

# brentwood baptist

HUMAN: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE REAL

REAL FAITH

1 SAMUEL 17:1-58

AUGUST 20, 2023

## MAIN POINT

Our trust in God moves us to act in faith in the midst of difficult circumstances.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Which circumstance in your life has caused the most fear?**

**When you are confronted with a seemingly unwinnable situation, is your natural reaction one of fight, or flight?**

Standing over nine feet tall, Goliath's size and armor made him appear to be an invincible foe. Perhaps you have faced similar "Goliaths" in your life. Maybe your Goliath was a financial debt that appeared to be so high you would never be able to repay it. Maybe cancer was your Goliath, intimidating you, causing you to fear. Or maybe the loss of a job or a home because of economic downturns. If you can relate to any of these circumstances, then you may have a small glimpse of what the Israelites felt when they were challenged to fight Goliath in a "winner takes all" fight.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ I SAMUEL 17:1-11.

**Besides his height, what made Goliath an intimidating foe? What did Goliath's armor reveal about himself?**

**According to Goliath's proposal, what was at stake for both sides?**

**Why were the Israelites helpless against Goliath? Had they forgotten anything?**

At the moment we are confronted with a seemingly unwinnable situation, our natural reaction is one of fear. Sometimes we are so fearful it leads to paralysis; we know we should act, but we cannot bring ourselves to do so.

READ I SAMUEL 17:20-26.

Verses 12 through 19 re-introduce us to David, whom we met in I Samuel 16 as he was anointed by God to be Israel's next king. Several of David's brothers had joined King

Saul's army and went off to war. David divided his time between serving King Saul at his court and serving his aging father, Jesse, as a shepherd (I Samuel 17:15).

Until David showed up at the battle, there is no mention of God's name! King Saul and his men were too focused on themselves and their own strength. David quickly ascertained the situation and couldn't believe what he had heard the Philistine giant, Goliath, say to the army of God. David was outraged that a non-Jehovah worshipper dared to speak out against God His king.

**What question did David ask aloud in verse 26? How is his response to Goliath's message different than the response of the soldiers?**

**Why is it important that David described the army of Saul as belonging to "the living God"? Do you think David said this aloud to not only remind the soldiers, but also himself?**

**When you are faced with a scary situation, is your first thought about you and your own abilities, or does your mind first acknowledge that you are one of God's dear children and that He is your strong heavenly Father?**

READ I SAMUEL 17:33-40.

David learned that King Saul had promised a reward to the person who fought and defeated Goliath. But for David, the real reason to fight Goliath was much more rewarding than money or fame; it was an opportunity for God's righteous name to be defended. With thousands of Israelite soldiers feeling fearful and inadequate, David drew courage from his past and trusted in God to provide a victory.

**How did Eliab and King Saul try to discourage David from fighting Goliath?**

**In spite of the discouragement from his own people, what evidence did David rely on to trust God?**

**How does remembering God's actions on our behalf in the past provide confidence in the present?**

**Although David fought lions and bears while protecting his father's flocks, to whom did he give ultimate credit? Why is this important to remember as we face our own difficult situations today?**

READ I SAMUEL 17:41-51.

**How did David honor God and call attention to Him in his speech to Goliath?**

**Would you say that David felt 1) overconfident, 2) righteous indignation, 3) self-confidence, 4) youthful exuberance, 5) faith in God, or some combination of these?**

## **How did David act in faith in verses 40-51? For you to act in faith in a circumstance you are facing today, what would you need to do?**

David knew something King Saul and his army had forgotten that the Israelites were God's chosen people, loved and cherished by Him. As the Creator of the universe, God's unlimited power was available to His people, they only had to act in faith to appropriate it. David's confidence to face Goliath was not because of an ill-placed self-confidence. David trusted that God was fully capable of defeating the Philistine enemy.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Is there a situation in your life that you have allowed to overwhelm you? Confess that to the Lord and ask Him to go before you in battle and fight for you.**

**How have you taken credit for past victories? Do you need to admit to God that you have been too self-sufficient while not acknowledging that it has been Him all along who has given you success?**

**How can our group help you face a "giant" in your life today?**

**What past experiences of God's faithfulness do you need to remind yourself of when facing your next Goliath?**

## **PRAYER**

Ask the Lord give you a new appreciation for His power and love for you as His child. Thank Him that He loves to show Himself strong to those whose hearts are completely His. Ask the Lord to give you courage and strength to face life's difficult situations. Trust Him to fight for you (Exodus 14:14).

## **COMMENTARY**

### **1 SAMUEL 17:1-58**

17:1-2 The heartland of Benjamin and Judah was approachable from the coast through six valleys. The Philistines already had come up the Aijalon Valley (13:23). During the days of Samson (Jdg 13-16), they had come up the Sorek Valley. Now they were coming up the Valley of Elah and already controlled Socoh and Azekah. If they got much farther up the valley, they could come up the ridge route into the hill country and threaten Bethlehem, Hebron, and Saul's capital, Gibeah. The situation was desperate for Saul and his army.

17:3 The word translated "valley" in verse 2 designates a broad, flat valley. The word translated ravine denotes a narrower, more sharply defined valley or wadi. Today, the valley pinches in a bit east of Socoh, perhaps marking the site of the ancient conflict.

17:4 Recent archaeological finds at Tel es-Safi, the site of ancient Gath, confirm that the name Goliath was used among the Philistines around this period. Two other early manuscripts (LXX, DSS) state that Goliath was “six feet, nine inches tall.” However, the description of Goliath’s combat gear appears to support the larger height of nine feet, nine inches tall. At either height, Goliath would have towered over the much smaller Israelites.

17:5-7 The sheer spectacle of Goliath’s armor and weapons frightened the Israelite army. At the same time, their weight would have restricted Goliath’s agility. He probably assumed he would not have a prolonged fight with anyone.

17:8-9 Goliath challenged and taunted the Israelites. With his words “Choose one of your men, and he will fight against me,” Goliath suggested representative combat—the army of the losing combatant would become servants of the army of the victorious combatant.

17:10 The Hebrew word translated defy first came from Goliath’s mouth, but it occurs four other times in the account (vv. 25,26,36,45), with the last three emphasizing Goliath’s mocking of God’s honor.

17:11 The Israelites needed their leader to articulate a plan of response, but King Saul had none.

17:20 David must have left very early in order to have made the 15-mile journey in time to see the army... marching out.

17:21 It appeared perhaps another day of standoff with the giant Goliath was forthcoming.

17:23 Came forward is literally “was going up.” The expression may suggest Goliath approached a bit closer than before, actually coming part way up the ravine (v. 3). David heard Goliath’s taunts: a subtle turning point in the account.

17:25 The victorious warrior would become Saul’s son-in-law (18:18,23) and would enjoy privileges as part of the royal family.

17:26 David’s words indicate he had not heard the announcement from Saul’s assistant (v. 25). The word disgrace is related to defy (vv. 10,25-26,36). Uncircumcised denotes someone outside God’s covenant. David saw the threat as not merely political (cp. v. 8) but theological. The armies of the living God, ironically, were terrified, but to David God’s honor was at stake.

17:33 Saul rejected David’s bold offer because David was just a youth, and because Goliath had been in training as a warrior from his youth.

17:34 Wild animals such as a lion or a bear were always threats to a lamb from the flock, and the shepherd’s fighting ability was the lamb’s only defense.

17:36 Lions and bears (lit “the lion and the bear”) probably best gives the sense of the translation. David was probably describing his various encounters with wild animals rather than identifying two specific incidents. This uncircumcised Philistine would suffer the same fate as these animals for his defiance of the Lord (see note at v. 26).

17:37 The word rescued is the same word that appeared in verse 35; David rescued the sheep, and God rescued him. Now, God would rescue His flock Israel. Encouraged by David’s faith, Saul found the courage to invoke God’s name in the blessing, May the Lord be with you.

17:38-39 Saul brought his own military clothes for David to wear, a fact that suggests that although he was the youngest, David may not have been smaller than the king. David tried on the bronze helmet and other armor, but he was not accustomed to wearing them, so he took them off. Ironically, it would not be the last time David wore a king’s clothes.

17:40 Rather than wearing royal armor, David took weapons with which he was most familiar. The five smooth stones he chose would have been roughly the size of tennis balls and would fly straighter than jagged stones. As a shepherd, he had likely become proficient with his sling, which would also enable him to attack Goliath from a distance instead of in close combat, where the giant would have a big advantage.

17:42 Goliath saw David as an unfit challenge to his skill as a warrior. He was just a youth, and his features did not show that he had battle experience.

17:43 Goliath began his psychological warfare (“trash talk”) against David by suggesting the staff David carried was fit only to beat a dog. The statement he cursed David by his gods further slants the account toward describing a battle between the gods of the Philistines and the God of Israel rather than just a battle between two men.

17:45 David’s response to Goliath highlights the contrast in battle strategy. The Philistine relied on his dagger, spear, and sword (or sword, spear, and javelin), but David fought in the name of (as the representative of and with the authority of) Yahweh of Hosts, who was the God of Israel’s armies. Goliath had defied Him, but now the Lord would triumph over him through His servant.

17:46 Hand you over to me is literally “shut you into my hand,” or leave no way of escape. David’s reference to the Philistine camp meant the outcome of their personal battle would have implications for the Philistine army. Birds of the sky and the creatures of the earth mimicked Goliath’s mocking taunt (v. 44). David insisted that when victory was his, all the world would know that Israel had a God mighty enough to rescue in seemingly impossible situations. David’s concern was that the nations would also know the power of Yahweh.

17:47 This whole assembly probably designates Israel’s army, but it may include all who were present that day. David testified that the Lord saves, but not by sword or by spear. Since the battle was His, He would fight and win His way.

17:49 After a lengthy anticipation of the battle in the narrative, the battle was over almost as soon as it began. The words fell on his face describe Goliath falling face-forward. The force of the stone's impact likely rocked him backward initially, but then he either lurched forward again to complete his fall or spun around face first as he continued to fall back (away from David) to the ground.

17:50 This emphasizes the unlikelihood of David's victory, which gives glory to God. And killed him is a summary statement of the whole event. David landed the actual death blow not with a stone but with Goliath's own sword (v. 51).

17:51 Goliath was badly wounded but was yet living when David reached him. Unwilling to stop short of finishing his task, David used Goliath's own sword to kill him and cut off his head. Seeing that their official representative in this death match was dead, the Philistines turned and ran back down the valley toward Gath.