the other?

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Are the most successful people in our society those with the 4 x Ps?

And therefore are the most successful leaders in our society those with the 4Ps?

And how does God think about success in the world that HE made?

What does he think about the 4 x Ps?

He is a great big Tiger Mum in the sky urging us to "work harder" or does he think a different way?

Or does he have different priorities?

Well in this chapter of 1 Samuel, God is very clear about what kind citizen HE considers success; and therefore he is very clear about what kind of leader is successful.

Let's have a look at what he has to say.

Let's have a look at sentence #1 following.

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### 1. Scared of “success” (16:1 - 3)

**16 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.”**

It is import that I quickly recap where the story left off, or when you watch a TV series at the start of each episode they have a “Previously” bit.

Samuel, God’s Prophet/Spokesman/Envoy who is about 80 years old, has been working alongside & helping King Saul for the last 15 years to work out how to lead as the first ever King in the nation of Israel.

Saul started out well, but then lost his way.

He started out as a bloke who obeyed what God has to say through his spokesman Samuel ... but then, over time, he became a bloke who thought he’d be the one to tell Samuel (and therefore God) how he would roll.

King Saul over time started to enjoy the Position, Pay Packet, Property and Peer Approval just a bit too much. He got drunk on his so called “success”.

And things came to a head in the previous chapter. God said two very definite things to Saul through Samuel:

1. 15:22-23: “I desire obedience not sacrifice”
  - a. I desire a King who wants to heed my advice, not legalistically obey the rules of religious feasts
2. And the second thing God says to King Saul through Samuel says is in 15:28 is, “The Lord has torn the Kingdom of Israel from you today and has given it to one of your neighbours – to one better than you”

They parted ways and Samuel the Prophet, in 1 Sam 15:35, resolved to never go up and see Saul again. He resolved to never approach him as King again. King Saul was sacked.

We don’t know how much time has lapsed between the disagreement of Chapter 15 and Chapter 16 but in my estimation it is a couple of years.

So it is with all of this happening “Previously” that God in sentence 1 tells Samuel to go and anoint one of the sons, of Jesse as king.

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Now, I don't know about you, but I would have thought that Samuel's response to God's commissioning would have been,

*“Woo Hoo. You rippa. We have a succession plan for the failed King Saul. It has been a hard couple of years sitting in limbo with enemies pressuring us on every side. I'm going to high tail it down to Bethlehem”.*

But is that the case?

No.

Look at sentence #2:

**<sup>2</sup> But Samuel said, “How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me.”**

We're meant to read that and react with “WHAT?”

In fact have you noticed the two emotional responses of Samuel in sentences 1 and 2. Samuel:

1. Mourns for Saul – he misses him, he is grieving the loss of Saul as King, the loss of his comrade, his brother in arms ... yet he also
2. Fears him – and not just I'm afraid of what he thinks. He is so afraid of Saul, that he thinks to himself, “If Saul gets wind of me crowning someone else as King, he will send his hench men, his assassins, to kill me to stop it happening”.
  - o Geography plays a part here, because in order for Samuel, who lives in Ramah, to crown someone as King in Bethlehem, Saul has to travel through Gibeah of Saul ... he's worried that Saul's border guards will hold him up and ask, “What's the purpose of your visit to Bethlehem”.

Isn't it interesting how Samuel feels both grief and fear, when he thinks of Saul. He feels these two paradoxical emotions at the same time.

But I think leaders who love the 4 P's have inspired these kinds of emotions in their lieutenants over the centuries.

If a leader loves power, and the perks that go with it, their lieutenants love the power and the perks that go with it too ... they get to enjoy the spoils.

I wonder if Samuel thought to himself:

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*I was there in the heart of the action, I was the Prophet of God that helped him to get to here he was. I walked in Israel's newly created corridors of power.<sup>1</sup>*

But then it is precisely this accumulated power that is used against these lieutenants should they ever speak up against the power drunk leader.

The lieutenants of Robespierre, Stalin and Mao Tse Tung all felt what Samuel felt.

So what does the Lord say to the fearful mourning prophet.

Look at sentence #2:

**The LORD said, “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’<sup>3</sup> Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”**

When Saul's border security personnel interrogate you, the female calf you are leading behind you will lead them to think that your alibi is for real. Heifer's are expensive, they'll believe your story.

When you get to Bethlehem I'll give further instructions.

So what does Samuel do.

Let's see. Look at sentence 4.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel 8:1 <sup>3</sup> Samuel's own sons were keen on dishonest gain. Samuel seems to be a complex soul.

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### 2. The heart of success (16:4 - 13)

**<sup>4</sup> Samuel did what the LORD said.**

That’s good, but what we notice in the next sentence is that fear is a common emotion in Israel under Saul.

**When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, “Do you come in peace?”**

The elders at the gate of the town, which is like the Town Square, trembled! Why were they afraid?

Well, Samuel the Prophet, Israel’s Spiritual leader was a very different character to the spiritual leaders of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, Glenn Davies.

In this stage of history, the Prophet also doubled as a Military Commander, Samuel was a bit like a mix of Glenn Davies and Australia’s Victoria Cross winning SAS Soldier, Ben Roberts Smith.

Samuel led the battle where Israel subdued the Philistine (Chapter 7).

Samuel, personally carried out the God ordained execution of the Agog, the King of the Amelekites Chapter 15.

Samuel didn’t walk along wearing a dog collar, he was packing heat, he walked with a broad sword on his hip and bow across his back.

No wonder they were afraid.

Sentence 5:

**<sup>5</sup> 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.**

Samuel in sentence 4 seems to be speaking to all the town elders but in sentence 5 singles out Jesse to invite him to a special sacrifice, something private. Something where the only people present were Jesse, Samuel and Jesse’s sons.

Well, what happens when they arrive?

Look at sentence 6 with me:

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**<sup>6</sup> When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”**

Now I want to paint a picture here for you.

This is a private gathering, it was probably at night, the room was lit by candles and the fire that was used to burn the sacrifice, in the religious building of Bethlehem, and there’s 9 people gathered:

- Samuel – 80 years old
  - Jesse (Father)– 50 years old
    - Eliab (Son #1) – 29 years
    - Abinadab (Son #2) – 26 years
    - Shammah (Son #3) – 24 years
    - Son #4 (Son) – 23 years
    - Son #5 (Son) – 21 years
    - Son #6 (Son) – 19 years
    - Son #7 (Son) – 17 years
    - David (Son) – 15 years

Jesse and his 7 sons are all lined up and what does Samuel do?

He looks them all up and down and then thinks to himself, “

*“Mmm, that Eliab has a physique that would make any Australia’s Ninja Warrior contestant proud, and not only is he ripped, he is also very tall which is awesome when you face an opponent on the battle field because it puts the fear of God into your opponent. Yep, Eliab has the abs and the altitude, he must be the chosen one. “*

How do we know this?

Because of the rebuke of the Lord in sentence 7:

**<sup>7</sup> 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 man looks at. Man<sup>2</sup> looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”**

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<sup>2</sup> People

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Samuel is a tragic figure here.

In sentence 3 God said:

**<sup>3</sup> Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.”**

But he rushes in and makes a mash of it.

He does what Saul did in Chapter 15.

Samuel, the prophet of God, is looking for the 4 Ps, he’s looking at the outward appearance. He’s after the powerful person, the one with position, the first born son of Jesse, the one at the head of the table.

Samuel has seen the terrible effects of selecting people on the basis of their outward appearance already. Saul was a chosen in Chapter 9:2 as “an impressive young man ... a head taller than any of the others”.

God says to Samuel, you’re looking for the wrong thing.

You shouldn’t be looking for Position, Pay packet, Postcode and Peer Approval you should be looking for PURITY.

You should be looking for a heart without malice, a King who puts the health of his people before the wealth of his palace.

God says to Samuel, “That’s what I look for, I look at a person’s heart”.

Friends, I have been very rebuked by this Bethlehem event. I am, like Samuel, a Christian leader.

One of the responsibilities I have is that I work for an organisation called, The Geneva Push – and what I do for them is assess Church Planters.

I DO NOT ask enough questions about their heart.

This is not easy is it friends.

As I mentioned before.

The 4 Ps, the infatuation with the externals is the “air we breath”.

But there are very simple things we can do that would please God and enable us to swim against the tide.

For example, when you next get your child’s School Report – discipline yourself to only comment to your child about issues related to character ... not marks. “Jake, your teacher said that you are a delight to teach. That brings great honour to Jesus. Well done my son.”

**[Pause]**



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Well what happens next in this covert coronation of the King.

Samuel starts to obey God which is good.

From sentence #8 onwards, Samuel takes God's advice:

**<sup>8</sup> Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, “The LORD has not chosen this one either.” <sup>9</sup> Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, “Nor has the LORD chosen this one.” <sup>10</sup> Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The LORD has not chosen these.”**

It appears none of the contestants was going to win the car.

This is both awkward and telling with respect to what's going on in Jesse's heart.

Jesse did not know that a coronation was going to happen.

Jesse weirdly didn't invite his own son, when asked to invite his sons to sacrifice.

Jesse seems to think that David is so insignificant that he isn't worth bringing along should the most religious figure in the nation ask him to attend an event with his sons.

This is telling in the extreme

**<sup>11</sup> So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”**

**“There is still the youngest,” Jesse answered, “but he is tending the sheep.”**

Silence ...

**Samuel said, “Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.”**

It must have been quite awkward in the room.

“We won't sit down until he arrives” just adds extra weight and anticipation to the private gathering.

It makes me think of a groom standing at the front of a church building on his wedding day, he will not sit until she arrives.

Presumably Jesse sent the 2<sup>nd</sup> youngest son to find David sentence 12.

David is “tending the sheep”, he is in the fields..

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A fast runner will cover 1 km in 5 minutes. We don't know how far away he was . and therefore what time elapsed between sending a scout and David walking into the room.

But I can tell you now, that when there was the light knock, and David entered, all eyes would have been on him as he entered the room.

I don't know whether Eliab, Abinidab and Shammah were glaring at him with jealous angry eyes, and were feeling usurped by their little brother ... I suspect they were if their behavior in the next chapter is any indication. Their attitude toward David in the battle against Goliath.

So what happens now?

Sentence 12:

**<sup>12</sup> So he sent for him and had him brought in. He was ruddy<sup>3</sup>, with a fine appearance and handsome features.**

There is tension in the room. The 7 x brother and Jesse would have been looking keenly at Samuel to find out whether God would green light this 15 year old boy as the next King of Israel.

They wouldn't have heard what the Lord said next, but they would've seen Samuel grasp the horn, the container of oil ...

**Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; he is the one.”**

**<sup>13</sup> 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 upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.**

This is a really significant event in human history.

The new King of Israel turned out to be:

- The most unsuspecting leader
- From a town called Bethlehem
- Who was a Shepherd

Why was he chosen by God?

The Apostle Paul answers that question in Acts 13:22

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<sup>3</sup> Glowing with health

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**<sup>22</sup> After removing Saul, he [God] made David their king. God testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart;**

And why is he described as a man after God’s own heart?

Look at how the sentence continues:

**he will do everything I want him to do.’**

Can you see what 1 Samuel 16 is teaching us?

The heart of success is not:

- Outward appearance
- The 4 Ps
- The accumulation of great power and perks

The heart of success in God’s eyes is a person or a leader who is a man or a woman after God’s own heart.

A person who’s heart mimics, imitates and emulates the very heart of God himself.

And one of the things I LOVE about Christianity is that one of David’s actual descendants, who was King of Israel 1,000 years later was also:

- The most unsuspecting leaders
- from Bethlehem
- who at age 30 said, “I am the good shepherd”

Wasn’t just a man after God’s own heart, but was God at heart.

God in the flesh.

And what did HE do when he came?

Did he follow in the footsteps of King Saul? Did he:

- Jockey for Position ... no he took on the nature of a servant, a slave
- Seek a big Pay packet ... no, people didn’t pay him. Instead Mark 10:45 he paid the price of his own life to free those in his realm
- Want a flash postcode ... foxes have holes & birds have nests
- Peer Approval ... he was scorned like no other

Why did he come?

What was this King’s greatest achievement?

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He came because he loved us and he came to rescue people like you and me from the freight train of God’s judgement with the shield of his own blood.

[Pause]

Well, friends, we don’t have time to look in detail at the second half of 1 Samuel 16.

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### 3. The Lord equipping the aints (16:14 - 23)

But what happens next is that God equips David in the most surprising way.

David is crowned at about 15 years old.

Everyone goes home afterwards.

But through a series of “coincidences” David ends up serving as King Saul’s armor bearer and court musician.

How does God equip David with the skills to learn to be King.

He arranges for the 15 year old to be in the Kings Court. He watches how the whole Kingship thing works by sitting next to King Saul.

Saul isn’t threatened by David because in Sauls eyes, David aint anything special.

But in the period, the Lord equips the aints, the Lord equips he who aint anything special.

David is both armor bearer (he gets militarily trained) and he is also the court musician, the man who would write songs that captured the heart of God (he was theologically trained).

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### **The Church’s measure of success**

Well friends, as we finish up.

What is the measure of success in God’s eyes:

1. It isn’t the 4 Ps ...
  - a. in fact the pursuit of the 4 Ps actually produces people who love power and perks
2. The successful person is the one who has had a heart transplant, they have a heart after God’s own heart
3. God equips the aints ... he equips those who in the world’s eyes aint anything special, but in his eyes are precious.