

“Facing Your Giant” (1 Samuel 17:1–54)

I played four years of basketball at Bremerton High School (Bremerton, WA). My senior year, our five starters were between 5’8”–5’10”.¹ Since I was one of our taller players (5’10” on a good day), I played down low in the post with my back against the basket. For lack of a better term, I was labeled our “power forward.” In each of our twenty games, I was outmatched in both height and weight. Tuesday and Friday nights, I would go up against players between the height of 6’6” and 6’9”.² If you want to fully appreciate this scenario then think back to the last time that you used a fly swatter on an insect! Yes, that was often my fate. I was a little gnat in a game ruled by giants.

But giants not only dominate basketball games, they can also dominate our lives. Giants that come in the form of bills, unemployment, marriage problems, health problems, job frustrations, lust, self-doubt, regret, depression, and stress lurk around every corner. These giants loom large and are extremely imposing and intimidating. They seem so immense that we often feel helpless to wage war with them. So we often wave the white towel of surrender because we’ve fought this giant numerous times and failed. Or, we attempt to ignore our giants and hope they’ll leave us alone or go away on their own. Yet if we’re honest, we realize that we must eventually face our giants. We must because they will not go away any other way. Giants can only be defeated if we face them head on. Thus, the question that we’ll consider is: How can we defeat our giants?³ In the familiar story of David and Goliath we find an answer that is as relevant today as it was 3,000 years ago.

1. Israel encounters a seemingly impossible situation (17:1–11). Our story begins at a battle site. Israel is at war with their long-time enemies, the Philistines. Verse 3 states that the two armies are each standing on a mountain with a valley separating them. Then in 17:4 “**a champion**” from the Philistine army appears on the scene.⁴ The champion’s name is “**Goliath from Gath.**”⁵ Clearly, this is one bad dude! His very name sounds like he’s a man who could hurt you! Goliath’s height was “**six cubits and a span,**” which translated means 9’9”!⁶ Goliath’s description is described further in 17:5–7: “**He had a bronze helmet on his head, and he was clothed with scale-armor which weighed five thousand shekels of bronze. He also had bronze greaves [shin guards] on his legs and a bronze javelin slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver’s beam, and the head of his spear weighed six hundred shekels of iron; his shield-carrier also walked before him.**” This human tank is wearing a suit of armor that weighs 126 pounds.⁷ This man is so powerful that just the head of his spear weighs fifteen pounds.⁸ Goliath is a physical specimen beyond our wildest imagination, who is a bad-to-the-bone killing machine!

This massive “manster” stands up and shouts in 17:8–10: “**Why do you come out to draw up in battle array? Am I not the Philistine and you servants of Saul?**”⁹ **Choose a man for yourselves and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will become your servants; but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall become our servants and serve us.**” **Again the Philistine said, ‘I defy [scorn, mock¹⁰] the ranks of Israel this day; give me a man that we may fight together.’**” What an intimidating proposal! As was common warfare in those days, the battle would be won or lost without sacrificing numerous lives.¹¹ The side with the representative that won would voluntarily become servants of the other. This was a winner-takes-all contest! Of course, the Philistines loved this—they had a man over nine feet tall! Goliath led the league in assault and battery. He was superb in battle. Israel, on the other hand, would prefer to have an all-out battle and cut their losses. Goliath’s intimidating invitation to “**Choose a man for yourselves**” should sound familiar. Earlier in 8:18 Samuel spoke to Israel and referred to Saul as “your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves.” If there was one candidate who could and should fight Goliath, it was Saul.¹² But instead of facing their giant, Saul and Israel “**were dismayed and greatly afraid**” (17:11).¹³ This was a nice way of saying that God’s people were scared to death.

2. David volunteers for a seemingly impossible situation (17:12–30).¹⁴ Despite apparently insurmountable obstacles, God always has a remnant He can count on.¹⁵ Verse 12 begins with the words: **“Now David . . .”** Whenever you see the word “now” in Scripture, you know something is going to happen. This instance is no different. The Lord sovereignly moves Jesse to send David to his brothers, who are at the battle line with Saul, to play delivery boy and bring food to them (17:12–22).¹⁶ And then the unexpected happened! A young, wiry, ruddy-faced teen-ager, who spent all his time playing the harp and singing to sheep, comes to the rescue of God’s people.¹⁷ Please notice 17:23: **“As he [David] was talking with them [his brothers], behold, the champion, the Philistine from Gath named Goliath, was coming up from the army of the Philistines, and he spoke these same words; and David heard them.”** Did you catch that last phrase “. . . and he [Goliath] spoke these same words; and David heard them?” At this point, you may have a question: What had David heard that Israel’s soldiers hadn’t? The answer is simple: David heard the name of his God being dishonored! In 17:24 the men of Israel saw Goliath, listened to his words, and ran away in fear. It is important to recognize that 17:16 informs us that Goliath had come forth and challenged Israel morning and evening for forty days.¹⁸ This means that what David heard was Goliath’s 81st challenge!

After hearing Goliath’s challenge, David responds in 17:26: **“What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel?¹⁹ For who is this uncircumcised²⁰ Philistine, that he should taunt the armies of the living God?”**²¹ David is not concerned about “the armies of Saul” or “the armies of Israel,” but rather “the armies of the living God.” To label Goliath as “uncircumcised” simply means he has no part with God’s people and God’s privileges. David is saying: Why should we be afraid of a Philistine who isn’t a part of God’s family? My question is: Do we have a mindset like David? How tall is our God? Is He taller and more powerful than a 9’9” giant? If so, then what in the world are we fretting about? We must measure the size of our God against the size of our problem. The reason many of us feel like we’re getting thrashed by our giants is because we have a tiny view of God. Yet, the God of the Bible is bigger and stronger than all our problems! That is why true biblical thinking says there’s no problem so great that God is not greater. Perhaps you feel as if a problem is talking to you: “I dare you to try to conquer me. I’m too big for you. I’ve got your number.” Giants love to use intimidation! They love to make us feel hopeless and that our problems are insurmountable. Yet, faith focuses on God instead of our problem. As we recognize that God is able to overcome any obstacle and we focus on His greatness, our troubles will seem much smaller.

In 17:28–30 David runs into a potential roadblock: **“Now Eliab his oldest brother heard when he spoke to the men; and Eliab’s anger burned against David and he said, ‘Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your insolence and the wickedness of your heart; for you have come down in order to see the battle.’²² But David said, ‘What have I done now? Was it not just a question?’²³ Then he turned away from him to another and said the same thing; and the people answered the same thing as before.”** Eliab is concerned with his honor instead of God’s honor. Clearly, Eliab still has an axe to grind with his baby brother. He is likely still battling the giant of jealousy that invaded his heart when Samuel anointed David instead of him.²⁴ Yet, David ducks his brother’s jabs and doesn’t even answer Eliab’s accusing and judgmental spirit.²⁵ David is too intent on fighting the real enemy to get into a scuffle with his brother. What a practical reminder: We must stay focused! We need to save our energy for fighting giants and not fellow soldiers. Perhaps you’ve noticed that often when a person determines to make a stand for the Lord that a family member tries to dissuade him or her. Many biblical examples prove this point: Joseph’s brothers hated him, lied about him, and sold him into slavery. Moses was criticized by both his own brother and sister. Jesus’ earthly family at one time misunderstood Him and opposed His ministry (Mark 3:31–35). In fact, Jesus said that a believer’s enemies will be those of his or her own household (Matt 10:36). If you have a spouse that encourages you in your Christian life and ministry, you have been given one of the greatest gifts in this life. This is also true of Christian parents, siblings, and relatives. Until you have been without such support, you have no idea how fortunate you are.

3. David conquers Goliath and vindicates God's honor (17:31–54). Now our story really begins to pick up: “When the words which David spoke were heard, they told *them* to Saul, and he sent for him. David said to Saul, ‘Let no man’s heart fail on account of him [Saul]; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.’ Then Saul said to David, ‘You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you are *but* a youth while he has been a warrior from his youth.’ But David said to Saul, ‘Your servant was tending his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued *it* from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized *him* by his beard and struck him and killed him. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God. And David said, ‘The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.’²⁶ And Saul said to David, ‘Go, and may the LORD be with you’” (17:31–37). David exhibits astounding confidence. Saul, on the other hand, attempts to rain on David’s parade. However, Saul’s argument is based upon the natural laws of battle; he fails to take God into account. David and Saul have two radically different perspectives. Saul and his men see Goliath and think, “He’s so big we can never kill him!” David sees the same man and thinks, “He’s so big, I can’t miss!” Saul is looking at David and saying, “He’s too small!” David is looking at God and saying, “He’s big enough.” In addition to providing a supernatural perspective, David also gives Saul a little history lesson in God’s faithfulness and power. There is a play on words here: The word for “paw” (*yad*) is the same word for “hand” (17:37). David is saying: The Philistine is just another animal that God will deliver [twice] me from.²⁷

The scene intensifies in 17:38–40: “Then Saul clothed David with his garments and put a bronze helmet on his head, and he clothed him with armor. David girded his sword over his armor and tried to walk, for he had not tested *them*. So David said to Saul, ‘I cannot go with these, for I have not tested *them*.’ And David took them off. He took his stick in his hand and chose for himself five smooth stones from the brook, and put them in the shepherd’s bag which he had, even in *his* pouch, and his sling was in his hand; and he approached the Philistine.” David chose not to wear armor he had never “tested.” Instead, he chose mobility over protection.²⁸ It is important to note, though, that slinging was not uncommon. There had been an entire brigade of 700 left-handed slingers from the tribe of Benjamin who could “sling a stone at a hair and not miss” (Judg 20:16). Additionally, 2 Kgs 3:25 describes how the conquest of a Moabite city was led by slingers. Why did David choose five stones? In the past I have preferred the view that David was prepared to kill Goliath’s four brothers or sons (2 Sam 21:22; 1 Chron 20:5). Yet, I now think it’s more likely that David took additional stones because he realized the giant might not fall the first time. He was certain of victory, but he knew it might take repeated attempts to take Goliath down. Similarly, when we encounter giants in our lives it will likely require ongoing effort to achieve God’s victory. The problem is that we are tempted to quit too soon. If we sling one rock and miss, or the giant doesn’t fall, we give up (e.g., one counseling session, one attempt at accountability). God will eventually give us the victory (either in this life or the next), but we must be willing to put up a fight over months, years, and maybe even decades.

Now in 17:41–47 we come to one of the greatest confrontations in the entire Bible. The author first focuses upon Goliath: “Then the Philistine came on and approached David, with the shield-bearer in front of him.²⁹ When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him; for he was *but* a youth, and ruddy [redheaded], with a handsome appearance [a pretty boy]. The Philistine said to David, ‘Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?’ And the Philistine cursed David by his gods [Dagon and Ashtaroth]. The Philistine also said to David, ‘Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the beasts of the field’” (17:41–44). Goliath is incredulous! He can’t believe that David, of all the soldiers, is the one who is going to fight him. This is a slap in his gargantuan face! Inevitably, this leads to some serious trash-talking. Goliath even goes so far as to promise, not merely death, but the ultimate humiliation—to die and go left unburied.³⁰ Yet, Goliath’s confidence is solely in himself—his size, his strength, his armor, his weapons, and his experience.³¹

Now read David's response in 17:45–47 and you'll see one of the greatest expressions of faith in the Bible: **“Then David said to the Philistine, ‘You come to me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel,³² whom you have taunted. This day the LORD will deliver you up into my hands, and I will strike you down and remove your head from you. And I will give the dead bodies of the army of the Philistines this day to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel,³³ and that all this assembly may know that the LORD does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is the LORD’S and He will give you into our hands.’”**³⁴ David's confidence is in the Lord alone! Nonetheless, he also talks some incredible trash—dare I say—the best in Scripture. He even one-ups Goliath's smack down: “I'm not just going to kill you, I'm also going to remove your head from you and kill a whole lot of Philistines as well!” David is saying, “Bring it on! Come on down! Let's get it on! I'm going to take you out!” Yet, David didn't go out there and fight the giant just so he could get TV coverage, make all the talk shows, endorse a line of slingshots, and get rich. David took on Goliath so that everyone in the battle would know there is a God in Israel.³⁵ Seven times he refers to the Lord. David understands that God is one who fights on behalf of His people.³⁶

There are two further reasons that David was able to muster up such confidence: (1) He recognized that he was God's man called to uphold God's honor. After all, he was anointed king in 1 Sam 16 and one of the responsibilities of kingship was to protect Israel from her enemies. (2) David knew that Goliath was standing on territory that God had given to the tribe of Judah (cf. 17:1).³⁷ The very ground he used to launch his insults had been deeded to those he foolishly sought to mock!³⁸ These are two further reasons that David could be certain that the battle was the Lord's!

Two other observations are worth making: (1) David had no idea when he woke up morning he'd be nose-to-kneecap with a giant in the afternoon! Giant problems most often appear when you least expect them. Who anticipates a pink slip at work, a car accident, a mysterious lump, or a phone call that something tragic has happened to a son or daughter? We must prepare for giants before they enter our lives. One of the primary points of 16:14–23 is that David spent substantial time preparing himself (e.g., reading the Word, writing psalms, serving, fighting off animals). Similarly, we must prepare our hearts and minds as well. We never know when a giant may attack. (2) Seldom are our giants wiped out as quickly as Goliath. I wish every spiritual battle could be conquered in one day, with one stone. David himself would find that this would be the only conflict settled quickly for him. Most of his battles would drag on for years.³⁹ Likewise, the Christian life is not always filled with happy endings of victory and last-second heroics; however, God is a faithful God who honors those who honor Him.⁴⁰

This legendary episode climaxes with a smashing success in 17:48–51: **“Then it happened when the Philistine rose and came and drew near to meet David, that David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground.⁴¹ Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand. Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it.”**⁴² The contest is over before it even begins! The narrator spills forty–seven verses of ink building up to this climax, and then ends it very suddenly. The bottom line is this: David hurled the rock with such force that it crushed the frontal bone of Goliath's cranium. It is worth noting that stones could achieve speeds as high as 125 miles per hour and could be thrown with accuracy for 100 yards,⁴³ so it's no wonder that Goliath went down for the count! I would also suggest that there may be an underlying reason that David used a slingshot. According to the Torah, any individual (an Israelite or a non-Israelite) guilty of blasphemy must be stoned (Lev 24:16). This is exactly what David did to Goliath—he stoned him . . . with a single stone! Even before fully inheriting the throne as Israel's king, David would prove himself to be a diligent follower of the Torah, and thus, a man after the Lord's own heart.⁴⁴

Our story concludes in 17:52–54: **“When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron. The sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps.”**

Obviously, the Philistines did not honor Goliath’s promise (cf. 17:9). Instead of serving the Israelites, they ran! Fortunately, the men of Israel finally entered the battle! Now that the Philistines were fleeing, they had the courage to chase them and kill many of them. They then returned from their killing spree to plunder the Philistines’ camps. Verse 54 states: **“Then David took the Philistine’s head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent.”** Jerusalem was a Jebusite city. It was closed to Israelites at this time. Why did David bring Goliath’s head to Jerusalem? David likely takes the head of the giant and posts it outside of Jerusalem as if to say, “Your turn will come. God will not be mocked.”⁴⁵ Interestingly, Jerusalem later became the first place David attacked and conquered. From start to finish, David was an exemplary man.⁴⁶

What a story! But now we must return to our original question: How can we defeat our giants? Although I have alluded to the answer throughout this narrative I have not explicitly stated it. The answer is rather evident: *Place God’s honor above all else.*⁴⁷ The prominence of God’s honor is seen at the beginning (17:10), the turning point (17:23–26), and the climax of the drama (17:45–46).⁴⁸ Hence, David essentially says to Israel and to us: “Yahweh’s reputation is at stake; that matters to me; that matters enough to risk my life for it.”⁴⁹ Everything David does stems from his desire to honor God. He is zealous for God’s honor. He longs for God’s honor to be manifest in the eyes of the world (17:46b).⁵⁰

Like David, we too, must *place God’s honor above all else.*⁵¹ The goal of your marriage is not to be happy and provide for your kids’ security; it is to honor God. *Place God’s honor above all else.* The goal of your parenting is not to impress yourself and others by raising successful and well adjusted kids; it is to honor God. *Place God’s honor above all else.* The goal of your finances is not to live comfortably, contribute to your kids’ college tuition, and have a retirement nest egg; it is to honor God. *Place God’s honor above all else.* The motivation for Christian obedience is to honor and glorify God as King and Lord. Now, God often honors those who have zeal for His honor, but our vision must be to *place God’s honor above all else* so that “all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (17:46b) and in our country.⁵² When this is our ultimate goal, God will enable us to slay our giants either in this life or in the next life. Will you submit your giant to the Lord today and declare: “Lord, I want to be victorious over my giant for your honor. What I really care about is your reputation and your renown. When I fail to prioritize your great name and your honor, teach me that this must be my chief end. Help me to realize that your honor is the only worthy pursuit.”

Scripture References

1 Samuel 17:1–58

1 Samuel 2:3–4, 9–10

Deuteronomy 1:30–33

2 Chronicles 32:7–8

Psalm 18:30–36; 19:14, 31; 144:1

Proverbs 3:5–6

Isaiah 52:12; 58:8

Study Questions

1. What giant blocks my path of spiritual progress? Have I faced my giant in faith like David, run from it like the Israelites, or tried to get someone else to fight it like Saul? What strategy have I followed most often? What have the results been? How can I learn from previous mistakes? Is there a certain aspect of facing my giant that may be hindering my efforts—perhaps intimidation or loneliness? What do I struggle with most in the battle?
2. What giant-killing weapons has God issued me? What is God calling me to do with the resources He has given me? How am I going to use them? Who can help me in my battle? How can my giant be dealt with decisively so that it doesn't keep daily revisiting me with taunts and threats? Do I genuinely believe that God will fight on my behalf?
3. How concerned am I about God's reputation? Will I vigilantly protect the name and reputation of God? Am I striving to constantly and consistently bring honor to His name? Is there a situation in my life that is a reproach to the living God? Am I being harassed by Satan, whose taunts make me think my humiliation is guaranteed? How will I respond in faith?
4. How have family members and/or God's people kept me from fulfilling God's purposes for my life? Am I prepared to accomplish what God wants to achieve in and through me? Do I strongly believe that God is able to use me in His plan whatever the odds might be against me? Am I willing to see God as the one who fights on my behalf?
5. How do I view seemingly insurmountable circumstances? Am I able to gain perspective on the giants in my life by comparing their impotence to the almighty God? If the battle truly is "the Lord's," how can I lay aside my own self-confidence or sense of inadequacy and trust in Him? What obstacles in my life has God overcome? How has He done so? Have I expressed gratitude to God for His faithfulness?

Notes

¹ The local newspaper nicknamed our team “The Killer Bees” because of our swarming defense (and offensive prowess). Unfortunately, because of our size, we had a 3-17 record.

² For this sermon our 6’7” youth pastor, Shon TenKley, appeared behind me on stage and then played a little one-on-one post-up ball with me. He blocked my jump hook (I let him, of course!), and then proceeded to post me up and back me down causing me to knock over a music stand and almost topple over myself. It was great fun!

³ There is reservation among some biblical scholars to use the term “giant(s).” Some prefer other descriptions and themes. However, if a vertical focus on the Lord as our victor is maintained, I don’t have an issue with such terminology. Constable aptly writes: “In applying this story, I believe it is legitimate to see Goliath as representing the many enemies that frustrate individual believers as we seek to live for God. However, I believe primarily the application deals with defeating those enemies bent on defeating and destroying God’s people *en masse*.

Contemporary movements designed to discredit God and remove Christianity from a land are what Goliath personifies.” Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on 1 Samuel,” 2012 ed.:

www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1samuel.pdf, 72. I also concur with Russell, who when discussing narrative literature, writes: “*What does this passage tell us about God (the Hero), His plan, or the role His people should be playing in His plan?*” See Walt Russell, *Playing With Fire* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2000), 114.

⁴ The Hebrew phrase *’ish-habbenayim* (“champion”), found nowhere else in the OT, means literally “the man between the two [armies].”

⁵ Leithart remarks: “Goliath’s family origins in Gath are significant: The Anakim were conquered by Joshua and relocated to Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod, three Philistine cities (Josh. 11:21-23). Goliath was possibly descended from the Anakim that Joshua conquered. Faced with a giant from Gath, Israel needed another Joshua and another Caleb, and they found one in David.” Peter J. Leithart, *A Son to Me: An Exposition of 1 & 2 Samuel* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2003), 97.

⁶ Some doubt has been cast on the accuracy of the Hebrew text (MT) here by two Septuagint (LXX) manuscripts and one of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which both give Goliath’s height as “four cubits and a span” (approx. 6’9”). See esp. J. Daniel Hays, “Reconsidering the Height of Goliath,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48.4 (Dec 2005): 701–14; Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 642; and many others. Bergen rightly notes: “This lower figure appears to be a pious emendation designed to increase the text’s credibility. Changing this figure, however, creates problems with Goliath’s combat gear; e.g., a fifteen-pound spearhead. Clearly the original writer intended to portray Goliath as a person of almost superhuman proportions.” Robert D. Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*. New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 189 n. 49. See also David Toshio Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*. New International Commentary of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 440–41. Youngblood notes: “The MT account of Goliath’s height is paralleled in modern times by reports concerning Robert Pershing Wadlow, who was eight feet eleven inches tall at the time of his death on July 15, 1940, at the age of twenty-two (*Insight* [18, 1985]: 51).” Ronald F. Youngblood, “1, 2 Samuel,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), Electronic ed.

⁷ Ralph W. Klein, *1 Samuel*. Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1983), 175.

⁸ An Olympic shot-put weighs sixteen pounds, so a fifteen pound spearhead is heavy!

⁹ Woodhouse writes: “Literally he said, ‘Am I not *the* Philistine?’ The pronoun ‘I’ is strongly emphasized. ‘Am I—the one you see before you—the nine-and-a-half foot-tall, metal-clad whole, this powerful and violent figure—am I not the embodiment of *the* Philistine?’ ‘And *you* [again the pronoun is emphasized] are Saul’s slaves.’ Why would Saul’s slaves come out to fight the mighty Philistines? ‘Take another look at me, folks! Do Saul’s *slaves* really want to fight *Philistines*?’ John Woodhouse, *1 Samuel: Looking for a Leader*. Preaching the Word series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 308.

¹⁰ Woodhouse, *1 Samuel*, 600 n. 19 suggests that the translation needs to reflect the cognate word used by David in 1 Sam 17:26: “reproach” (ESV), “disgrace” (NIV), perhaps better “scorn” or “mockery.” Davis remarks that the root *charaph* (“to reproach, defy, mock, deride), which appears six times (17:10, 25, 26 [twice], 36, 45) is a key word that helps us to properly view Goliath. Dale Ralph Davis, *1 Samuel*. Focus on the Bible (Ross-shire: Christian Focus, [1988] 2000), 144.

¹¹ Bill T. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*. New International Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003), 253.

¹² Walton & Walton write: “Saul, Israel’s champion, had been chosen because of his warrior potential to fight Israel’s battles for them. Nevertheless, Saul went out looking for volunteers and offering lavish incentives. Not only had Saul failed God’s criteria, but he had failed with regard to the people’s criteria.” John H. Walton & Kim E. Walton, *The Bible Story Handbook* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 163.

¹³ This is unlike the Saul of 1 Samuel 11.

¹⁴ The LXX lacks 1 Sam 17:12–31 and 17:55–58.

¹⁵ A great example of this principle is God’s words to Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:18.

¹⁶ Davis, *1 Samuel*, 146: “one cannot help seeing a stroke of providence in the length of the introduction of David.”

¹⁷ In 1 Sam 17:16 the narrator states that Goliath “took his stand” for forty days. Youngblood observes: “He ‘took his stand,’ like the kings of the earth in Psalm 2:2 (same Heb. verb), ‘against the LORD and against his anointed one’ (Ps 2:2 NIV mg.).” However, here, David takes his stand with the Lord God as his strength.

¹⁸ Leithart, *A Son to Me*, 97 writes: “The fact that Goliath taunted Israel for ‘forty days’ (17:16) was analogous to Israel’s wilderness experience; but David was about to bring Israel out of the wilderness and into the land of milk and honey.”

¹⁹ Eaton writes: “We may ask, are the servants of God to encourage themselves in God by the thought of how much they will get if they serve him? Is it selfish? But what would come to David would be a further opportunity for [sic] fulfill what he knew he had been anointed to do. God’s rewards for service consist, amongst other things, of further opportunities to serve God.” Michael Eaton, *1 Samuel*. Preaching Through The Bible (Kent: Sovereign World, 1995), 72.

²⁰ To be “uncircumcised” means that Goliath has no part with God’s people and privileges.

²¹ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 192 n. 54 mentions that the title “the armies of the living God” was first used in Deut 5:26 “in a context that emphasizes God’s immanence and power. Perhaps David’s use of it here was meant to highlight those ideas as well.”

²² Twenty was the usual minimum fighting age in the OT (Num 1:3, 20).

²³ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 193 paraphrases: “What have I done to offend you now? I happen to have been asking about a very important matter.”

²⁴ The jealous older brother theme in the OT includes Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, and Joseph and his brothers (see Genesis 4, 27, and 37 respectively).

²⁵ In this act of self-control David eclipses the role of the firstborn. Gary D. Vreeland, *The Darker Side of Samuel, Saul, and David* (Maitland, FL: Xulon, 2008), 198.

²⁶ See David’s words in Ps 144:1: “Blessed be the LORD, my rock, who trains my hands for war, *and* my fingers for battle.”

²⁷ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 193–94.

²⁸ Davis, *1 Samuel*, 153 eloquently remarks: “What matters is not whether you have the best weapons but whether you have the real God. In fact your ‘inadequacy’ may be precisely your qualification for serving God; for his strength shines most brightly behind the foreground of your weakness.”

²⁹ Although David is smaller than Saul, he is not a tiny tot. He just didn’t have the experience necessary to use the armor to his advantage. Rather, he chose mobility over defense (see also Walton & Walton, *The Bible Story Handbook*, 163).

³⁰ Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 462.

³¹ Tsumura, *First Book of Samuel*, 461 astutely comments: “The Philistine looked down on David [literally!] and *despised him*, thinking himself almost perfectly equipped; he trusted in his own ability and his weapons. But his overconfidence in human resources led to his destruction.”

³² Brueggemann suggests that David’s use of the name *Yahweh tsaba* (“the LORD of hosts”) “means to allude to the entire memory of Yahweh’s deliverance of Israel in the past.” Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*. Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 132.

³³ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 132 calls this a “missionary speech.”

³⁴ Doriani notes: “The poems that open and close the books of Samuel state the major themes (1 Sam. 2; 2 Sam. 22–23). Hannah says, ‘It is not by strength that one prevails; those who oppose the Lord will be shattered. . . . He will give strength to his king’ (1 Sam. 2:9–1). David sings, ‘The Lord is my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer. . . . You armed me with strength for battle’ (2 Sam. 22:2, 40).” See Daniel M. Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2001), 172 n. 19.

³⁵ Tony Evans, *Time to Get Serious* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1995), 291.

³⁶ The key to the story is David’s faith (17:26, 36–37, 45–47); yet, the real hero is God (17:46–47) who gave David the victory. Douglas Stuart, *Favorite Old Testament Passages* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 53–54.

³⁷ Greidanus correctly states: “The message is: David, God’s anointed king, delivers Israel and secures its safety in the promised land.” Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament: A Contemporary Hermeneutical Method* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1999), 238.

³⁸ Erwin Lutzer, *Growing Through Conflict* (Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1992), 30.

³⁹ Lutzer, *Growing Through Conflict*, 25.

⁴⁰ 1 Samuel 2:30: “Therefore the LORD God of Israel declares, ‘I did indeed say that your house and the house of your father should walk before Me forever’; but now the LORD declares, ‘Far be it from Me—for those who honor Me I will honor, and those who despise Me will be lightly esteemed.’”

⁴¹ For an excellent response on “Who Killed Goliath?” see Walter C. Kaiser, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, [1996] 1997), Electronic ed.

⁴² This is the first case of decapitation in the Bible. Arnold, *1 and 2 Samuel*, 257 notes that decapitation is the decisive sign that the battle was over (1 Sam 31:9).

⁴³ Walton & Walton, *The Bible Story Handbook*, 164.

⁴⁴ See also Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 195.

⁴⁵ Bergen, *1, 2 Samuel*, 198; Leithart, *A Son to Me*, 100. Other scholars argue that the author is presently describing something that would take place at a much later date. David would eventually make Jerusalem his capital city. And at that time, Jerusalem would become a place for his war trophies (e.g., Klein, *1 Samuel*, 181).

⁴⁶ I love how Goldingay puts it: “David’s story is good news for little people.” John Goldingay, *1 and 2 Samuel for Everyone* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2010), 84.

⁴⁷ Mathewson proposes another big idea: “God uses people who have the courage to act in faith on his specific promises.” Steven D. Mathewson, *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative* (Grand Rapids: Baker; Carlisle: Paternoster, 2002), 89.

⁴⁸ Davis, *1 Samuel*, 154; Doriani, *Putting the Truth to Work*, 172.

⁴⁹ Davis, *1 Samuel*, 154.

⁵⁰ Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, 132.

⁵¹ Walton & Walton, *The Bible Story Handbook*, 164: “While we might be inclined to say, ‘Like David, we should trust God,’ it is more appropriate to say, ‘Through the story of David we learn that God is trustworthy, so we should trust him.’ The line between the two is thin, and the result of trusting God is the same; the difference is in the motivating factor. We want students to learn to trust God because of who God is, not because of what someone else did or believed. The narrative put God before our eyes using the story of David. They are not intended to simply put David before our eyes. Imitating David is a poor substitute for basing our behavior on the revealed character of God.”

⁵² See also Ps 46:10: “Cease striving and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”