

**Worship Material**  
**Changed and being changed**  
**Material from Roots Bible Study**  
**Sunday 16th June**

**Begin with opening prayer**

Thank you, Lord, that you have been faithful to us through all the changes of our lives; we praise you, for there is no end to your faithfulness. Help us today to be open to you, and to trust you through all the changes still to come.  
**Amen.**

**Read 1 Samuel 15:34–16:13**

**Bible notes**

Israelite elders asked Samuel for a king. Saul was identified and anointed, but his kingship turned out to be unsatisfactory. The long saga of the books of Samuel and Kings has a single criterion for evaluating the success of kingship: is the king wholeheartedly committed to worshipping Israel's one God, who is identified as his Father (Psalm 2:7)? Because Saul does not live up to this, especially over his treatment of the Amalekites after victory in battle (see chapter 15), God withdraws favour and the search for a new king is on.

Samuel, at home in Ramah near Bethlehem, mourns the end of his relationship with Saul, and God too is sorry. Saul's shortcomings as leader grieve them both; the narrative does not address the wider theological questions about why God chose Saul and why this calling broke down. The pause to mark this sorrow is only brief, and the story moves on – change is urgently needed.

For Samuel, Bethlehem was just another insignificant place in Judea. Its fame arose from what he would do there: anoint David as king. Its resonance in Christian tradition also arises from this anointing – Jesus, Son of David, was born in David's hometown. Samuel's action changed human history in the short- and long-term. Samuel's arrival in Bethlehem alarmed the elders – was he coming to challenge them? His reassurance was in line with God's advice (v.2) but did not reveal the real purpose of his visit. It is not clear whether Jesse is one of the community's leaders; in any case, his status is not relevant alongside the overwhelming reality of God's choice. This is reiterated with the rejection of one son after another, all fine young men who might, in Samuel's

eyes, have been suitable. They shared a handsome appearance with Saul, but this was no longer relevant to God's purposes.

The choice eventually fell on David, the last-born. He was still a boy (17:33; cf 3:1), and an eighth son in a society that recognised seven as the 'perfect' number. He had the menial task of keeping the sheep, though this also recalls the lifestyle of Abraham and Moses. This focus on his insignificance fits in a pattern of unexpected choices: why was Jacob chosen over his older brother, or Joseph over his brothers? Change for the better flows from God's initiative, not human preference; and so David was anointed with oil and received the spirit of the Lord.

### **Prayer**

Samuel anointed David with oil. From that day on he was a changed man, powerfully filled with your Spirit. We thank you, Lord, that when we trust you, that can be our experience too.

When we are prepared to change, you change us.

'Changed from glory into glory,  
till in heaven we take our place,  
till we cast our crowns before you,  
lost in wonder, love and praise.'

**Amen.**

### **A prayer to conclude**

Thank you, Lord, that you love us and you can change us:  
help us to trust you this week.

Thank you, Lord, that you love this world and you can change it:  
help us to work with you this week.

**Amen.**