

Facing Giants

Opener: Besides David and Goliath, what's your favorite underdog story?

Scripture: The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them. ⁴A champion named Goliath came out of the Philistine camp. He was 9'9" tall and his armor weighed over 125 pounds. ⁸Goliath shouted to the ranks of Israel, "This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." ¹¹On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified. ¹⁶For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

¹²Now David was Jesse's youngest son and he went back and forth from tending his father's sheep to Saul. His older brothers had followed Saul, so one day Jesse sent him to check on them. When he reached the camp the army was going to its battle positions. ²²David ran to the battle lines and asked his brothers how they were. ²³As he was talking with them, he heard Goliath step out and shout his usual defiance. ²⁴Whenever the Israelites saw the man, they all fled in great fear.

²⁵Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his family from taxes in Israel." ²⁶David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" ²⁷They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him."

²⁸When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the wilderness? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle." ²⁹"Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" ³⁰He asked someone else and the men answered as before. ³¹What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

³²David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him." ³³Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth." ³⁴But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep, ³⁵I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. ³⁶Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. ³⁷The Lord who rescued me from the lion and the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine." Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you."

³⁸Then Saul dressed David in his own armor. "I cannot go in these," because I am not used to them." So he took them off. ⁴⁰Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

⁴¹Meanwhile, the Philistine kept coming closer to David. ⁴²He saw that he was little more than a boy, glowing with health and handsome, and he despised him. ⁴³He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. ⁴⁴"Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals!"

⁴⁵David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.

⁴⁸As the Philistine moved to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. ⁴⁹Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground. ⁵⁰So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him. He took hold of the Philistine's sword and drew it from the sheath. After he killed him, he cut off his head with the sword. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they turned and ran. I Samuel 17 (condensed)

Discussion Questions

1. Every man in the Israelite army obviously felt inadequate to go up against a champion like Goliath. While we haven't faced a literal Goliath, the truth is that everyone faces formidable foes and has felt inadequate or "less than" others. What can cause us to feel "less than"? How does it affect relationships? How does it limit purpose and productivity? Give some examples. I Samuel 17:1-16
2. According to v.28, how does Eliab view David? According to v. 33, how does Saul view David? According to v.42, how does Goliath view David? What do these accounts have in common and how could they have affected David's view of his abilities and worth?
3. While Saul and his men saw Goliath and thought, "He's so big we can never kill him!" David saw Goliath and thought, "He's so big, I can't miss!" How can we change our perspective in a situation where we feel outnumbered and underqualified? I Samuel 17:32-46
4. Why do you think David asked about the potential reward for killing Goliath? Was it right or wrong to inquire about a reward? I Samuel 17:26
5. Goliath was a seasoned warrior and was huge, but David was an expert slinger (yes, that was a thing), and he used his skill to maximum effect. We all have abilities and experiences that have equipped us to serve and fight battles. What can we learn from David's experiences with a lion and a bear? What "lions and bears" have you fought that have equipped you? I Sam. 17:34-37
6. What do you think about David's statements to Goliath? In what sense is there a fine line between bravery and stupidity? How do we know when we go from trusting God to trusting in our own ability and methods? Why is it important not to assume a situation will always turn out like it did for David?



Wrap Up

Everyone has felt "less than" others. Less competent, less intelligent, less fortunate (the list goes on!). The world's solution is to strive to be more perfect, to catch up to, or show up, others. Or we can just resent those we think are more fortunate than us or who have put us down. We can even develop a sense of entitlement, subconsciously believing that others owe us since they are so much better off than we are. Or we can just sink into depression. That's pretty much what the Israelite soldiers did.

Or we can do what David did. He focused on who God is and on how God had given him everything he needed to fight the giant in front of him. He focused on what God was leading him to do rather than on how big Goliath was and how small he was.

It really is possible to stop caring about what others may (or may not) think about us—or if they like (or don't like) us. Instead, we can focus on what God thinks and about what we know to be true, which is that He loves us, died for us, directs us, uses us—and even defeats Goliaths through us!

