



Study #6: Shattered Confidence

I Samuel 17
Week of 10/25

David and Goliath

“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!’” (1 Samuel 17:45).

Despite being anointed as king over Israel in his father Jesse’s house (16:1–13), David did not ascend to the throne immediately; rather, he was pressed immediately into the service of King Saul (16: 14–23). It was in the first part of his service to this king that David displayed many of the heroic qualities that would be so closely associated with him later on.

Soon after David entered the court of the king, the Philistines moved to attack the nation of Israel. As was common then, the armies of each nation stood opposite one another on two mountains with a valley in between them — squaring off, so to speak (17:1–3). From their vantage point, the Philistines and their champion, Goliath, engaged in a bit of psychological warfare, taunting Israel and boasting of their military superiority (17: 4–10). This was also the usual way for armies to face each other before battle, and the clear atmosphere of the land of Palestine made it easy for shouts to be heard up to a mile away. Thus, Saul and his army had no problem hearing Goliath, and they were “greatly afraid” (17: 11).

While Saul was off fighting Israel’s battles, David, a shepherd, was tending to his family’s flock. But he was then sent to bring food to his brothers who were fighting in the army of Israel (17: 12–22). Confident as he was in the strength of Yahweh, the only true God, David was dismayed that no one in the army was prepared to fight the pagan enemies of the Lord (17: 23–30). So the king-to-be volunteered to face Goliath, not because of the reward promised to the victor but because of the chance to take part in God’s cause against His foes (17: 31–37). As is well known, David defeated Goliath using the simple weapons of a shepherd — a sling and a few stones (17: 38–58).

Coram Deo

In this world of causes great and small, it can be tempting to jump on every bandwagon that comes along. We are not, however, called to megalomania, nor are we called to be equally zealous for all campaigns that present themselves to us. Yet we should never see it as an option to not join the cause of Christ. When He calls we must answer, for He is our captain, and we are His faithful soldiers.¹

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Not every cause that presents itself to us is worthy of our enlistment. Yet when the Lord calls, the only right choice is to answer the charge. Like David, we should not fear when we are pressed into service; indeed, we should be the first to volunteer to face potential suffering for the sake of Christ. We can be sure that God will give us the final victory when we fight for Him according to His ways. Though there will be some casualties on our side, the war's outcome is decided, and all those who suffer now will be raised in triumph in the world to come (Revelation 6:9-11; 20).

Open It

1. What is your greatest fear or phobia? What is the reason for it? Have you ever been able to overcome it?

Read It: 1 Samuel 17

Explore It

2. What is the situation in the first couple of verses of chapter 17?
3. How does the author describe Goliath and his attitude toward the Israelites?
4. What was the Israelites' response to Goliath's challenge?
5. David is only a young boy. Why then does he find himself on the frontlines?
6. What is David's response to the fear of the Israelites and terror of Goliath?
7. Describe how David approaches Goliath when the battle ensues. How do things turn out?

Get It

As the Israelites and Philistines were facing each other, each army on a mountain side, Goliath came out of the Philistine camp. He probably looked like a Transformer with his helmet, mail coat, shin guards, and javelin. Goliath yelled across the valley at the Israelites and mocked them saying, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man that we may fight together" (17:10). Being 10 feet tall and the Philistine champion, you would think Goliath had room to talk. His challenge sent shivers down the spines of the Israelite soldiers. Here is the primary problem of our passage. Instead of looking to God Almighty, who rescued the Israelites from Egypt, the Red Sea, and the wilderness, they cower in fear to another man! By nature, we are passive creatures who doubt God's strength in tough circumstances. Thankfully, God doesn't let all of His people put their tails between their legs. He stirs David to see God's name honored.²

8. Why do you think none of the regular soldiers of Israel were willing to fight Goliath? Why do you think Saul was unwilling to fight Goliath?

Was their unwillingness to fight a sign of cowardice or a sign of wisdom? Why?

9. Israel, it seemed, was paralyzed by fear. Look over verses 4–11 and verse 24 and describe what dominated Israel's attention and contributed to their fear.

When have you been paralyzed by fear? Why is it that when the problem is your focus, you become consumed with every detail of the problem?

What will this focus most likely lead to?

10. Saul, Goliath and David derived confidence and courage from different sources. Where did they find their confidence?

² <http://crupressgreen.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/davidandgoliath.pdf>

How did the source of their confidence impact their behavior?

11. Looking at verse 26, what seemed different about David compared to the rest of Israel's army?

12. David's older brother Eliab rebukes David in response to his confidence concerning Goliath. What possible reason can be given for Eliab's reaction toward David in verse 28?

What possible insights does 1 Samuel 16:6 give you regarding the reason for this confrontation?

What are some reasons others may use to rebuke the steps of faith that we feel called to take for God?

How do we help those doubters to see that this calling is real and not a step of insanity?

13. In verses 32–37, what past reasons does David give to convince the King that he is capable of defeating Goliath?

How can smaller victories in the past give us the faith to take on great trials in the future?

When has this been true in your life?

Cultural believers go to church and believe in God. They know all the right religious clichés. Outwardly they seem to be believers. But their faith is not personal and practical because they don't want to confront and deal with their sin (often, like Saul, it's the sin of pride). Whenever they face a problem, they mouth religious clichés ("May the Lord be with you" [17:3–7]), but they know nothing of personal, practical faith in the living God. If Saul knew the reality of the Lord's presence, then he could have gone out and taken off Goliath's head. As it was, he had a form of religion, but he did not know its power. He might just as well have said, "Good luck, David!"³

14. Even after David declares to the king that he is confident of victory, Saul still advises that he go out with armor that doesn't fit right. What does this say about Saul's confidence in his young warrior?

What should Saul's response have been in that situation?

If the battle truly is "the LORD's" (17:47), how can we lay aside the weapons of the flesh, the folly of self-confidence and the despair of inadequacy, and trust in the deliverance of the LORD of Hosts?

15. How do our steps of faith and God's faithfulness impact those who are watching our lives?

16. According to verse 40, we see that David chooses what seems at first glance to be odd weaponry. Why does David have such confidence in his weapon of choice?

David had no armor, no military experience no protective equipment, he was not battle tested, nor was he trained. Yet he had one thing that Goliath had which was confidence. The difference was Goliath's confidence rested upon himself and David's was in his God!!!

³ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-2-felling-giants-your-life-1-samuel-17>

17. All throughout the battle we hear of Goliath's taunts against God. How are we to discern the times that we should let it go and the times we are called to stand up and defend the honor of God?

18. Many of us believe that Jesus should be the source of our courage, but we often fail to live out that belief. What would it look like for you to live with the courage Jesus gives us?

"Christian courage is the willingness to say and do the right thing regardless of the earthly cost, because God promises to help you and save you on account of Christ." — John Piper

19. What area in your life needs some godly courage and confidence? What is keeping those two attributes from moving you to action?