

Soft Music for a Hard Heart

1 Samuel 16:14–23



PREPARE YOUR HEART

Before you open the Word of God, use *Psalms 108:1–5*, a song written by David himself, to prepare your heart. Offer his lyrics to God as a personal prayer.

*My heart is confident in you, O God;
no wonder I can sing your praises with all my heart!
Wake up, lyre and harp!
I will wake the dawn with my song.
I will thank you, LORD, among all the people.
I will sing your praises among the nations.
For your unfailing love is higher than the heavens.
Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.
Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens.
May your glory shine over all the earth.*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The Israelites wanted to be like other nations. They didn't want God as their transcendent, divine King. No, they wanted a mighty king, a warrior king . . . a *human* king. So God granted them what they *wanted* even though it wasn't what they *needed*. King Saul perfectly fit the job description of "a king like those of other nations." And Israel was ready to follow its new king anywhere.

Yet Saul did not have a heart for God. He pursued wickedness, and he started leading God's people down a path of sin that would have left them far from God. In *1 Samuel 16:1–13*, God anointed a new king—the humble shepherd named David.

But at this time, Saul was still alive and sitting on the throne. Soon enough, the current king and the future king would meet face-to-face. What would David do when he met his soon-to-be predecessor? Turn to *16:14–23* to find out!



Soft Music for a Hard Heart

1 Samuel 16:14–23

Observation: Saul’s Strange Malady, David’s Unique Ability

According to the method explained in *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll begins by asking the same question when he studies a passage of Scripture: What does the text say?¹ Read *1 Samuel 16:14–23*, and carefully observe the *actions* the text says David took in his earliest encounters with King Saul.

According to *16:14*, what happened to Saul after God “rejected him as king of Israel” (16:1)? Check a few Bible versions and write down the ways different translators describe Saul’s condition.

The spiritual torment Saul experienced became evident to those around him, so they wanted to help. According to *16:16*, how did Saul’s servants suggest that he address the difficulties caused by this evil spirit? In the ancient world, many believed that this practice could soothe passions, heal mental illness, and even calm riots!

List the six ways Saul’s servant described David in *16:18*.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____



Soft Music for a Hard Heart

1 Samuel 16:14–23

4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

According to 1 Samuel 16:21, how did Saul feel about David? What did Saul do for David?

Why did Saul feel so positively about David? According to 16:23, what did David do for Saul?

God brought David to the throne room not *to take* the throne but *to serve* King Saul with his gift of music. David's willingness to serve God in this way revealed trust in God's plan, and David's example abounds with theological truths valuable for God's people across time.



Interpretation: The Ministry of the Holy Spirit

In David's day, before the temple existed, God's glorious presence "filled the tabernacle"—the mobile "temple" Israel used during its nomadic years (*Exodus 40:34–35*). Later, David's son, Solomon, would erect a permanent temple to house God's presence (*1 Kings 8:11*).



Soft Music for a Hard Heart

1 Samuel 16:14–23

Occasionally, however, the Spirit of the Lord would indwell someone who needed divine empowerment, wisdom, or guidance (for example, see *Judges 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25*). After God accomplished His purpose through this person, though, His Spirit would depart.

A new era of the Holy Spirit's ministry began at Pentecost. Now, God baptizes those who trust in Christ with the Holy Spirit (*1 Corinthians 12:13*), empowers believers with spiritual gifts to serve one other (*1 Corinthians 12:7*), and permanently seals them for “the day of redemption” (*Ephesians 4:30*).

According to *Ephesians 2:19–22*, to what does the apostle Paul compare the people of God (see especially *2:21*)? How does this truth provide comfort to those who fear God might take His spirit away from them?

Why was David able to deliver Saul from the tormenting evil spirit? (Note the contrast between David and Saul presented in *1 Samuel 16:14* and *16:18*.) For more information on this element of the passage, see *Constable's Notes* at netbible.org.



Soft Music for a Hard Heart

1 Samuel 16:14–23

Prior to these events, Saul had not yet met David, so Saul knew nothing about David other than what his servants told him. What key event happened to David in *1 Samuel 16:1–13*, right before he met Saul? How did David treat Saul despite what happened in the previous scene? What does David's treatment of Saul reveal about his character?

I think it's beautiful that David never once pulled rank on Saul. He was never jealous or envious of Saul's position. David had been anointed, but he'd let the Lord open the door.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: Singing Psalms and Hymns and Spiritual Songs

Music plays a key role in the church of Jesus Christ. Read *Ephesians 5:15–20*. As you read, write down three or four commands that stand out to you.



Soft Music for a Hard Heart

1 Samuel 16:14–23

The Greek syntax of this passage creates a connection between *Ephesians 5:18* and *5:19*. So “singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” is the *result* of being filled with the Holy Spirit. How is this kind of spiritual singing naturally related to the presence of the Holy Spirit among believers in Jesus Christ? How is this truth instructive for those who believe in Him today?

Music is an essential element of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. And God’s gift of music allows believers to serve those in need in powerfully unique ways.



Application: Music’s Effective Ministry

By playing music for Saul in his moments of deepest distress, David provided Saul with a feeling described in Hebrew as *ravach*—a term used to show Saul spreading himself out with a sense of *relief* and *refreshment*.

Think about the music you’ve enjoyed over the past week. How did this music affect you? Did it bring you refreshment and relief? Or did it foster within you negative emotions like anxiety or anger? How does this reflection affect how you might think about your choice of music going forward?



Soft Music for a Hard Heart

1 Samuel 16:14–23

What unique gifts has God given you? You may wonder how God can use these gifts, but He wants to use these gifts to minister to those He's placed in your life. How do you sense God calling you to use your gifts to meet the needs of others?

You will be beloved when you minister to people—for helping them in their misery and malady. You'll be attached to their heart, and you can't drive a wedge between it. In the simplest things, the things that just come naturally to you, you minister to others.
—Pastor Chuck Swindoll

God used David's musical gifts to bring Saul relief and refreshment from the torment of the evil spirit. However, Saul would face the oppression of that spirit so long as he stood in opposition to God. Many today feel tormented by sin, and while good music may temporarily provide relief, only the grace of God found in faith in Jesus Christ will *permanently* fill a soul with true peace.



A FINAL PRAYER

Thank You, Father, for the way You unfold Your marvelous plan for Your creation—both in the time of David and today. I ask You to give me eyes to see how I can use my gifts to serve others now and wisdom to know that You can and will use these gifts in unlikely ways to serve Your purposes in the future. I ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."



