



BIGGER THAN BIG

*Jeff Peabody
New Day Church
Federal Way, WA
May 7, 2006*

We are back this morning with our study of the life of David. I'm glad it's a family Sunday this week, because today we get to talk about a great story that most of you kids probably already know. In fact, I bet you even know a song about it.

Everybody knows about David and Goliath. Even if you never ever read a Bible in your life, chances are you've heard about the little boy who beat the big giant with a sling.

But it doesn't matter if we've all heard it before. A good story grows with you. There is always more to learn from the story of David and Goliath, because we're in a different place each time we hear it. We've lived through more experiences, and we reinterpret the story in fresh ways each time.

We can all relate to David, can't we? We like to cheer for the underdog, and

Let's read through it. If you brought your Bible for "Bring Your Own Bible" month, you can find this story in 1 Samuel 17.

[CLICK]

1 Samuel 17

Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Socoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Socoh and Azekah. Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.

[CLICK]

Let me pause for a second. When we hear places and names like that, it feels very unreal and far away. We can start to imagine David as just some sort of made up legend. But this really happened, and you can still visit the Valley of Elah in Israel to this day and picture the armies camped on the hills.

[CLICK]

A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. He was over nine feet tall.

Whoa! Do you know how tall that is?

[CLICK]

Have you ever heard the name Robert Wadlow? He lived in Illinois back in the 1920s and 30s, and he's considered the tallest man in modern times. He was 8' 11". By the time he was 13, he was over 7 feet tall. They called him the biggest Boy Scout ever. He kept growing to get almost as tall as Goliath. But not quite. Robert Wadlow wasn't very powerful. His body was pretty weak and he died at a young age. Not like Goliath – He was tall AND strong. He was a champion fighter. Listen to how the writer describes him:

[CLICK]

He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him.

[CLICK]

Here's a picture of some bronze armor from about that time period. The Bible says Goliath's weighed over 125 lbs. That's probably more than David weighed at the time!

[CLICK]

Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us."

Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

Think about that for a minute. The Bible tells us that King Saul was head and shoulders taller than all the Israelites, so he's their biggest and best answer to Goliath. And he's scared out of his mind. He's not about to go down there and fight Goliath. So if he's not going to do it, nobody else is going to want to do it either.

Goliath was way bigger and stronger than Saul -- the best Israel had to offer. That's a discouraging situation. That's the way a lot of life's battles feel to us. We see what

we're up against and it feels like it's way bigger than us and we don't have the resources to fight it.

When I was in 7th grade, two bullies picked on me almost every day for a long time. Danny C. and Tony B. They were both bigger and stronger than me. They wouldn't hit me, they would just say mean things day after day. It was discouraging. I didn't feel like I had any way to stop them.

Don't worry – it all ended up okay and they did eventually quit. But the point is that we all find ourselves in situations where we're dealing with something that overwhelms us with its size. Maybe we don't have enough money to pay the bills. Maybe it's just that we haven't been able to sleep and the thought of functioning all day is too much. Our enemies can look like Goliath to us – bigger and stronger than the best we've got to offer.

[CLICK]

Now David was the son of an Ephrathite named Jesse, who was from Bethlehem in Judah. Jesse had eight sons, and in Saul's time he was old and well advanced in years.

[CLICK]

Jesse's three oldest sons had followed Saul to the war: The firstborn was Eliab; the second, Abinadab; and the third, Shammah. David was the youngest. The three oldest followed Saul, but David went back and forth from Saul to tend his father's sheep at Bethlehem.

[CLICK]

For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

Forty days! It makes you think of the 40 days of rain during the flood, or the 40 days Jesus was tested in the wilderness. It represents a long, difficult stretch. This wasn't just a one time thing. Goliath was repeating his challenge over and over again and he wasn't going to give up until somebody took him up on it.

Isn't that exactly how it is for us, too? A lot of our struggles go on and on. It's not just one day here or there. **Our hardest challenges are not the big moments, but the daily assaults that wear us down.**

[CLICK]

Now Jesse said to his son David, "Take this ephah of roasted grain and these ten loaves of bread for your brothers and hurry to their camp. Take along these ten cheeses to the commander of their unit. See how your brothers are and bring back some assurance from

them. They are with Saul and all the men of Israel in the Valley of Elah, fighting against the Philistines."

Early in the morning David left the flock with a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry. Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers.

[CLICK]

As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear.

Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his father's family from taxes in Israel."

David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him."

[CLICK]

When Eliab, David's oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked, "Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle."

"Now what have I done?" said David. "Can't I even speak?" He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before.

I love that little exchange. I'm sorry to say that being an older brother myself, I can relate to Eliab. I used to ride my brother all the time and think it was my job to keep him in line.

You can just hear David's reaction. "What's your problem?" And then the verse says he turned away to someone else.

When you're in the fight of your life, you have to be selective in who you're going to listen to. There will be people who will want to keep you down and prevent you from

even trying. Like David, we need to learn to recognize those negative influences and turn away from them.

Sometimes the fight is just to live for God. I went to a Christian college, which you would think would be good for your faith. But my freshman year there, I had a group of friends who were a negative influence on me. They didn't help my fight at all. They weren't really interested in growing spiritually themselves, and it was one of those situations where everybody kind of drug everybody else down. Fortunately, that group scattered at the end of the year and their influence over me ended. But at the time, I didn't recognize the importance of choosing my friends carefully.

[CLICK]

What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

Saul replied, "You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth."

Saul was like a lot of grown ups. He didn't think David could help because he was too young. But God saw things differently. He knew that David's youth was a strength. It meant he wouldn't be as afraid of Goliath. It meant he could still run fast. It meant he wouldn't sit around and say, "We've never done it that way before."

Never think that you are too young physically or in your faith for God to use. Paul told Timothy:

1 Timothy 4:12

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

God can use you to fight his battles – no matter how young you are. He thinks you're important, and he takes you seriously.

[CLICK]

But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."

You might think the battle between David and Goliath happened when the stone hit Goliath in the head. But I think David already had won before even picking up his sling. He saw things that the rest of the Israelites hadn't been looking at. They were looking at Goliath and seeing something big. David looked at the Lord and saw someone bigger than big.

[CLICK]

At the ad agency, I work a lot in a program called Photoshop for editing pictures and making graphics. One of the coolest things about Photoshop is that it lets you work on things in layers. I can turn a layer on and off, depending if I want to see what's on that layer. I can move whatever is on that layer either behind or in front of another layer. And I can make a layer more or less transparent so I can see what's on a layer underneath.

The Israelites are looking at this picture and seeing the layer with Goliath on it, but everything else is hidden to them. David sees Goliath, too, but he also sees a couple other layers.

[CLICK]

First, he sees the bigger issue. He knows that Goliath won't be able to stand because he has defied the armies of the living God. It's not a question of how strong Goliath is – it's a question of God's honor being dragged through the mud. The army is so consumed with fear of Goliath that they've lost sight of what's most important.

[CLICK]

The second thing David sees is the bigger power. God is stronger than Goliath. David knew that God would take care of him and help him win, because in the end, Goliath was no different than that bear or lion in comparison with God. David had seen God's power at work before and knew he could trust God completely.

When it comes to your battles, what layers are you seeing? Do you only see what's right in front of you, whatever that big struggle is? Or do you see what's bigger than big? God's purposes and his power?

When I say big struggles, that doesn't necessarily mean the earth shattering ones. All kinds of problems can loom large in front of us. After Karin's Uncle Rick passed away, her aunt found herself battling loneliness in a major way. It was really discouraging her, and she finally cried out to God, "I just wish I had somebody who knew me like a husband." And she felt as if God responded by saying, "I'm here. What can I do for you?"

She said, "I just wish I had my blue earrings back." It was the kind of frustration she felt like she could have shared with Uncle Rick. A few days earlier she had cleaned up her

car, and she remembered scooping them up with the trash, and she hadn't been able to find them since. It was just one of those little things in life that she had nobody to talk to about anymore.

Shortly after that, she sat down on the couch with a bag of chips and spilled them all over. As she reached down into the cushions to clean them up, there were her blue earrings. And she stopped and cried and felt noticed and cared for, because she knew it was God's way of showing her his power to be there in her loneliness. It was a new layer to God she hadn't seen before.

That's the key point to remember this morning: Whatever we face, whether it is loneliness or shame or physical pain or fear, no matter how big it is, God is bigger than big.

[CLICK]

Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you."

[CLICK]

Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

"I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off.

Isn't that great? David wasn't going to be pressured into fighting in a way that wasn't him.

When Karin and I first started dating, there were a lot of other guys interested in her. She also had this big football player brother and a dad who she was really close to, so I had this vague sense of needing to be something more than who I was. Mostly I felt the need to be a little taller, so you can imagine how much pressure that was. I spent the better part of a year trying to be somebody that I thought she wanted me to be. Finally, I got to a point where I couldn't do it anymore, and I told her "I've got to just be myself." And what do you know – our relationship got a whole lot better after that, because I wasn't pretending anymore.

God doesn't want us to pretend to be someone we aren't. We don't have to act like we're stronger or braver than we really are. Fighting his battles isn't about acting like we're tough or that we have a lot of faith. He can use us just as we are.

[CLICK]

Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

[CLICK]

Again, so we remember how real this battle was, you can still find that stream where he picked up those stones. It's pretty amazing to think about, isn't it? You can picture David looking into the water, scanning all the different rocks until he found some that were the right shape and size.

Just because David believed in God doesn't mean he didn't prepare for the battle he was about to face. He had a strategy and he carefully chose his weapons – his staff and his sling. You have to be really experienced to use a sling, but when you're good at it, it is said to be more accurate than a bow and arrow. The Bible says that at one time there was a group of Benjamites in the army who could sling stones at a hair and not miss. It wasn't just a kid's play toy. David had spent long hours getting good at using it.

And he had those five stones. He only used one of them – but he had back up in case he need it.

I think there's a lesson in that for us. We have weapons that we're going to need to know how to use for our struggles in life. And like David's weapons, they're somewhat unconventional. They're not what you'd expect to fight with.

But we said that what makes the difference in the battle is being able to see what's bigger than big. So the weapons we use will be weapons that help us to do that.

God has given us some very simple tools: Prayer and the Bible. They are the ways we do battle. And like a sling, it takes practice to use them. Like David with his five stones, we need to be over-prepared so we'll have what we need when we need it.

It's not always easy to read your Bible. It takes work to memorize verses. But we need to think of it as preparation for battle. If we don't spend time with Scripture, we won't have it in our arsenal when we need it. We'll reach for something to fight with, and we won't have anything there.

Try this experiment: Read a chapter today when you go home. You can even read 1 Samuel 17. Then see if God doesn't use it in your life in some situation you face this week. Once we incorporate God's word into our lives, he makes use of it there. He says in Isaiah,

[CLICK]

Isaiah 55:11

*So will the words that come out of my mouth
not come back empty-handed.*

*They'll do the work I sent them to do,
they'll complete the assignment I gave them.*

[CLICK]

As we take in the things God says, he uses them in our lives every time. His words become a weapon for us.

The same is true with prayer. When we spend time communicating with God, it opens up our eyes to be more aware of him.

Billy Graham is getting old now. He's probably the most famous preacher around the world. Millions of people have believed in Jesus because of his ministry. He's done some amazing things for God. But when he was asked what he would do differently as he looks back on his life, he said, "I would spend more time in Bible study and prayer."

It sounds so simple, but those are the key pieces that give us strength for our fight. There's no substitute for them. And we need practice using them if we want to be prepared to face the enemy.

[CLICK]

Meanwhile, the Philistine, with his shield bearer in front of him, kept coming closer to David. He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him. He said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. "Come here," he said, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field!"

[CLICK]

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will hand you over to me, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. Today I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds of the air and the beasts of the earth, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

The battle is the Lord's. That's the best line ever. God's way of dealing with things is different than ours. He doesn't win the way we expect – it's not by sword or spear. But it is his battle. It's his to fight, and he's going to win.

As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him.

[CLICK]

Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown on the ground.

So David triumphed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.

David ran to the battle. Back at the beginning of the story, everyone else was running away from it – but David ran to it. He knew he had nothing to fear and nothing to lose. He had full confidence in God.

I want to have that same confidence. No matter how big my battles, God is bigger. No matter how strong my fears, God is stronger.

God's people faced an enemy they couldn't beat, so God sent one young man to represent them and do battle for them. It sounds a lot like Jesus to me. We were caught in a deadlock with sin, and we couldn't win. So God found a most unlikely way to solve the problem. Jesus didn't come in and pound out a victory – he came and died in our place, and that unusual move dealt the final blow to Satan. Our enemy is defeated.

It's because of that ultimate victory that we can join with David in saying for sure that the battle is the Lord's. The outcome is already determined. God is bigger than big. Are we ready to fight like he has already won?

As we prepare to celebrate the Lord's Supper together, ask yourself:

[CLICK]

1. What are my Goliaths? What are the big battles that I'm facing right now? What fills me with fear?

[CLICK]

2. What am I seeing – big or bigger? Am I only seeing the situation right in front of me, or am I seeing the additional layers of God's purposes and his power?

[CLICK]

3. Am I preparing for the fight? What am I doing so that I will have the weapons I need when it comes time?

[CLICK]

4. Have I given the battle to the Lord? It's his to win. Am I trying to control it myself, or am I letting him have control?