



DAVID: *King of Hearts*

A Bible Study by Stan Key

Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. (1 Sam. 16:7)

CHAPTER 2. A GIANT PROBLEM

I Samuel 17:1-58

I. **Jumbo Shrimp.**

- A. The Gospel delights in putting two realities together that seem to be contradictory. This paradoxical and **oxymoronic** nature of truth is found everywhere in the Bible: the way up is down, the way to be wise is to be a fool, the way to gain is to give, the way to be joyful is to mourn, the way to be first is to be last, the way to live is to die, etc. One of the greatest of these seeming contradictions is the mustard seed reality (Matt 13:31-32) that bigness comes in being **small**, and strength comes in being **weak**. No story illustrates this better than the battle between David and Goliath.
- B. We all love stories about how an **underdog** wins an upset victory¹. This theme of the unlikely hero is a recurring favorite all over the world:
 1. The tortoise and the hare (*Aesop's Fables*).
 2. Rocky Balboa vs Apollo Creed (*Rocky*).
 3. William Wallace vs England (*Braveheart*).
 4. Hickory High School vs South Bend High School (*Hoosiers*).
 5. Brer Rabbit and Brer Fox (*Uncle Remus*. Joel Chandler Harris).
 6. Seabiscuit gave hope to many during the Great Depression (*Seabiscuit*).
 7. Susan Boyle (*Britain's Got Talent*).
 8. The Miracle Mets (1969).
 9. The US Olympic hockey team beats Russia (Lake Placid, 1980).
 10. Luke Skywalker vs Darth Vader and the Death Star (*Star Wars*).
 11. Benjamin Netanyahu standing before the United Nations.
- C. The most famous underdog story of all time is undoubtedly David and Goliath. I first heard it in Sunday School via the state-of-the-art technology of **flannelgraph**. G. K. Chesterton says that life's most important lessons are learned from the stories read to us when we were children.²

II. **I Samuel 17:1-58**

Goliath's Challenge vv 17:1-11	David's Response to the Challenge vv 17:12-40	The Battle vv 17:41-58
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Read the story (vv 1-11, 16, 24-54). There are three main characters in this story. Let's examine them one by one:

¹ For a recent example see Malcolm Gladwell's bestselling book *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*. Back Bay Books. New York. 2013.

² *Othodoxy*. Ignatius Press. 1908. See the chapter entitled "The Ethics of Elfland."

- A. *Goliath*. We are given a great deal of information about this man:
1. Ethnicity and national identity: from Gath, a Philistine (v 4).
 2. Religion: he is uncircumcised (v 26) and a polytheist (v 43).
 3. Size: “six cubits and a span”³ (v 4). Over **nine feet** tall. A first-round draft pick for the NBA.
 4. Weapons (vv 5-7). State-of-the-art weapons of mass destruction:
 - Bronze helmet for his head.
 - Coat of mail made of bronze (probably from shoulders to knees). This weighed 5,000 shekels (about **125 pounds**).
 - Bronze shin guards.
 - Bronze javelin (type of spear or sword for thrusting in hand to hand combat).
 - A spear whose shaft was like a weaver’s beam. The spear’s tip weighted 600 shekels (about **15 pounds**).
 - A shield carried by a personal armor-bearer.
 5. Power of intimidation and use of **psychological** warfare. His words are blasphemous, vile and defiant (vv 8-10, 43-44). He is a terrorist and the prototypical **bully**.

NOTE 1: Goliath may have suffered from a medical condition called acromegaly. This abnormality is caused by a problem with the pituitary gland which results in an overproduction of growth hormone. One side effect can be poor vision. Perhaps this explains the armor-bearer and Goliath’s reference to David carrying “sticks” (v 44), though he had only his staff in his hand (v 40). Was Goliath suffering from double vision?

NOTE 2: Without belittling the very real threat that Goliath poses to Israel, it takes only a little effort to feel a measure of **sympathy** for this overgrown bully. Always the subject of jokes and derision because of his size, suffering from bad eye sight, and filled with massive insecurities, Goliath was perhaps, like many bullies, an insecure little boy, hiding underneath all that impressive weaponry, defiant verbosity, and arrogant belligerence.

- B. *Saul*. Being the tallest man in Israel (I Sam 9:2; 10:23) and having a fine suit of armor himself, Saul was the obvious candidate to fight Goliath! But like the rest of Israelite army, Saul was “dismayed and greatly afraid” (v 11). Goliath’s bullying worked. Saul became **paralyzed**, inactive, passive. He therefore decides to find someone else to take on this battle. Saul is the classic example of the **victim**: low self-confidence, fear, anxiety, depression, feelings of powerlessness, submissive and passive.
- C. *David*. No one could have predicted that David (small, young, a civilian, unarmed, a newcomer) would beat Goliath! Imagine a **boxing match** that opens with the referee saying:

In this corner, weighing 355 pounds and measuring over 9 feet tall, a professional solder for over ten years with a record of 48 knock-outs and no losses, wearing 125 pounds of armor and carrying a sword, a spear and a javelin... Goliath! *And in this corner*, weighing 145 pounds and measuring five foot nine inches in height, for

³ A cubit was the length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger (about 18 inches). A span was the length from the thumb to the little finger (about 7 inches)

over 5 years having taken care of his father’s sheep; a poet and songwriter, a musician; wearing no armor and carrying a staff and a sling shot... David!

The bell rings! And before the first round is over Goliath is face down on the ground, dead. How did it happen?

III. What does it take to be a giant-killer?

Giants and bullies still exist. Whether they come in the form of physical threats of violence, or misfortunes, oppression, injustice, sickness, and disabilities, these powerful opponents threaten us and often render us passive and impotent. From David’s example, we can learn what it takes to step into the ring and take on our giant in face to face combat.

- A. See the situation with **new eyes**. Get a new perspective. Reframe the situation. “Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart” (I Sam 16:7). David, filled with the Holy Spirit (I Sam 16:13), was able to see what others could not:

Saul/Israel saw:	David saw:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A personal threat • This is all about me • A dangerous terrorist • This is my battle • Goliath is so big I can’t win • He is well equipped with modern weapons • Somebody ought to do something • He has a sword and spear • This is a huge problem • I might get hurt 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A threat to my family and friends • This is all about God • An uncircumcised philistine • This is God’s battle • Goliath is so big I can’t miss • He is weighed down with cumbersome accessories • I ought to do something • I have a sling shot • This is a huge opportunity • God’s reputation might be hurt

- B. Be **prepared**. It may seem that giant-killers just appear suddenly, full grown and ready for battle, out of nowhere. Don’t be fooled. During years of obscurity, when no one was looking, David had been preparing for this battle... developing a proven **track record**, though he didn’t fully understand it. He was no professional soldier, but that didn’t mean David didn’t know how to fight (vv 33-37). Underdogs work long and hard when no one else is watching. Don’t expect to win in the big battles if you are not being faithful in the small battles (daily disciplines, witness to neighbors, tithing, victory over bad habits, etc.). “Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a **little**; I will set you over much” (Matt 25:21).
- C. Keep your **motives** pure. David’s big brother (Eliab) accused him of having selfish motives (v 28) but that only revealed Eliab’s own impure intentions! David is not motivated by personal rewards, by duty and responsibility, or by hatred of the enemy. He did not come to this battle seeking his own glory... but God’s. “...that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel... the battle is the Lord’s...” (vv 46–47). “The true soldier fights not because he hates what is in front but because he loves what is behind” (G. K. Chesterton).
- D. Use the right **weapons**. It seemed logical to borrow Saul’s armor (vv 38-40). But David was not seduced into letting Goliath set the terms of battle! Saul’s armor might work for Saul, but David needed to fight with the weapons that were uniquely suited to David and most honoring to God. The truth is that a man with a sling shot (speed

and agility, distance, a rock moving at 80 mph toward an unprotected part of the body) can easily have tactical advantage over a giant loaded down with heavy armor.⁴

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds... (II Cor 10:3-4)

- E. **Trust** in the Lord. The text makes clear that David's trust was not in his sling shot... but in his Lord! "... I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts... This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand... For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand" (vv 45-47). It was this trust that gave him **courage**, which simply means that David refused to let his feelings of fear control his actions. It is sobering to remember that the Lake of Fire is where all **cowards** will be thrown (Rev 21:7-8). The battle will be determined not by the size of your enemy but by the size of your God! David was simply living in the reality of what God had promised his people long ago through Moses:

*When you go out to war against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and an army **larger** than your own, you shall not be afraid of them, for the Lord your God is with you... for the Lord your God is he who goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to give you the victory. (Deut 20:1-4)*

Little wonder that David could say: "In the Lord I take refuge; how can you say to my soul, '**Flee** like a bird to the mountain, for behold, the wicked bend the bow; they have fitted their arrow to the string to shoot in the dark at the upright in heart'..." (Ps 11:1-2).

- F. Be filled with **the Spirit** of God.

It takes more than human skill, ingenuity and courage to defeat Goliath. When "the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David" (I Sam 16:13), he was given abilities to do things he could not do in his own strength. It was this indwelling Spirit that ignited a fire of **passionate zeal** and love for God in his soul that propelled him into battle. No longer could he sit by passively as God's reputation was slandered and his Name defiled. "For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me" (Ps 69:9).

TABLE TALK

1. Name a "giant" who is currently posing a threat in your life right now.
2. Thus far, how have you responded to this "giant problem"? Paralysis? Letting someone else fight the battle? Using weapons that don't fit?
3. How has this lesson helped you to think differently (gain a new perspective, reframe) about what you are facing?
4. Name one thing you intend to do to face your "giant" and bring glory to God.

⁴ Moshe Dayan, leader of Israel's surprising victory in the 1967 Six-day War, wrote an essay on the story of David and Goliath. "David fought Goliath not with inferior but (on the contrary) with superior weaponry; and his greatness consisted not in his being willing to go out into battle against someone far stronger than he was. But in his knowing how to exploit a weapon by which a feeble person could seize the advantage and become stronger" (quoted in Gladwell, p 12).

The Ballad of Davey the Giant-Killer

*Come listen my friends and a tale you'll be told
Of a lad that was honest and faithful and bold;
With God in his heart and a stone in his sling
He went out as a child and returned as a king.
So if you will listen and lend me your ears
You too can slay giants and conquer your fears.*

*Davey, O Davey I marvel in wonder
You sing like an angel then fight like all thunder!
But stop and consider: it's really not odd,
For Davey's whole heart is devoted to God!*

*Goliath stepped out on the field for the fight;
His armor, his voice and demeanor, his height,
Made Israel tremble and cower in fear
And pray that this monster would just disappear!
The army of Israel froze in their places
Panic and terror were etched on their faces.*

*But Davey just happened to be there that day
And heard what the ogre did mockingly say:
"You're sissies and wimps - and the one you call 'Lord'
Is no match for my strength or my size or my sword.
Come out and do battle and let the world know
That I and my gods are in charge of this show!"*

*It seemed that the giant's assessment was true
For no one in Israel knew what to do.
No Scripture was quoted and none said a prayer,
The mood of the moment was deep, dark despair.
It seemed that the forces of darkness had won
Before the encounter had even begun.*

*Then Davey stepped forward, in passion so hot;
"I'll fight this giant; just give me one shot.
Just who does he think that he's mocking like this
He's so big and so brazen I really can't miss!
I refuse to sit still while my God he's defying;
I'll teach him a lesson... or I'll die while I'm trying!"*

*So Davey went forth with a sling and a prayer
And sent a rock flying up into the air,
And down came Goliath with one mighty thud;
He collapsed and he fell to the earth in the mud.
And wanting to make sure the foul monster was dead,
Davey walked over and cut off his head!*

*So listen, dear friends, to what Davey would say,
When giants oppose you and stand in your way:
Trust firmly in God, don't listen to fear;
His strength and his wisdom and might will appear
Just when your status appears at its bleakest;
He loves to show off his power in the weakest.*

Faith Is the Victory

By John H. Yates (1891)

*Encamped along the hills of light,
Ye Christian soldiers, rise.
And press the battle ere the night
Shall veil the glowing skies.
Against the foe in vales below
Let all our strength be hurled.
Faith is the victory, we know,
That overcomes the world.*

Refrain

Faith is the victory! Faith is the victory!
O glorious victory, that overcomes the world.

*His banner over us is love,
Our sword the Word of God.
We tread the road the saints above
With shouts of triumph trod.
By faith, they like a whirlwind's breath,
Swept on o'er every field.
The faith by which they conquered death
Is still our shining shield.*

Refrain

*On every hand the foe we find
Drawn up in dread array.
Let tents of ease be left behind,
And onward to the fray.
Salvation's helmet on each head,
With truth all girt about,
The earth shall tremble 'neath our tread,
And echo with our shout.*

Refrain

*To him that overcomes the foe,
White raiment shall be giv'n.
Before the angels he shall know
His name confessed in Heav'n.
Then onward from the hill of light,
Our hearts with love aflame,
We'll vanquish all the hosts of night,
In Jesus' conqu'ring Name.*

Refrain