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David and Goliath

Key Theme

- God uses imperfect people to accomplish His perfect plans.

Key Passages

- 1 Samuel 17; Hebrews 11:32–34

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Contrast the faith of David with the fear of the Israelite soldiers.
- Identify the source of David's confidence in battle.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

Write on the board, "Who killed Goliath?"

Students will place a bookmark at 1 Samuel 17 and Hebrews 11:32.

Students will practice the memory verse with a partner, marking out words and reciting the verse.

- Paper bookmarks

- Memory Verse Unscramble Sheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student



Activity: Who Killed Goliath?

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Students will take a pre-test to see how accurately they can recall the ideas and facts of the battle between David and Goliath.

- Student Guides

- Pencils



Studying God's Word

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The Philistine Goliath's challenge caused fear among Saul's entire army. But David wasn't afraid. His faith in Israel's mighty God led him to fight Goliath. God's name was glorified when David defeated the giant with just one stone.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.

- Read through 1 Samuel 17

- Go Before the Throne.



Prepare to Share

SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

Prepare to teach by preparing your heart. Read the lesson key passages along with this background.

God gave David the gift of faith and used him in a mighty way to accomplish His perfect plans. David had been chosen by God to take the throne of Israel after Saul had failed to lead Israel in a God-honoring way (1 Samuel 15:10–26). Samuel had anointed David in the presence of his father, Jesse, and his older brothers, and David was now the king in waiting (1 Samuel 16:11–13).

From the time of David's anointing, the Spirit of the Lord was with him (1 Samuel 16:13). But the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul (1 Samuel 16:14). God had rejected Saul and set His favor on David from whom the promised Messiah would come to reign forever. In His wisdom, God had sent a distressing spirit to harass Saul, and David was brought in to Saul's palace to play for him (1 Samuel 16:23). When David played his harp, the distressing spirit left Saul, and he was refreshed. David became a part of Saul's household and was made his armor-bearer.

Although Saul loved David greatly at the beginning (1 Samuel 16:21), he soon became envious and despised the talented, courageous, godly young man. Saul's jealousy toward David began in the account we are studying today—the account of David's defeat over Goliath, the Philistine from Gath (1 Samuel 17:23).

How is it that the shepherd David, the youngest of the sons of Jesse, would be the one used by God to display trust, courage, and faith? The entire army of Israel was not able to exhibit this degree of valor

against its enemy (1 Samuel 17:24). The Israelite soldiers had no courage because their confidence was not in the omnipotent God of Israel. Yet David, unarmed and unprepared for battle, volunteered to go and fight the one who would dare to defy the army of the living God (1 Samuel 17:36).

And on he went—armed with trust in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel (1 Samuel 17:45). David's faith was in his God, not in sword and spear. His purpose was not glory and honor for himself but a desire to display that God's power alone can save (1 Samuel 17:47).

As mentioned earlier, when Samuel anointed David as king, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him. The Spirit gave David the strength, courage, confidence, and trust to continue in the name of the Lord to defend Israel against its enemies. His conquests made in the name of his sovereign and all-powerful God brought him honor among the people (1 Samuel 18:5–7). This increasing popularity provoked Saul's jealousy and hatred. Saul became consumed with this vendetta and sought to kill David on multiple occasions over many years. David roamed about the region with a band of valiant men and even spared the life of Saul on two occasions, acknowledging that because Saul was the Lord's anointed he must respect him as his authority for the time (1 Samuel 24:6, 26:11).

Throughout history we see God using imperfect people to accomplish His plans. While the entire Israelite army feared one Philistine giant, a God-fearing young man came forward to kill the enemy. From the line of this young man David would come the Messiah (Jesus Christ) to provide forgiveness, mercy, and grace to sinners—and the promise of eternal life.

HISTORICAL/APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

Even though David was the youngest son of Jesse, he was no pipsqueak. The common depictions of David and Goliath in Sunday school materials, coloring books, animated movies, and even paintings is of a small boy facing a giant man. While this makes for a good “story,” this is not what the Bible presents. In 1 Samuel 16:18 we have a description of David:

Then one of the servants answered and said, “Look, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, who is skillful in playing, a mighty man of valor, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a handsome person; and the Lord is with him.”

This description paints David as a valiant young man quite capable of fighting, and this was some time before his encounter with Goliath.

Another point often raised is the description of David trying to wear Saul’s armor. We know that Saul was a head taller than the normal Israelite (1 Samuel 9:2). Many people assume that David refused to wear Saul’s armor into battle because it was much too big for him (1 Samuel 17:38–39). Looking carefully at the text, however, David said that he had not “tested” the armor—he was not comfortable fighting in gear he had not trained in. Also, Saul would not suggest David wear his armor if it was much too big for him. To do so would put David at a disadvantage. We need to purge the little-boy image and have a biblical perspective of the young man, David.

Although David was no flea of a man, he might have appeared so next to Goliath. This warrior from Gath was probably a descendant of the giants who caused the 10 spies to be fearful of entering the Promised

Land. Like those spies, the warriors of Israel did not trust God to fight for them, and they stood in fear of a mere man. The details of Goliath are indeed impressive—he stood 9’-9” tall, his coat of mail weighed 125 lbs., and his spearhead weighed 15 lbs. There was not a man among the Israelites in his own strength who could defeat Goliath.

Over the years, many falsified photos have circulated showing giant skeletons being excavated around the world. Unfortunately, some well-meaning Christians have used these to “prove” that someone as tall as Goliath could have lived in the Middle East. We must remember that we can trust God’s Word to record the height of this man accurately, and we should not start with outside sources to demonstrate the Bible’s trustworthiness. If these archaeological finds (were they even real) could prove the Bible to be true, then we’d no longer be looking to the Bible as the authority. We must always look to Scripture as our ultimate authority.

For more information on this topic, see the Online Resource Page.



BEFORE THE THRONE

Almighty Lord, you thrill me. I will never tire of learning and applying the truths of your Word! Help me to look to you instead of the circumstances the next time I face a giant in my life. Help me to prepare and teach this lesson in a way that it will really impact my students. Bless them with a desire to have a relationship with you like David had. Draw them to you so they will have faith and trust in you as Savior and Lord.

► **Pace your lesson!** Use the clocks to mark the time you want to finish each section. This will help you stay on track and finish on time. You may need to shorten or drop sections as necessary.





COME ON IN

As students arrive . . .

- They will mark their Bibles at 1 Samuel 17 and Hebrews 11:32 with strips of paper.
- They will unscramble the scrambled words on the memory verse sheet and practice reciting the verse to each other, together, and/or to the class.

This time at the beginning of class should be used to review the memory verse. We have provided an activity sheet on the Resource DVD-ROM for you to use. Students should unscramble the letters of the missing words and then recite the verse to you or another student. Each week the verse will get harder to unscramble. You may have other ideas and ways to encourage your students to memorize the verse.



Review

In our last lesson, we were studying through 1 Samuel 16.

- ? What significant event did we learn about in that chapter? *The anointing of David as the future king*
- ? What was significant about where that event took place? *Bethlehem was the home of Boaz and Ruth, ancestors of David, and the future site of the birth of the Messiah. It was also referred to as the City of David.*

God chose David from among the Israelites not because of his physical stature or oratory skills, but because he had a heart after God's own heart. David was not perfect—he was a sinful man like every other—but he sought to do God's will.

We have more recorded about David than almost any other Old Testament figure.

Use the History of Israel poster to show the overlapping nature of the books that record David's life. If you look at this timeline, you can see the books of the Bible here at the bottom. Each of these bars represents the period of time the book records. We have been working through 1 Samuel, but David's life is also recorded in 2 Samuel, the beginning of 1 Kings, and the majority of 1 Chronicles.

Our account today has to do with an event in David's life that you are all familiar with, so we are going to have a pretest!





Who Killed Goliath? Part 1

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Students will take a pretest to see what they already know about the account of David battling Goliath. You will come back to this activity at the end of the lesson, before discussing the application questions.

In your Student Guides, you will find an activity titled “Who Killed Goliath?”

Without any helps of any kind, answer the questions as best you can. Allow a few minutes for students to complete pretest.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Often we have ideas about a biblical event that have been shaped by popular culture, movies, songs, etc. After we look at the biblical text today, we’ll come back to these questions to evaluate our understanding in light of the scriptural account.



Studying God’s Word

READ THE WORD

Now that we have formulated our own thoughts about this account, let’s look to the text of 1 Samuel 17:1–16 together and see how well we remember the truth. *Have someone read the passage aloud.*

- Write on the board, “Who killed Goliath?”

1 Samuel 17:1–16

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? Who was the enemy of the Israelites? *The Philistines.*
 - ? What are some of the things the text tells us about Goliath? *He was the champion of the Philistine army; he was heavily armored and had a javelin and a spear (we learn later that he also had a sword); he was six cubits and a span tall; he was confident in his own strength. Some Bibles use shekels and cubits to describe Goliath. Refer to a table of conversions or the study notes to help students convert the measurements. Some Bibles will use modern weights and heights.*
- If your Bible hasn’t already done the conversion for you, Goliath’s height was about 9’ 9” and his armor weighed about 125 pounds!
- ? What was Goliath’s challenge? *He offered the Israelites man-to-man combat to settle the battle—the winner would rule over the loser.*
 - ? How long had he been presenting this challenge? *Forty days, morning and evening.*
 - ? Last week we learned that David was made Saul’s armor bearer (1 Samuel 16:21). Why was David not with the army? *He was allowed to return to his shepherding duties for a time, but his three eldest brothers were with the army.*

Discover the Truth

So, the stage is set for an epic battle. The Philistine army outnumbered the Israelites and they likely had superior weapons and armor. We might understand the hesitance of the Israelites knowing that they were outgunned. But they had forgotten a very important part of the battle. Let's read on to see what they were forgetting.



1 Samuel 17:17-58

► If there are not enough students to read all of the parts, you can read for Jesse, Eliab, and Abner.

READ THE WORD

I am going to read the rest of the chapter as the narrator and I need volunteers to read as **Jesse, David, Goliath, Saul, Eliab, and Abner**. *Read the passage as the narrator, pausing for the others to read at the appropriate places. It would be best to use one Bible version for this portion if possible.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

- ? **Why was David sent to the battle?** *Jesse sent him there to take food and to bring back a report of his brothers.*
- ? **How did the Israelite soldiers react as Goliath approached the assembled army?** *All of the soldiers were afraid of Goliath.*
- ? **How had Saul tried to motivate the men to battle Goliath?** *He had offered riches, his daughter, and exemption from taxes to the man who would defeat Goliath. Apparently, it was not a sufficient motivation.*
- ? **In verse 28, what did Eliab say to David?** *He seemed very upset and accused him of just coming to watch the battle when he should have been tending the sheep.*
- ? **What was the likely motive of Eliab's response to David?** *He was bitter about David, the youngest, being anointed as king when it should have gone to the eldest son.*
- ? **When David offered to fight Goliath (v. 30), what was Saul's response?** *Saul told David he was too young to fight Goliath, who had been a warrior from his youth.*
- ? **What experiences did David offer Saul to explain his qualifications?** *He had killed a bear and a lion while tending his father's sheep.*
- ? **Who did David credit for these brave acts?** *He said that it was God who had delivered him from the animals, just as He would from the Philistine.*
- ? **When Saul offered his armor and sword, how did David respond?** *He refused to wear them because he had not tested them.*

Many people imagine David to be a little boy during this battle. However, that is really not an idea that can be supported from the text. David was described as a mighty man of valor in chapter 16, not a little boy. Also, we know that Saul was a head taller than the typical Israelite (1 Samuel 10:23). Why would Saul offer a little boy his armor? It is a ridiculous proposition. David must have been about Saul's size or the armor would never fit. Notice

that the text (v. 39) says that David had not “tested” the armor—he was not comfortable fighting in it; he didn’t say that the armor did not fit him. Examining the text carefully, we can see that David was not a little boy. As we mentioned in the last lesson, there are a few clues in the text that suggest he was about 20 at this time, though we can’t be exact.

- ? **How did David respond to Goliath’s mocking in verses 43–44?** *In verse 45 and following, David told Goliath that he was fighting in the name of God and was confident that God would deliver Goliath into his hands.*
- ? **What did David want everyone assembled to know (v. 47)?** *The battle was the Lord’s and the outcome was not dependent on the weaponry involved.*
- ? **How did David defeat the giant?** *Using a sling, he struck Goliath in the forehead, bringing him to the ground where David took Goliath’s sword and cut his head off, completing the promise he had made in verse 46.*
- ? **The text seems to say that David killed Goliath twice. How can we reconcile verses 50 and 51?** *Verse 50 could be a summary statement and the stone had simply brought Goliath to the ground, unconscious.*
- ? **How did the two armies respond to Goliath’s defeat?** *The Philistines fled in fear while the Israelites pursued them, emboldened by the defeat of Goliath.*
- ? **What does Hebrews 11:32–34 tell us about David’s actions?** *David conquered Goliath and put the army to flight by faith in God.*

Hebrews 11:32–34

Discover the Truth

While the Israelite army camped in fear of an army that outnumbered them, David would not stand for a filthy, uncircumcised Philistine to blaspheme God and stand in opposition to the army of His chosen people. While the soldiers cowered and looked at their own inabilities, God used David to defeat this army as He empowered David through His Spirit. David knew the character and promises of God and he acted in faith.

- ? **Which attributes of God did David trust in?** *Omnipotent, faithful, sovereign.*

This is not a story to give us some moralistic incentive to be brave like David or to face up to the “giants” in our lives. Rather, it is a true account of how God showed Himself mighty to save His people from the Philistines. It was by faith, in spite of the lack of numbers and weapons, that they were able to have victory. David trusted in God, and God used David to defeat Goliath.

Although we will not be studying the rest of Saul’s interactions with David in our lessons, from this point forward, Saul would seek to kill David because of jealousy. As the Israelites returned from the battle, led by King Saul, the news had preceded them. The people were singing, “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (1 Samuel 18:7). God continued to torment Saul with the distressing spirit and David had to flee for his life for the next five years.



OMNIPOTENT

FAITHFUL

SOVEREIGN



Who Killed Goliath? Part 2

MATERIALS

- Student Guides
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Go back through the pretest the students took at the beginning of class and discuss the answers. If time is short, have the students complete the corrections on their own.

Now that we have read through the text and examined it more closely, let's review the activity we started earlier. If you need to, make corrections to your answers in a different color or by noting "correction" after your original answer. Discuss the answers below.

1. **Who killed Goliath?** *David killed Goliath, but God was the ultimate victor over Goliath (v. 47).*
2. **Who was leading the Israelite army?** *King Saul.*
3. **How old was David during this battle?** *Probably around age 20, but we cannot be certain.*
4. **Why didn't he wear any armor?** *Not because it was too big for him, but because he had not tested it (v. 39).*
5. **What weapon did he take into battle?**
Draw a picture of that weapon. *He used a sling, not a slingshot. This weapon is a long rope or strap with*

a pocket in the middle to hold a stone, not a Y-shaped weapon with a rubber strap—a modern weapon that David would not have known (v. 49).

6. What weapon was used to kill Goliath? *While the stone brought him to the ground, David pulled out Goliath's own sword to kill him, cutting off his head. Verses 50–51 describe David killing Goliath twice, so we can't be certain whether the stone or the sword actually killed him.*

7. What was Goliath's challenge to the Israelites? *He challenged any Israelite to man-to-man combat to settle the battle, but none would take the challenge (vv. 10–11).*

8. Who is the hero of this section of Scripture? *God should be seen as the hero, though most people would look to David (vv. 37, 47).*

9. What is the most important message of this passage of Scripture? *While many preach or teach about this passage in order to promote courage, valor, or facing the "giants" in our lives, the core of the message is about trusting in God rather than self.*

10. What other details do you recall about the passage? *Many people will remember that David picked five smooth stones from the brook as these are often symbolically connected to some extra-biblical ideas; others may remember Goliath's size or the weight and size of his weapons and armor.*



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

The big picture of the lesson today is that God is the hero. Yes, David was the one who acted to defeat the foreign army, but it was because of his trust in God that he prevailed. Apart from God's empowerment, David would have surely covered as the rest of the soldiers did.

David knew that God had set him apart and the Holy Spirit was empowering him to do what he was called to. Just as he protected his father's flock from the menace of the bears and lions, so he protected God's flock, Israel, from the Philistines, fully relying on God in each instance.

In this we can see him as at least a shadow of the Good Shepherd who would come to lay down His life for the sheep of God's fold. Jesus, the Son of David, came to conquer an enemy far greater than Goliath. Our sin (and the death it deserved) was defeated by Christ's work on our behalf. We wait for the full realization of that truth in a kingdom with no death or sin, just as David still waited for the kingdom of Israel to be delivered to him. As Israel looked to David as king, we must look to Christ and follow Him as King.

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

- ? **What do we learn from David about placing our faith in God?** *Regardless of our inabilities or weaknesses, we must place our full trust in God and know that He is able to prevail. We are imperfect people, but God uses us to accomplish His plans.*
- ? **In what way have you seen the importance of looking carefully at the biblical text as we studied this passage today?** *Discuss various answers, including the importance of not allowing outside influences to contaminate our understanding of the text.*
- ? **Which of the characters in this account do you most identify with?** *While many will say David, we should say we are more like the cowering Israelite soldiers who cannot defeat sin. We need someone to step in and defeat sin for us. Jesus Christ has done just that by delivering us from the penalty of sin, and daily delivering us from the power of sin.*
- ? **What is the difference between looking at this passage the way we have done today and using David as an example of a brave person who we can try to emulate?** *We are weak, and apart from God's empowerment in Christ by the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing. Apart from acting in faith our actions are sinful. If we try to do things in our own strength and be like another person, we are going to become frustrated as we fail to live up to a moralistic standard. We must trust fully in God to accomplish His plans through us, not in our abilities to behave correctly.*



MEMORY VERSE

2 Samuel 7:22 Therefore You are great, O Lord GOD. For there is none like You, nor is there any God besides You, according to all that we have heard with our ears.



GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Ask God for wisdom in following Him in faith.
- Thank God for giving us examples to follow.
- Praise God for working all things according to His plans.

