

## Week 4: *David and Goliath*

### Hook



**Main Point: Those who trust in the Lord and follow His will do not need to be afraid.**

David vs. Goliath is one of the most well-known fights in history. The feud is so famous that “David vs. Goliath” has become a trope, clashes that pit a small or weak person against a larger, stronger enemy. Movies such as *Rocky* (\$117 million gross at the box office), *Cinderella Man* (\$108 million), *Miracle* (\$64 million), and *Karate Kid* (\$91 million) have captured the imagination and made a significant impact at the box office.<sup>1</sup>

**Q: What are your favorite “David vs. Goliath” movies, books or stories?**

**Q: Describe a time in your life when you felt as if you were facing your own giant. What did you learn through the experience?**

**RECAP:** Last week, we saw how God doesn’t judge by our external qualities but looks at the inner person. God chose David to be a king after His own heart and empowered David with His Holy Spirit. This week, we’ll see that truth played out in the way David handled the challenge of Goliath in comparison to Saul.

## **Week 4: *David and Goliath***

### **Book**

**Main Point: Those who trust in the Lord and follow His will do not need to be afraid.**

**1 Samuel 17:1–11 [Read]**

**Talking Point 1:** Those who trust in the Lord shouldn't be afraid.

**Q: What does the description of Goliath say about him?**

**Q: How does Saul's fear relate to what we saw about him in previous lessons?**

The opening of the story of David and Goliath sets the stage for what the story is ultimately about. Would the people live in fear or choose to trust in the Lord? So far in the story of Saul and David, we have seen Saul lead out of fear instead of trusting in the Lord, and we know God rejected him as king for it (1 Samuel 15:23). We have also met the new future king, David, and learned that God chose him for his heart (his inner person), not his external qualities (1 Samuel 16: 7). We have also seen how God empowered David with His Holy Spirit (1 Samuel 16:13). But David was still just a young shepherd boy. He had been anointed king but had not yet stepped into the role. Chapter 17 will show us that even as a young shepherd boy, David possessed the trust in the Lord that was necessary to be a godly king.

The opening verses of the story paint a dramatic picture with the language and imagery as well as the situation itself. There are two opposing armies on two mountains with a valley between them. This formation was typical for many battles in the hilly country of central Israel.<sup>2</sup> But those reading this story and are familiar with biblical history would be reminded by this image of the blessings and curses of the covenant on Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal (Joshua 8:33). This ceremony happened on two opposing mountains, a picture that reminds us of the two paths available; one path as a path of blessing, the other as a source of curse and destruction.<sup>3</sup>

This truth is made explicit in Deuteronomy 30:15 – “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil” – and the path to life is described as being found in loving God and walking in obedience to Him. The story of David and Goliath paints a similar picture – two opposing mountains, one army committed to loving God and walking in obedience to Him and the other cursing Him. Like the story of Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal, this story presents us with a distinct choice between curse and blessing, living in fear or trusting in God.

Lofty language describes Goliath. He is a true giant, nine and a half feet tall. This was not an exaggeration; there are plenty of records of Canaanite warriors who were this tall.<sup>4</sup> He was covered in bronze armor from head to toe and carried a spear with a head of iron. Goliath's armor weighed more than 125 pounds and his spear more than fifteen

pounds. Both metals portray strength, with the iron highlighting the Philistines' technological advantage over the Israelites (13:19).<sup>5</sup> The text makes it clear that Goliath is in every *physical* way superior to shepherd boy David and even mighty king Saul. And yet, we will see just what God said in the previous chapter played out in this story – what matters isn't the outward appearance but the inner person.

The term “champion” referred to a type of warfare in which each army chose one soldier to fight on their behalf. Whoever won this individual battle won for their entire army. The text literally just says “man,” but it's translated “champion” because of this type of warfare. Volunteering as champion gave soldiers an opportunity to show their prowess and gain honor and fame. But if a champion did not come forward after a period of time, the king himself was supposed to fight. The fact that Saul was “greatly afraid” and did not go out to fight creates an intentional contrast between Saul and David and shows us that fear of man was Saul's great weakness.<sup>6</sup>

The story doesn't deny that Goliath was scary – just the opposite. It is very honest about how unusually strong and powerful he was. But a king whose inner person trusted in the Lord would not be afraid. This is much like the story of Joshua and Caleb in the wilderness, who agreed with the other 10 spies that the people in the land were giants and were stronger than they were, but they believed God's promise that He would fight for them and give them victory even though the enemy was stronger. Joshua and Caleb knew that the enemy was *not* stronger than God. The people had wanted a strong king who would go out and fight their battles (1 Samuel 8:20). This story shows that Saul was not that king – not because he wasn't a strong enough warrior but because he was fearful. And it was his inner person, not his external qualities, that was weak.

**Q: What “giants” are you facing right now? What things feel too big and/or too scary for you to handle?**

**Q: Why can it be hard to trust in God when things seem too big to handle?**

**Q: What specific promises of God can you trust regarding these things?**

### **1 Samuel 17:12–40 [Read]**

**Talking Point 2:** David truly trusted in the Lord; Saul did not.

**Q: How did David describe Goliath? Compare David's description to how the story introduced Goliath.**

**Q: How does what Eliab said about David's “heart” compare to what God said in the last chapter?**

Now the story turns to David, whom we met in the last chapter, when God said not to look at his outward appearance but at his heart (16:7). We have also seen how David

was empowered by the Holy Spirit and had been playing music to soothe Saul when he was attacked by the harmful spirit. The previous chapter tells us that Saul liked David so much that he made him one of his armor-bearers (16:14–23). At this point in the story, David went back and forth from feeding his father’s sheep to serving Saul (17:15). He was still just a youth, not yet a mighty warrior (17:33), and yet this youth was the only one who came forward to fight.

David’s oldest brother, Eliab (whose name means “God is father”), was angry with David, thinking he was only asking about coming forward because he wanted the reward of riches and Saul’s daughter’s hand in marriage (17:28). His language is yet another strong contrast to what God said about David’s heart. The way David described Goliath tells us he was not after his own honor but the honor of God (17:26). No matter what Eliab thought, David’s motives were pure, and his inner person was one who trusted in the Lord.

When David came before Saul, he referenced the “heart” again (17:32). David said, “Let *no man’s* heart fail because of him [Goliath],” speaking generally of the whole army. No man had stepped forward. Yet the story creates a clear contrast between David and Saul specifically. Saul’s heart had failed him, but David’s heart trusted in the Lord (17:37).<sup>7</sup> The contrast is furthered when David couldn’t walk in Saul’s armor (the Hebrew is “walk”) and went into battle with only his shepherd’s weapons (17:38-40), highlighting the difference in the strength and power of David (who had no armor and carried only a slingshot) and Goliath (who had the latest technology in weaponry). A slingshot wasn’t nothing; it was still used as a weapon, not just for shepherds but in ancient forms of warfare, but Goliath’s weapons were stronger and more advanced.<sup>8</sup> However, David had the Lord on his side, whom he trusted to deliver himself (17:37). The gods of the Philistines were just idols of stone and wood, but Israel’s God is the living God! (17:36).

**Q: How could David be so confident that God’s will was for him to prevail over Goliath? Does this mean Christians always win their battles? Why or why not?**

**Q: How can we encourage one another to trust in God’s will for our lives?**

### **1 Samuel 17:41-58 [Read]**

**Talking Point 3:** Faith in the Lord can move mountains and conquer giants.

**Q: What strikes you about David’s words to Goliath? Where did David’s confidence come from?**

**Q: What did David say this victory would teach the people about God?**

We all know the end of the story. The Lord used David to conquer Goliath with just a slingshot. The speech David gave Goliath before the fight is an interesting point of focus.

- Goliath made fun of David's weapons. David responded that Goliath came with the latest technology in weaponry, but he came in the name of the Lord (vv. 43, 45).
- David used the name "Lord of hosts," which is a military term, "hosts" referring to God's army of angels (v. 45).
- David didn't brag about his own strength or skill but said, "The Lord will deliver you into my hand" (v. 46).
- David didn't talk about his own glory or fame but said he would win so that "all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel" (v. 46) and
- Also that "all this assembly" – both the Philistine army and God's own army – "may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear" (v. 47).

This whole battle was about God, not about David at all. The battle was about showing the world and even the army of Israel that Yahweh is the Lord of all nations, that He is the Savior and Deliverer. And He doesn't need fancy weapons, human skill or anything else to win His battles. The story of David and Goliath shows us that God is stronger than any "giant" the world puts in front of us (1 John 4:4) and that faith in the Lord's promises and His will can move mountains (Matthew 17:20).

David spoke of this often in the Psalms – "The Lord is my strength and my song" (118:14), "my strength and my shield" (28:7), and "equipped me with my strength" (18:32). "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life, of whom shall I be afraid?" (27:1). David spent a huge portion of his life after this on the run from Saul and later from his own son, Absalom. He had every reason to fear, but instead he took refuge in the Lord (57:1). No matter what David went through, he told himself, "The Lord is on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me?... It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man" (118:6, 8). David made a lot of mistakes, but he got this one simple truth right – trust in the Lord ... and He will make straight your paths (Proverbs 3:5–6). "Straight" doesn't mean we won't through twists and turns and struggles. It doesn't mean physically "straight;" it means the *right* path. His plan for our lives may take us through hills and valleys, but we don't need to fear because He is with us (Psalm 23:4). And when we consecrate ourselves to the Lord, He will do amazing things through us (Joshua 3:5).

**Q: What amazing things has God done in your life?**

**Q: How can reminding ourselves of God's power and His promises help us when we face big problems?**

**Q: How can we know we are on the "straight" path? How can we know we are following God's will if we're in a valley or a battle or even running for our lives?**

## **Week 4: David and Goliath**

### **Took**

**Main Point: Those who trust in the Lord and follow His will do not need to be afraid.**

Where do you find strength and encouragement during moments of fear and stress? The past few years, 2020-2022, have been particularly challenging; in a recent survey, 87 percent cited inflation as a source of stress, 81 percent supply chain issues, 81 percent global uncertainty, and 80 percent Russian cyberattacks or nuclear threats.<sup>9</sup>

**Q: What do you do when you're feeling overwhelmed or afraid?**

**Q: In what ways do you remind yourself of God's strength when you feel small?**

Consider memorizing one of these passages to remind you of God's presence and strength.

**Psalm 34:4–5** I sought the LORD, and he answered me  
and delivered me from all my fears.

Those who look to him are radiant,  
and their faces shall never be ashamed.

**Psalm 23:4** Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

**Psalm 27:1** "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"

**Psalm 46:1–3** God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,  
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,  
though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah

**Philippians 4:6-7** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

## CHALLENGES

**THINK:** Why is it sometimes hard for you to trust in the Lord, especially when you are faced with “giant,” scary situations? What is it about your personality, circumstances or experience that makes it hard for you to trust? How can you grow in your trust of the Lord? What practices or disciplines can help you? How can others help you grow in trust?

**PRAY** for God to grow your trust. Pray for Him to reveal His will to you in His timing and give you the strength to follow even if it seems hard. Ask for His strength and wisdom not to fear when you face “giant” situations.

**ACT:** Face your giants. Whatever your particular “giant” is right now, commit to facing it head-on instead of cowering in fear. Look back at the paragraph where David spoke confidently to Goliath about how God was going to deliver him from Goliath. Speak that same truth over your own life regarding whatever giant situation you are dealing with. Use David’s words as a “proclamation prayer” claiming God’s victory over your giants.

**NEXT TIME in *The Life of David*:** For the next three weeks, we’ll look at the period of time when David lived in Saul’s house as his armor-bearer, his son-in-law, and his son’s best friend. We’ll see David’s success as a warrior, the growth of his popularity as Saul’s diminished, and Saul’s reaction to all of it. Next week, we’ll see more contrasts between Saul and David – David’s bravery and humility and Saul’s pride, jealousy and lack of gratitude.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt0087538/?ref\\_=bo\\_se\\_r\\_1](https://www.boxofficemojo.com/title/tt0087538/?ref_=bo_se_r_1)

<sup>2</sup> Robert Alter, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Rabbi YY Jacobson, “A Tale of Two Mountains” *Jews for Judaism* - <https://www.jewsforjudaism.org/knowledge/articles/a-tale-of-two-mountains/>

<sup>4</sup> John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000).

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/news/20220310/americans-report-overwhelming-stress-poll>