

• Training for kingship

**First, there comes into David's life God's inconspicuous training**

• A musician to sooth tormented Saul

• David had to be content to let God bring him into his calling as King

• God's training lasts as long as it has to

• Training in psalm writing

**Next, there comes dramatic introduction into position as Saul's second-in-command**

• The Philistines gather

One way to train a future king would be to send him to court and let him observe a king being king! Next he might be introduced to doing the things a king needs to do. So it is in the life of David.

**First, there comes into David's life God's inconspicuous training.** God has a habit of gently manipulating our lives so that we get real experience in something we are going to do, and then he plunges us into our calling.

Saul had ruined his life. God had withdrawn from him<sup>1</sup>. Wild moods of anger<sup>2</sup> and violence<sup>3</sup> had begun. His attendants knew he was being tormented by an evil spirit<sup>4</sup>. They had discovered that music had a soothing effect upon Saul, and so suggested that they should look out for a musician to play the harp for him. They did not mention the need to call upon God for mercy, but just wanted something to 'make him feel better'<sup>5</sup>. Saul agreed<sup>6</sup>, and - in the providence of God - one of his attendants knew about David. Not many knew him but the one who did thought well of his courage, his fine appearance and his spirituality<sup>7</sup>. After his anointing by Samuel David had gone back to looking after the sheep. 'Send me your son David, **who is with the sheep,**' was the message of Saul<sup>8</sup>. So David was given a few supplies and was sent to Saul<sup>9</sup>.

David knew he was to be king, and that he already had God's anointing for the task, but he had to be content to let God work it out for him. This was stage one of David's training - observing a king at work. God put David alongside Saul<sup>1</sup>. What better training could David have? He was Saul's 'armour-bearer', witnessing everything that Saul was doing as king, observing every kind of task that arose in Saul's life. This apprenticeship did not last for a long time but it lasted long enough. God's training lasts as long as it has to but no more. 'Allow David to remain in my service,' said Saul to Jesse<sup>2</sup>. David continued his ministry of playing the harp to Saul<sup>3</sup>.

It was not only training in kingship, it was also training in psalm-writing! Later David would become famous for his psalms which to this day often soothe our spirits when we are in distress. When and where did David learn to exercise this ministry? He had learned to play the harp in his solitude while looking after sheep. He learned more about calming distressed hearts in the palace of Saul. It was all training for the future.

**Next, there comes dramatic introduction into position as Saul's second-in-command.** Again we notice how the whole procedure is utterly of God, utterly without any manipulation on David's part.

David was back with the sheep<sup>1</sup>. Despite his contacts with the palace David was still 'only a boy'<sup>2</sup>, still despised by his brothers<sup>3</sup>, still being given small jobs to do for his father<sup>4</sup>. The Philistines were gathering their forces ready to totally crush the people of Israel<sup>5</sup>.

The scene is a dramatic one. There is a valley between two hills. The Philistines are gathered on one hill; the Israelites are on the other hill<sup>1</sup>. The Philistines reckon they have the ultimate military weapon: Goliath! He is about three metres tall, heavily armoured

16:14  
17:8  
17:10-11  
16:15  
16:16  
16:17

16:18  
16:19  
16:20

16:21

16:22  
16:23

see 17:15  
17:33  
17:28  
17:17  
17:1

17:1-3

• *Goliath – panic in Saul’s army*

and accompanied by his shield-bearer<sup>□2</sup>. He stands in the valley and shouts out his invitation to settle the war by one-to-one combat. War by combat of two heroes was not common but with a hero like Goliath no doubt the Philistines thought it was a good idea! Goliath mentions Saul, hinting that Saul himself should accept his offer<sup>□3</sup>, pointing out that it would settle the war decisively<sup>□4</sup>. He is confident and defiant<sup>□5</sup> and creates panic both in Saul and in the lower ranks of the army<sup>□6</sup>.

□2 17:4-7  
 □3 17:8  
 □4 17:9  
 □5 17:10  
 □6 17:11

• *David present – not by his own manipulation but at his father’s instruction*

It is in that setting that we are once again introduced to David. We are again told of this family with its eight sons, one of whom was decidedly the junior<sup>□1</sup>. We discover how David was present when Goliath was shouting his defiance; he was bellowing his message daily for forty days<sup>□2</sup>. David was sent by Jesse to take supplies to his brothers<sup>□3</sup> and was specially told to pay his respects to the commander of the unit<sup>□4</sup>. This means that David would be noticed by someone high in authority, and yet it was not David’s manipulation but his father’s instruction. He is told by his father to come back afterwards<sup>□5</sup> and given direction to where the battle was taking place<sup>□6</sup>.

□1 17:12-15  
 □2 17:16  
 □3 17:17  
 □4 17:18  
 □5 17:19  
 □6 17:20

• *A marvel of God’s timing – David arrives at the decisive moment*

A marvel of God’s timing takes place. David arrives at the very point where the armies are moving into position<sup>□1</sup>. He gets on with what he was sent to do and goes straight to his brothers<sup>□2</sup>. At that very point Goliath is shouting out his challenges<sup>□3</sup>. David witnesses the fear of the Israelites<sup>□4</sup> and hears about the great rewards that will come to anyone who could deal with Goliath<sup>□5</sup>. God has prepared him for his next step towards kingship, which will be largely concerned with overcoming the Philistines. So he is naturally, easily, and decisively introduced into his life’s work.

□1 17:20-21  
 □2 17:22  
 □3 17:23  
 □4 17:24  
 □5 17:25

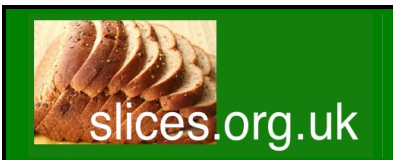
• *David kills Goliath and is appointed to high office*

We know the rest of the story. David kills Goliath<sup>□1</sup>. Saul takes greater notice of David and keeps him with him<sup>□2</sup>. In no time at all he is the close friend of the king’s son<sup>□3</sup>, in high office and much respected by everyone<sup>□4</sup>. There can be nothing higher except the kingship itself and Saul’s jealousy of David begins<sup>□5</sup>.

□1 17:26-54  
 □2 17:55-18:2  
 □3 18:3-4  
 □4 18:5-7  
 □5 18:8-9

• *From the sheep fields to high office – all God’s doing and entirely without David’s manipulation*

But we are running ahead. Our task as we look at 17:1-25 is to notice God’s hand in all of this. It is totally without manipulation on David’s part. God himself has brought something into the story of Israel that will take his chosen king from the sheep-fields to the highest position in the land under Saul. David’s days with sheep are finished; from this point on David was shepherd of Israel.



Dr Michael Eaton is highly respected internationally as a theologian, author, preacher and teacher. He lives in Kenya where he is one of the leaders of the Chrisco Fellowship. His *Preaching Through The Bible* (PTTB) books are highly popular worldwide. Michael Eaton puts the theological and practical meaning of the Bible in a clear and down-to-earth way so that what is written can be easily understood by the reader.



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