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The Lord Looks at the Heart

1 Samuel 16:1-13

In the movie *Twins* some genetic engineers combine the genes from several of the best men they can find—a brilliant scientist, a powerful athlete, a talented musician, a great artist, and a tall and incredibly handsome hunk. They implant these super genes into a mother’s womb. But by accident, they also implant all of the leftover genetic “junk.” Then nine months later out pops the ideal (according to our culture) baby, who grows up to be the ideal man: Arnold Schwarzenegger. But to everyone’s surprise a second baby also pops out—the embodiment of everything our culture says you don’t want to be as a baby or a man—Danny DeVito!

The implied message of the movie is that if you wanted to pick someone to be CEO of your company or the quarterback for your team or the pastor of your church—or whatever—you’d pick an Arnold Schwarzenegger every time because he is tall, handsome, powerful and intelligent. But the *last* person you would ever pick would be Danny DeVito because he is short, weak and unattractive.

GROUP DISCUSSION. How does a person’s appearance affect your initial opinion of him or her?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. In what ways do you try to impress people

with your outward appearance?

Israel's first king, Saul, was the ideal candidate—tall, handsome and impressive. Unfortunately, he was also foolish and disobedient. As Israel's second king is chosen, the Lord rejects worldly standards of leadership and selects David, a man after his own heart. *Read 1 Samuel 16:1-13.*

1. What evidence is there in this passage that Samuel is having difficulty letting go of Saul?

2. What specific instructions does the Lord give Samuel for anointing a new king (vv. 1-3)?

3. Why does Samuel suppose that Eliab is the Lord's anointed (vv. 6-7; see 17:13)?

4. According to verse 7, how does God's judgment differ from ours?

5. The Lord tells Samuel, "Man looks at the outward appearance" (v. 7). What sorts of "outward" things do we tend to look at in people?

6. How does our culture reinforce our emphasis on appearance?

7. Why are outward qualities an unreliable way to judge a person?

8. If you had been given the job of finding the next king of Israel, why would David have been an unlikely choice?

In what sense was he also a good choice (see v. 18)?

9. Why do you think the Lord has Samuel look at each of Jesse's sons before revealing that he has chosen David (vv. 6-12)?

10. When the Lord looks at our hearts, what specific qualities do you think he values most? Explain.

Take time to pray, asking the Lord to develop those qualities within you.

Now or Later

George Barna writes, "In the past two decades Americans have been burned by leaders who oozed charisma and flashed world-class rhetorical skills but whose underlying character was debatable, at best." (*The Barna Report* [Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 1998] p. 5). In what ways can we look beyond deceptive appearance and discern a person's true character?