

1 Samuel 17 “The Contrast Between Fear and Faith” [\[1\]](#)

Series: “*Learning to Wait on God: The Life of David Before He Became King*”

1 Samuel 16-31

This evening, we are treading on familiar ground. Not a person in this room hasn't heard the story of David and Goliath, I would guess. But what's the purpose of the story? Why did God include it in 1 Samuel?

Challenge: We all love stories of the underdog beating the bully. But if we reduce 1 Samuel 17 to being merely a story about triumphing against great odds, we've missed God's intent.

Purpose: Three levels of meaning in I Samuel 17 (often the case in narrative)

1. Universal Level -- reveals God's Sovereignty, authority, and power
2. Israelites Level -- reveals a Leadership Transition, showing Saul's inadequacy and David's adequacy to lead God's people
3. Individual Level -- reveals the personal need to trust in the Lord, not in man

Context:

Ch 15--Samuel informs Saul that God has rejected him as King.

Ch 16--Samuel anoints David.

Ch 17--Contrast between Saul's fear, and David's faith

Outline of I Samuel 17--The Story of David & Goliath

I. Scene 1--The Threat to Israel (1-11)

A. By the Philistines (1-3)

B. By Goliath (4-11)

1. His defiance: "I defy..." (10)

2. Israel's dismay: "they were dismayed..." (11)

II. Scene 2--David's Family (12-18)

A. The Older Brothers in the Army (12-13)

B. David was an unknown.

1. Caring for the sheep (14-15)
2. Taking sack lunch to his brothers (17-18)

### III. Scene 3--David at the Battlefront (19-39)

- A. David learns about Goliath (23).
- B. David grasps the real problem:
  1. "Who is this Philistine that he should defy the... Living God?" (26)
  2. "Is there not a cause?" (29)
- C. David brought before Saul (31).
  1. Reports what God has done for him in the past (34-35, 37)
  2. Realizes that God's Reputation is at stake (36)
  3. Refuses the armor (39)

### IV. Scene 4--The Showdown (40-54)

### V. Scene 5--The Results (55-58)

- A. David is honored.
- B. God is glorified.

### Lessons:

1. Little is much when God is in it!
2. The mark of a true leader is not physical appearance, nor personality charm, but conviction--the type of conviction that above all desires to see God honored, and His will accomplished.
3. A man of faith takes action when God's reputation is slandered.
4. Courage is linked to having a Big view of God.

Let's walk through the story, making a few observations. Then, at the end, let's zero in on several important lessons.

### **I. Scene 1--The Threat to Israel (1-11)**

#### A. By the Philistines (1-3)

Q: What threat did the Philistines offer?

## B. By Goliath (4-11)

Q: What was Goliath's threat?

Key: This story has to do with a conflict between 2 types of people. One is Goliath (self-seeking, self-relying, self-made, and self-destructing!). The other is David (one who seeks God, relies on God).

Q: What kind of armor was Goliath wearing? Vv 5-7

Q: What was the essence of Goliath's threat?

1. His defiance: "I defy..." (10)

Key word in story: "defy"

Q: What effect did this have on Israel ?

2. Israel 's dismay: "they were dismayed..." (11)

Q: How long did it last? V 16 "40 days" = time of testing

Then the narrative shifts, like a commercial break on TV, to scene 2...

## **II. Scene 2--David's Family (12-18)**

V 12 "Now David was..."

We were introduced to David in ch 16. What did we learn about him?

### A. The Older Brothers in the Army (12-13)

Q: How many of the brothers were in the army? V 13

In stark contrast to the older brothers...

### B. David was an unknown.

Q: What was David doing?

1. Caring for the sheep (14-15)

## 2. Taking sack lunched to his brothers (17-18)

I Sam 17 is full of irony. David is the youngest (14), yet he will be the hero. Though his brothers are soldiers, David, the shepherd (15), is the military hero. David is not experienced in battle techniques, warfare dress, or the "way it's supposed to be done." On the other hand, Goliath was a professional. He's more than qualified to be a victor in battle (notice the elaborate details about his dress in vv 4-7).

In other words, David is an UNKNOWN.

Yet David knew one thing. What was it? He knew God!

Discuss: Implications?

### III. Scene 3--David at the Battlefield (19-39)

Note: At what time did David leave? V 20 "early"

Think about how many "big" events in the Bible took place early!

When David arrived with the lunches...

A. David learns about Goliath (23).

B. David grasps the real problem:

Q: What was it, according to the following verses?

1. "Who is this Philistine that he should defy the... Living God?" (26)
2. "Is there not a cause?" (29)

David grasped the problem. God was being blasphemed.

Q: What did David's brother think of David's involvement? V 28

Note: A person who takes God seriously is a threat to the "status quo."

C. David brought before Saul (31).

Q: What did David do before Saul?

1. Reports what God has done for him in the past (34-35, 37)
2. Realizes that God's Reputation is at stake (36)
3. Refuses the armor (39)

Q: Why did he refuse the armor?

Wow! David was a man of great faith! His faith grew out of his conviction of what God had done for Him in the past.

#### **IV. Scene 4--The Showdown (40-54)**

He went into battle with merely a sling, and 5 smooth stones.

Q: Was David being presumptuous? After all, Goliath was heavily armed, and David had only a sling.

I read that such slings usually weighed a pound or more, and the stone could be hurled at 90-100 miles an hour. We need not view David's faith as reckless. He was a man of faith, but he was not foolhardy.

Here's what Robert Vannoy observed, "David was not irresponsible, but he did arm himself in a way that left room for God's help. This calls our attention to the important distinction between faith and presumption. Although this distinction involves a line that is difficult to draw, we should be aware of the difference. God calls us to faith, but He does not call us to act in presumptuous and foolish ways. We don't step in front of a Mack truck in the belief that God will protect us from its impact. But God does call us to step out in faith..."

He also said, "Our natural human tendency is to want certainty of result before committing ourselves to some endeavor for the Lord. But this is not the way a true believer in the Lord should live." (article by Robert Vannoy, "Biblical Bulletin," Fall 1993).

Discuss: Summarize the difference between faith and presumption?

Q: What happened in the showdown?

Q: To whom did David acknowledge dependence? Vv 45-46

Q: Which way did Goliath fall? V 49 "on his face"

Is that significant? Yes.

Q: What other enemy of God fell on his face in I Samuel? 5:4 Dagon!

God's enemies always eventually fall on their faces!

## V. Scene 5--The Results (55-58)

The outcome was a thorough rout of God's enemy! The result was...

A. David is honored.

B. God is glorified.

### Lessons:

1. Little is much when God is in it!
2. The mark of a true leader is not physical appearance, nor personality charm, but conviction--the type of conviction that above all desires to see God honored, and His will accomplished.
3. A man of faith takes action when God's reputation is slandered.
4. Courage is linked to having a Big view of God.

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[\[1\]](#) These are unedited teaching notes used initially for a Wednesday evening Bible study at Wheelersburg Baptist Church . They are provided for your edification as you personally study God's life-changing Word. Pastor Brad Brandt