

14 Fresh Ways to Enjoy the Bible

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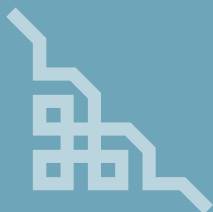
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CHAPTER ONE



David

FIRST ACTIONS: 1 Samuel 16–17 portrays David doing a number of actions, such as being obedient to his father, Jesse, shepherding the family’s flocks, playing the harp in King Saul’s court, and fighting Goliath as a warrior in the Valley of Elah.

FIRST WORDS: “And David said to the men who stood by him, ‘What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?’” (1 Sam. 17:26).

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTORS: He was the youngest of Jesse’s sons, and was “ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome” (1 Sam. 16:11–12).

David is often labeled as a “man after God’s own heart” (1 Sam. 13:14), which is expressly demonstrated by his first recorded words. His early recorded actions reveal him to be a shepherd (an apt metaphor for his later leadership skills), a musician (which is fitting since he is a major contributor to the book of Psalms), and a warrior whose military skills will become more evident as the narrative proceeds.

These first actions plant the seeds for the three major roles David will have throughout his life (leader, musician, and warrior). These major character traits are intentionally introduced up front in the narrative. Although embedded with this first impression are David’s many positive traits, there is also an introduction to a major character flaw in that he is somewhat self-interested as well. This is revealed by his own lips in the very first words we hear from him when he inquires about what the reward will be for killing Goliath. This focus on “what’s in it for him” later reveals itself when he took a census of his own people and committed adultery with Bathsheba.

Like most of us, he is a mixed bag—a man after God’s heart, but he can also pursue his own heart and interests as well. David’s physical attributes, especially his attractive outer appearance, add tension to the overall account of David’s life in that the Bible often depicts attractive people as experiencing more difficulties (Sarah, Rachel, Joseph, Bathsheba, Absalom, etc.).

IN SUMMARY,

the “First Impressions” technique is an easy way to increase the “wow” factor as you read your Bible. You are now able to detect how the biblical authors identify key positive and negative traits of Bible characters by reflecting on a character’s first words, first actions, and any physical descriptors. By focusing on these details, readers can not only increase their enjoyment but also gain an inside track into properly assessing an individual’s character by seeing how these early actions and speeches paint an accurate first impression that is further depicted later in the narrative.

GO and IMPLEMENT

This technique can be properly utilized with other characters such as Rachel, Sarah, Jacob, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, Saul, Daniel, and John the Baptist. It can also be used in the first two chapters of Genesis by looking at “God’s” actions and speech in Genesis 1 and then contrasting and comparing those actions and speech to the “LORD God’s” actions and speech in Genesis 2. This reveals great insights into God’s character traits by looking at His first actions and words.