

1 Samuel 16:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

Analysis

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.

This verse contains one of Scripture's most profound anthropological and theological statements. The contrast between human sight (einayim - eyes) and divine sight reveals fundamentally different modes of evaluation. 'The LORD looketh on the heart' (lebab) - encompassing mind, will, and affections - establishes internal character as the true criterion for divine approval. This principle anticipates Jesus' teaching that 'out of the heart proceed evil thoughts' (Matthew 15:19) and underscores that God's kingdom operates by values counter to worldly wisdom.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern cultures valued physical prowess and appearance in kings as signs of divine favor and military capability. Israel had adopted these criteria in choosing Saul. God's corrective through Samuel challenges cultural assumptions about leadership qualifications that persist across civilizations.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. What aspects of your 'heart' - thoughts, motives, affections - need transformation before God's eyes?
2. How does this passage challenge the criteria your church or organization uses to select leaders?

Interlinear Text

אָל תִּבְטַח לֹא שָׁמְעוֹא לֹא שָׁמְעוֹא לֹא שָׁמְעוֹא לֹא שָׁמְעוֹא
said But the LORD H413 unto Samuel H408 Look H413
H559 H3068 H8050 H5027

כִּי קָוָמָת וְגַבְּהָ וְאֶל מְרָא הָוֶה
not on his countenance H413 or on the height H1364 of his stature H3588
H4758 H6967

כִּי פָאָדָם יְרָא הָאָשָׁר לֹא כִּי מְאַסֵּת יְהוָה
because I have refused H3988 looketh H3808 H834 for man H3588
H3588 H120

יְרָא הָאָשָׁר יְרָא הָאָשָׁר לְעֵינֵיכֶם
for man looketh on the outward appearance But the LORD looketh
H120 H7200 H5869 H3068 H7200

לְלִבָּבְךָ
on the heart
H3824

Additional Cross-References

John 7:24 (Parallel theme): Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.

Jeremiah 17:10 (References Lord): I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

Luke 16:15 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.

1 Peter 3:4 (Parallel theme): But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Proverbs 31:30 (References Lord): Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

Proverbs 16:2 (References Lord): All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits.

1 Chronicles 28:9 (References Lord): And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

1 Kings 8:39 (Parallel theme): Then hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;)

Acts 1:24 (References Lord): And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

Jeremiah 20:12 (References Lord): But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

