

1 Samuel 17 — David And Goliath

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Good morning CrossWinds! If you are a visitor, it is great to have you. My name is Kurt. I am one of the pastors. This morning we return to our study of 1 Samuel. The last time we were in 1 Samuel was in June. It has been a while so let me remind you what was happening. We left off in 1 Samuel 16. At that time, the Holy Spirit left king Saul. David was secretly anointed king by Samuel the prophet. Saul found himself going mad. He was overwhelmed with depression. The Bible tells us that a harmful spirit of the Lord was upon him.

In the strange way that God works, somebody in Saul's cabinet thought music would cheer him up. Someone else also knew about David's amazing ability to play the lyre, which is an ancient version of the acoustic guitar. It ended up when David was brought to king Saul to play music for him when King Saul found himself depressed and overwhelmed by this harmful spirit from the Lord.

So while David was secretly anointed king, he was serving as a musician for Saul, who was the rejected king. So David — the secretly anointed king — was the only one who could bring peace to Saul — the rejected king. It is interesting how God works things.

At this time, David was playing a very behind-the-scenes role. He was seen as nothing more than a court musician and a boy shepherd. That is all about to change when we turn the page and come to 1 Samuel 17 and David's battle with Goliath.

This is the longest narrative in all of 1 Samuel. We have a lot to cover so we will need to move quickly. If you stay with me to the end, you will be richly

rewarded because there is much more to the story of David and Goliath than your Sunday school teacher told you about.

In 1 Samuel 17, the Israelites were fighting the Philistines. The Philistines were a group of people living in the Promised Land. God gave Israel orders to drive them out of the Promised Land. The order to drive them out was given by God to the Israelites generations before when Joshua was conquering the Promised Land. In 1 Samuel 17, it is generations later, and we see the Israelites still had not finished the task of driving the Philistines, and other people groups, out of the Promised Land. Why had they not completed the task?

One of the reasons the Israelites had not finished the job of conquering the Promised Land was because the Philistines looked incredibly strong. They were technologically advanced and were one of the first civilizations to use bronze and iron, which they used to build weapons. While the Philistines had iron and bronze weapons, they did not allow the Israelites to possess that technology. The Israelites were literally fighting with sticks and stones. With their military strength, the Philistines controlled the cities of Gezer, Megiddo, and Hazor. Those names don't mean much to us, but they were big cities on popular trade routes. It was like controlling New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. The advanced strength of the Philistines left most people, especially the Israelites, cowering in fear of them and their war machine.

Interestingly, as we have seen earlier in 1 Samuel, even though the Israelites were vastly overpowered by the Philistine's military equipment and the

number of soldiers when they engaged them in battle, the Israelites consistently won.

Earlier in 1 Samuel, we saw King Saul destroy king Nahash of the Ammonites. That was an unexpected victory. The Israelites were outmatched on paper, but they won the battle. We also saw Jonathan, King Saul's son, single-handedly attack a huge group of Philistines with their chariots in the battle of Michmash. Jonathan set off a panic in their camp that gave the Israelites a surprise victory. The Israelites were defeated on paper, but they defeated their enemies in the battle.

Why was Israel winning in spite of the odds stacked against them? The reason goes back to Deuteronomy and other earlier passages in biblical history. God promised to help the Israelites win their battles and conquer the Promised Land. God's people only needed to have the courage to fight and trust God with the outcome.

The LORD said to Moses, "Depart; go up from here, you and the people whom you have brought up out of the land of Egypt, to the land of which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'To your offspring I will give it.' I will send an angel before you, and I will drive out the Canaanites, the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. Exodus 33:1–2 (ESV)

God's promise that he would fight for his people and give them victory against their enemies in the Promised Land was still valid at the time of David in 1 Samuel 17. The problem was that while everybody knew this promise was true, nobody was willing to enter into battle and believe it would be true, especially if you found yourself fighting a giant, a giant named Goliath. Understanding God's promise to help them conquer the Promised Land, in spite of the odds against

them, is the key to understanding the battle of David and Goliath in this chapter. Let's dive into the text and see how this unfolds.

The Background

Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh, which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah, in Ephes-dammim. 1 Samuel 17:1 (ESV)

In 1 Samuel 14, the Philistines and their massive army tried to conquer Israel at Michmash. After Jonathan scaled cliffs in that area and executed a surprise attack, he sent the massive Philistine army scurrying home to their coastal fortresses. However, the Philistines were not easily daunted. In 1 Samuel 17, they returned to try and conquer Israel again. This time they have a new secret weapon.

The armies were gathered at Socoh, which is about 13 miles from Bethlehem. The Philistines were already inside Israelite territory. Saul mobilized his army to stop the invaders. There was a standoff between the two armies in the Valley of Elah.

And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped in the Valley of Elah, and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines. And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. 1 Samuel 17:2–3 (ESV)

This is the location today. You can see the two mountainsides with the valley between them where the battle between David and Goliath took place.

This battle was important for King Saul. This is the first battle he would face after being rejected by God as the king and abandoned by



the Holy Spirit. In the past, Saul could rely on God's saving help, but now Saul had to manage things on his own.

As we remember from 1 Samuel 9:2, Saul was an impressive person. From his shoulders up, he was taller than anyone else in the nation, a head taller than the rest of the people. Earlier in this book, we learned that Saul's good looks and impressive size were some of the reasons the people wanted him to be king. They thought he would be a king that was so big and impressive that he could lead them into their battles.

Saul's impressive height didn't matter when the Philistines introduced their latest secret military weapon. The Philistines had their own giant, and he was of immense proportions.

Meet Goliath

And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. 1 Samuel 17:4 (ESV)

The first thing we notice about Goliath is his amazing size. If we convert these Biblical measurements to modern-day units, we find he was 9 foot, 6 inches tall. That is huge.

Some people don't believe Goliath was that big. They point out that the Septuagint, which is a Greek copy of the Hebrew Old Testament translated over a thousand years after the original Hebrew text, says Goliath was 4 cubits and a span, which would make him about 6 foot, 9 inches tall. For some strange reason, some Bible scholars want to shorten Goliath and go with the shorter 6 foot, 9 inches tall height. If that were Goliath's actual height, I would call him tall, but I certainly wouldn't call him a giant.

For a variety of reasons, I think it is a mistake to go with this shorter height from the Septuagint that some assume is right. Let me tell you why. First, the original Hebrew, which says Goliath was 9 feet, 6 inches tall, is over a thousand years older than the Septuagint. After a thousand years, you do not introduce a correction to the Bible. You only introduce an error. Second, in a moment, we will read about the weight of Goliath's armor. Goliath is wearing over 200 pounds of iron and bronze plating. A 6 foot, 9 inch person can not wear 200 pounds of armor and run around in a fight. Maybe a giant that is well over 9 feet tall could walk around with that much weight. This is another reason why the 9 foot, 6 inches tall height of Goliath is believable.

I think when King Saul saw Goliath, he freaked out. This may have been the first time Saul met somebody taller than him. Remember Saul was the tallest man in all of Israel. Goliath was not a little taller than Saul, he made Saul look like a dwarf. This is why Saul turns into a complete chicken when he sees him.

We should note that today, we have no record of a human being of this height. The tallest man in the Guinness book of world records was Robert Wadlow, an Illinois man from the 1940's who was 8 foot, 5 inches tall. Goliath was more than a foot taller than Robert Wadlow. Robert Wadlow was this tall because of a birth defect in his pituitary gland. His incredible height led to him walking with a cane and an early death. Goliath was over nine feet tall naturally.



Should we believe Goliath was so incredibly tall? Let's look at our Bible to see if we find support. When Israel came to the Promised Land, Moses sent spies to investigate the land of Canaan. In Number 13:22, the spies reported on the Promised Land. They returned and told everyone they saw descendants of Anak in the land. In Deuteronomy 9:2, we learn that the descendants of Anak were known as the Anakim. They are described as people great and tall. Numbers 13 tells us these Anakim were so tall that they terrified the Exodus generation. The Israelites were so afraid of these giants that they didn't want to enter the Promised Land. Numbers 13:33 also tell us that these giants in the Promised Land were descendants of the Nephilim. The only other time we read about the Nephilim is in Genesis 6:4. The Nephilim are described as mighty men, possibly demonically possessed men, who came about when the sons of God came to the daughters of men and had children with them.

How the giant Nephilim of Genesis 6:4 survived the flood and how they now had their descendants show up as the Anakim in the Promised Land is a mystery. When Joshua conquered the Promised Land, we learn many of these giant Anakim were destroyed, but in three cities, there were still some Anakim that remained.

There was none of the Anakim left in the land of the people of Israel. Only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod did some remain. Joshua 11:22 (ESV)

Remember where Goliath came from, the city of Gath. Goliath was not a normal human being. He was an Anakim. He was descended from a race of giants, the same giants who were so big and scary that they kept the Exodus generation from wanting to go into the Promised Land. These giants were

somehow descended from the Nephilim in Genesis 6:4, which might mean these giants had some demonic influence or power behind them.

The Bible tells us there were literal superhumans giants in the Promised Land of immense size, and they were possibly strengthened with demonic power. So a 9 foot, 6 inch tall Goliath in the Promised Land is not out of line with what the rest of the Bible tells us. Now, do you understand why Saul and the rest of the army are cowering in fear? Let's look at his armament.

He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron. And his shield-bearer went before him. 1 Samuel 17:5-7 (ESV)

Remember, the Israelites had no battle armor. There were only two swords in all of Israel, one for Saul and the other for his son Jonathan. Goliath was covered in iron and bronze protection. He was a literal human tank. He had a bronze helmet to protect his head. He was wearing a coat of mail. Mail is a chain link put together to form a type of iron mesh shirt, making Goliath impervious to arrows, spears, or swords. If you convert the ancient weight of his shirt to the modern units, the chain mail he wore was 126 pounds. His massive legs were covered by bronze armor plating, like huge shin guards, thigh guards, and foot guards. He had a shield, but it was so big he couldn't carry it. He had somebody else carrying the shield because in his hands were a sword and a spear, and across his back was a javelin. The shaft was like a weaver's beam. I don't know the size



of a weaver's bed, but I assume it is big. The point of the spear, when converted to modern units, was 15 pounds.

Goliath was a literal giant covered in metal plating. Later we will learn he was a specialist in hand-to-hand combat. He was a gladiatorial champion, an experienced fighter. This was not his first rodeo. He had fought people to the death since he was a youth. He was used to killing people. This is not the kind of guy with whom you want to find yourself in a street fight.

Here was the strategy Goliath proposed.

He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together." When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid. 1 Samuel 17:8–11 (ESV)

Goliath planned to intimidate the Israelites, and it was working. When the armies drew up for battle, Goliath came forward and said, "Am I not a Philistine." A literal translation of the Hebrew is, "Am I not *the* Philistine." In other words, Goliath saw himself as the embodiment of the massive Philistine strength, power, and military superiority. As you can see, Goliath had a huge ego problem. He wanted the Israelites to give just one man who would be man enough to fight him.

Saul was the natural one to fight Goliath. Remember, Saul was Israel's giant. The problem is that Saul was a complete chicken. Even Jonathan, the hero of the battle of Michmash, was terrified at the sight of Goliath. All the size and

strength were on Goliath's side. All the armor and iron weapons were on Goliath's side.

The problem is that Saul and the rest of the military only looked at things with what their eyes could see. It looked like they were guaranteed losers and completely overwhelmed. Everybody forgot about God's promises to come to their help in these battles and to give them victory -- even if they were severely outmatched -- when it came to fighting for the Promised Land.

Meet David

With the vision of Goliath fresh in our minds, we meet somebody who is the exact opposite of Goliath. He isn't even old enough to be in the army. His name is David.

Now David was the son of an Ephrathite of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. 1 Samuel 17:12 (ESV)

We already met David in the last chapter. Why is he now introduced to us a second time? There is a point being made. Goliath's qualities, which he hoped would produce victory, were his size, experience, and armor. David's only defining quality that would give him victory in this battle is that he was one of God's chosen people. That is what sets him apart. That is all he needs.

In Goliath, there was raw physical strength, immense size, years of experience, iron and bronze military equipment, and perhaps even demonic power. In David, we see just an ordinary boy whose one defining quality is his connection to the living God of the universe.

Remember, David was not old enough to be in the military. According to Numbers 1:3, 20, an Israelite must be 20 years old for military service. I am guessing David was around 18 years old.

The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab, and the third Shammah. David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem. 1 Samuel 17:13–15 (ESV)

David was too young for military service, so he was left caring for the sheep. He also traveled back and forth from the front lines. Let's see why.

For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening. And Jesse said to David his son, "Take for your brothers an ephah of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers. Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them." Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry. 1 Samuel 17:16–20 (ESV)

In those days, when it came to food and support for the soldiers, that was provided by the families of the soldiers. The families also provided extra food for the king and his officers. David was the grocery guy that brought food to the front lines from home. He was a little like the nice folks who help by bringing our groceries to our car at Fareway.

David had quite a distance to bring this food. He came from Bethlehem, 14 miles away. On this occasion, he left early in the morning.

Here we also find out that for 40 days, when the armies drew up for battle, Goliath came forward to issued his challenge. Let's not fight but send me

somebody to fight with me. For 40 days, the Israelites had no answer. They left the front lines in fear.

In the Bible, 40 days is significant. Sometimes it represents a period of testing. Jesus was in the wilderness for 40 days of temptation, where he was tested by the devil. Here Saul and the Israelites were being tested to see if they would enter into battle with Goliath trusting God and his promises for victory. After 40 days of nobody willing to battle Goliath, the Israelites have failed the test. If nobody from the Israelites fought Goliath after 40 days, nobody from all of Israel will ever fight Goliath. It is after Saul and all of Israel failed their test that God brought David to the scene.

David arrived just as Goliath was bellowing the same challenge he put forward for the last 40 days. David heard Goliath's words and had no idea that this day was about to turn into one of the most important days of his life.

And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers. As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him. All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid. And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel." 1 Samuel 17:21–25 (ESV)

David heard this challenge, and he couldn't believe everybody was running from him.

Here we also learn that Saul was trying to find somebody to fight for him. Since Saul was afraid to fight Goliath himself, he was offering a handsome reward to anybody who fought Goliath for him. It was great riches, the king's

daughter in marriage, and your entire household would be free of taxes. In our economy, I think that the tax-free part would motivate people to do about anything. Here it was not working.

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?” And the people answered him in the same way, “So shall it be done to the man who kills him.” 1 Samuel 17:26–27 (ESV)

David couldn't believe what he heard. He had to double-check this reward that nobody was willing to claim. It was too big. It was too much.

Notice that David was looking at things differently. Instead of seeing Goliath's size, he saw Goliath as an uncircumcised Philistine who had the gall to defy the armies of the living God. To David, what mattered was not the size of Goliath, but that Goliath was defying the living God of Israel. How dare Goliath defy the living God.

As we talked about earlier, David remembered that God promised to fight for Israel and to give them victory over their enemies so they could possess the Promised Land. What mattered in those battles was not the size of the enemy but the promise that God gave them of victory no matter the odds. Saul, and all of Israel, knew about these promises, but they didn't actually believe them. David was the only one who was willing to not just know about God's promise to give Israel victory over their enemies in the Promised Land but to be willing to risk his life believing those promises would prove true.

Saul, and the rest of Israel, didn't formally deny God. They just lived as if God wasn't involved in their lives. All they could see was Goliath's size and their helplessness. They forgot the size of God.

As we would expect, David met some resistance to his confidence in victory over Goliath.

David was mocked by Eliab, his brother.

The first resistance comes from his own brother.

Now Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle." And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?" And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before. 1 Samuel 17:28–30 (ESV)

I don't know, but I suspect there was a little jealousy on Eliab's part. Earlier in 1 Samuel, we saw Samuel pass over Eliab and anoint David as the next king. I guess that Eliab is not a real fan of David because Eliab was passed over for David. When young David claimed big Goliath was not a problem, Eliab took the opportunity to make David look like a foolish kid.

What comes to mind is a little lesson. Isn't this the way it works in the church? There is somebody young, an upstart who is living with great faith and trust in Jesus. Who are the first people to criticize him or her? Isn't it church people who are supposed to be older and more mature? Instead of receiving support from his brother, David was made fun of by his brother. We should expect the same thing will happen in the church when we step out in faith for Jesus. We may find some of our strongest resistance will come from God's own people. Just expect that.

David didn't just face resistance from his own brother, but he faced resistance from King Saul.

David was discouraged by Saul, his king.

When the words that David spoke were heard, they repeated them before Saul, and he sent for him. And David said to Saul, "Let no man's heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth, and he has been a man of war from his youth." 1 Samuel 17:31–33 (ESV)

To Saul, the idea of young David fighting Goliath was preposterous. Saul knew David as the young teenage boy who played the lyre for him. How could a young boy musician fight an experienced warrior? Saul could only see David as too inexperienced and too young. Like the rest of Israel, Saul judged David and Goliath only by how things looked on the outside. Saul wasn't considering God's promises of victory in the battles for the Promised Land.

But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." And David said, "The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine." And Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you!" 1 Samuel 17:34–37 (ESV)

While Saul viewed David as unprepared, David saw himself as specially prepared. David wanted Saul to know that God had prepared him for that battle. As a shepherd, David learned to fight lions and bears to protect the sheep. Sometimes those lions and bears turned and attacked David. David learned to fight for his life. Every time David fought for his life in the shepherd field, God gave him victory over lions and bears. God prepared David to fight against Goliath on the battlefield by David learning to fight for his life on the shepherd's field. Killing Goliath would be no different from killing a lion or bear.

Here we see another important lesson. There may be a big day in our life in the future. Today, God is preparing us for our finest hours by allowing us to face small battles and smaller tests. God is using those smaller battles and smaller tests to train us and prepare us for those bigger battles and bigger tests.

Today, if God has you in hard times, working behind the scene in difficulty, you are no different from David fighting to protect his sheep in the shepherd's field. God is using those hard times to prepare you.

David also realized those fights against lions and bears were used by God to develop his skills with primitive weapons, like the sling so that David would be prepared for this crucial day. Folks, the same is true for us. When we find ourselves in the little battle of today, God is developing and preparing our skills now to be extremely useful for God later.

It was at this time that David was able to look back and see God's faithful preparation in his life for that day.

Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." So David put them off. 1 Samuel 17:38–39 (ESV)

This is an interesting line. Saul, as Israel's giant, had the same kind of armor as Goliath, the Philistine's giant. Remember the rest of the Israelites did not have armor. They did not have swords. Saul had everything he needed to enter into the battle with Goliath.

I think Saul dressed David in his armor because he figured the only way David had a chance on the battlefield would be if he trusted in armor, just like Goliath did in the battle. David rejected Saul's armor not just because it was

probably way too big but because David was going to trust in God in the battle, not in metal armor. David took with him what God trained him to use in a fight.

David fought Goliath.

Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine. 1 Samuel 17:40 (ESV)

David battled with a staff, a sling, and just five smooth stones. He put the stones in his shepherd's pouch, so they were hidden. What Goliath didn't know is a stone and a sling in the hands of a skilled marksman were deadly weapons.

Rocks come out of a sling traveling more than 150 mph. The Bible tells us that if people are proficient with the sling, a sling like the one David used could be a deadly accurate weapon.



Among all these were 700 chosen men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair and not miss. Judges 20:16 (ESV)

David, with a shepherd's staff, a leather sling, and five smooth stones hidden in a pouch in his belt, moved into the valley between the two armies while Goliath was acting all big, proud, and defiant.

And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." 1 Samuel 17:41–44 (ESV)

Goliath didn't believe the opponent the Israelites finally sent to battle. David was the exact opposite of Goliath. Instead of being a huge monster, David was a young and small boy. Instead of a sword, David was carrying a shepherd's

stick and a little leather pouch on some string. Then it says the Philistine cursed David by his God. In other words, is this all your God can put forward to fight? You Israelites and your God are such wimps, all you can do is send out an 18-year-old kid to fight me with a stick? Your people and your God are a joke.

Next David gets in his taunt of Goliath.

Then David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hand.” 1 Samuel 17:45–47 (ESV)

This is the theological center of the chapter. Goliath was trusting in his strength, size, weaponry, sword, spear, and javelin. David trusted the Lord of hosts, the God of heaven’s armies, the one Goliath defied. David knew that God would give him victory, and in doing so, everyone would know there is a God in Israel. What matters is not swords and spears but your relationship to the living God of the universe. David went into battle completely dependent on God.

The battle between David and Goliath wasn’t even worth the price of admission. It was like paying an expensive price for a UFC fight ticket, then things ending in a first-round knockout.

When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. 1 Samuel 17:48–50 (ESV)

David and Goliath head to the battle line to meet one another. It was after Goliath was running into battle and it was too late to change his strategy that David reached into his pouch and pulled out a stone. He whirled it over his head and shot it at Goliath. I don't know how fast that stone traveled, but it didn't just hit him in the head. It went right under the top of the helmet and sunk *into* his skull, penetrating his brain. Goliath came crashing down on his face. All those years of David practicing with a sling in the wilderness, all those times he used a sling to protect himself against lions and bears, were years of God preparing him for that moment. God gave David the victory, but he gave David the victory by preparing him for years before the fight.

Finally David finished him off.

Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron. And the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent. 1 Samuel 17:51–54 (ESV)

David took out Goliath's sword and finished him off, then used it to hack off Goliath's head. Then David picked up Goliath's head by the hair and held it up for everyone to see. Guys, he looks pretty dead to me! That freaked everybody out. Instead of the Philistines keeping their end of the bargain and becoming slaves of the Israelites, they ran for their life. The Israelites chased them all the way back to their coastal cities, then returned to take all the Philistine's stuff.

David ultimately took Goliath's head and brought it to Jerusalem. We are so familiar with Jerusalem, so that doesn't sound significant. It is. At this time

Jerusalem was a fortress city on a hill that Joshua had told the tribes of Benjamin and Judah to conquer. They had never conquered Jerusalem. The lingering presence of this Canaanite fortress deep in Israelite territory was an embarrassment to Israel and a reminder of the unfulfilled legacy of the Promised Land. David knew this. He dropped off Goliath's head in this city and essentially said, you think you are a fortress city that can not be conquered. Goliath thought he was the human tank that could not be beaten. God gave us victory over Goliath. Here is Goliath's head to prove it. We will come back, and God will give us victory over you. That is exactly what happened later when David became king. He headed to Jerusalem and conquered it!

Next, we have a little flashback about what happened with king Saul as David went to the battlefield to fight Goliath and what happened right after David killed Goliath.

As soon as Saul saw David go out against the Philistine, he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this youth?" And Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know." And the king said, "Inquire whose son the boy is." And as soon as David returned from the striking down of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand. And Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite." 1 Samuel 17:55–58 (ESV)

In the last chapter, Saul was already introduced to David. David played the lyre in his court. David was the one who brought him peace when a harmful spirit of the Lord tormented him. This is not Saul meeting David for the first time. Saul already knows about David. This is Saul taking a sudden interest in David's lineage, his background. Saul is finally taking notice of David and saying, "Where does this guy come from?" David is about to be related to Saul through marriage.

David is about to be famous in Israel. Saul is suddenly realizing David is somebody special.

Application

That is a familiar but long story. At this point, we need to ask what we should learn from the story of David and Goliath. Far too many people tell us this is the story about the underdog. If you have faith, even if you are weak and powerless, God will enable you to conquer the giants in your life. God will give you victory over whatever is in your way if you have faith, like David. Folks that is not true. That is not the point of David and Goliath.

VeggieTales has a video about this called Dave and the Giant Pickle. They say the moral of the David and Goliath story is that with God, all things are possible. That is also not what the story of David and Goliath is about.



What is God teaching us with this story? Remember why David stepped forward to fight Goliath when everyone else didn't. David was the only one who believed God would keep his word and enable Israel to beat the people of the Promised Land even when they were overpowered, overpowered by a giant.

Remember what we learned at the beginning. David was not the first one to fight and conquer giants in the Promised Land.

Remember Caleb and Joshua. David was not the first one to beat giants in the Promised Land.

Remember when Moses brought the exodus generation to the edge of the Promised Land? They sent in twelve spies to check the land out. Ten of the spies

were discouraged and thought they couldn't conquer the Promised Land because the land had giants. Two spies believed in God's promises and thought they could conquer the Promised Land and the giants because God would be with them and give them the victory. Look at the report brought back by the spies who checked out the Promised Land in the time of Moses.

And they came to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation of the people of Israel in the wilderness of Paran, at Kadesh. They brought back word to them and to all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, "We came to the land to which you sent us. It flows with milk and honey, and this is its fruit. However, the people who dwell in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large. And besides, we saw the descendants of Anak there. The Amalekites dwell in the land of the Negeb... But Caleb quieted the people before Moses and said, "Let us go up at once and occupy it, for we are well able to overcome it." Then the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are." So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. And there we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them." Numbers 13:26–33 (ESV)

It was because the Israelites were afraid of the giants in the Promised Land that they never went into the Promised Land. At that time, only Caleb and Joshua believed God would enable them to conquer the Promised Land and beat these giants. A very similar thing was happening with David and the rest of the Israelites. David is the new Joshua and Caleb of his generation.

After the death of Moses, that same Joshua was chosen by God to lead the new generation of Israelites into the Promised Land. God enabled Joshua to wipe out a large portion of the giants in the Promised Land in spite of them being much bigger. Remember the Anakim are the descendants of Anak from Numbers 13, who were connected with the Nephilim in Genesis 6.

And Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the hill country of Judah, and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua devoted them to destruction with their cities. There was none of the Anakim left in the land of the people of Israel. Only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod did some remain. Joshua 11:21–22 (ESV)

Joshua, who took Moses' place, was not the only spy who believed God would give victory against the giants in the Promised Land. Caleb was the other spy. Look what Caleb did to the giants when he went into the Promised Land.

So now give me this hill country of which the LORD spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the LORD will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the LORD said.” Then Joshua blessed him, and he gave Hebron to Caleb the son of Jephunneh for an inheritance... Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba. (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim.)... And Caleb drove out from there the three sons of Anak, Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmi, the descendants of Anak. Joshua 14:12–15, 15:14 (ESV)

Here we read of Caleb defeating three significant giants. David was extremely young when he defeated the giant named Goliath but Caleb was extremely old when he defeated these three giants. Remember Caleb and Joshua were the only two people still living from the exodus generation. Everyone else died in the wilderness after 40 years. Joshua defeated a number of giants in the Promised Land and Caleb defeated at least three that we know about. None of these giants were defeated because Caleb and Joshua were particularly strong or that they possessed an impressive military advantage. They were all defeated because God kept his promise and gave his people victory.

David knew about the giants defeated by Joshua and Caleb in an earlier generation. He knew their victories came because they served a living God who promised to be involved in these battles. David has learned from Caleb and Joshua that the size of the giants didn't matter. What mattered was the fact that

God promised to give them the Promised Land. God also promised to defeat their enemies when they fought them, no matter how big and scary they were. Everyone knew what God had done in the past, but only David was willing to risk his life, believing God's promises of helping Israel defeat their enemies even giant enemies, would still prove true.

David was not the last one to defeat giants in the Promised Land.

Incidentally, this promise was not just true before the time of David with Caleb and Joshua and at the time of David in the battle between David and Goliath, but it was still true after this battle in Israel's battle with other giants in the Promised Land..

And after this there arose war with the Philistines at Gezer. Then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Sippai, who was one of the descendants of the giants, and the Philistines were subdued. And there was again war with the Philistines, and Elhanan the son of Jair struck down Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. And there was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number, and he also was descended from the giants. And when he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea, David's brother, struck him down. These were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants. 1 Chronicles 20:4–8 (ESV)

The lesson of David and Goliath is simply this. We may know the promises God made to us, like Saul and Israel's army or the exodus generation, but are will actually willing to risk our life believing they will come true even when we face overwhelming odds against us?

For you and me, God has not promised to help us conquer the Promised Land, but there are many other promises God has made to us that are still valid in our life. We know them in our heads, but most of us are just like the ten spies

who checked out the Promised Land or like Saul and the rest of his army. We know the promises God made, but we are afraid to risk our lives, believing those promises will always prove true.

This week, when we read our Bible and see promises God made to us, choose to be like Caleb, Joshua, and David. Be fully confident that God's word and promises will still prove true against all odds. Be willing to risk your life to rely on the promises of God's word.



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