
When the Lord Sees People, Do They Change?

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
by Dean Sam Candler**

When the prophet Samuel was called to anoint a successor King Saul, the Lord sent him to the sons of Jesse. One by one, those sons were processed before Samuel, so that Samuel could determine who it was who had been called by the Lord. Here is how it goes:

Samuel looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the Lord." But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart."

(1 Samuel 16:6-7)

Those lines echo a familiar refrain in the biblical chorus. Again and again, we get the message that the Lord does not see as humanity sees. Our God sees things that we do not. God sees characteristics and gifts and strengths that we do not. We get the message that the Lord looks on matters of the heart that we humans sometimes cannot see.

However!

This very passage, 1 Samuel 16, then claims a strange reversal of that principle! When the youngest son of Jesse shows up, the future King David, David is described in ways that don't seem to appeal to the heart at all. Instead, David is described in ways that just might appeal to our human sight!

After Samuel has seen most of Jesse's sons,

Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." (1 Samuel 16:11-12)

What is going on? Suddenly, David is described as being "handsome, with beautiful eyes!" Surely that sounds appealing to us!

Here is what might be going on: When God looks upon a person, they actually do change. What if David was, indeed, a rather ordinary-looking person, not well-regarded, the last son of a long line of stronger sons? What if, suddenly, God looked at him? What if God turned God's face towards him?

What if, when God smiles upon someone, that person really does change? What if ordinary people become extraordinary when God chooses them? Yes, I believe that David changed when God chose him.

In fact, I believe that each of us changes when we realize that God loves us. For some of us, that realization, that God might actually choose us, and love us, is a hard thing to realize. The heavy and hard criticism of our backgrounds and cultures has weighted us down with despondency.

Yes, some people have grown so bitter and despondent that they cannot hear that loving voice of God. Instead, they need to hear from God's ambassadors, God's messengers, God's angels. They need someone to speak God's words to them.

That's where all of us come in. All of us are meant to be, from time to time—if not all the time!—God's angels to others. There are many people who simply will not feel “handsome (or pretty), with beautiful eyes,” until someone tells them that. When we do tell them that, those words will seem like the words of God.

And they will be. The Lord sees more deeply than humans do. But we have the same power to speak divine love and acceptance to our neighbor. We have the power to change their lives, and maybe even to change their very appearance! When we speak good words to people, we really do change them.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam Candler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

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