

## The How Matters

Giants in Our Hands Week 4: 1 Samuel 24

9/30/18: PBO Campus

Welcome/intro/vision: GLAD TO BE BACK IN PBO!

New here? One church, two locations: Woods, PBO

One vision, one staff team, one budget, all with one goal: to connect people to God and to each other all across Chatham County and to engage Chatham County for good

We work together to love and serve Chatham County because we believe that God loves this place and we want to be a church that loves this place, too

This is week 4 of a series called giants in our hands

if you're just joining us we're talking about the fact that all of us at points in our lives have giant problems or challenges or opportunities that have power over our futures

Sometimes those giants are very personal like challenges in our relationships or at work, finances, medical stuff or addictions and patterns that you face

Or maybe there's a giant OPPORTUNITY for the direction of our careers and our futures but you're going to have to get through some hurdle to get there: like a job interview or the SAT's

And then there are other giants that we face as a community or a state as a nation that we have to deal with together--out in the eastern part of North Carolina they're digging out and recovering together from a GIANT storm—a GIANT project!

And across the country we've got other giants like racial and ethnic tensions and poverty and making sure that the laws we have in this country are just and right and fair for everyone

The proposal for this series is this: for many of us, **The quality and direction of our personal lives and of the places where we live, work and play will be decided by a couple of GIANT questions:**

### 1. Will you take on the giants or will you avoid them?

In my own life at times mastered the art of ducking my giants! Some of you have as well. Lots of us are very good at living in denial or just avoiding things, some of us have perfected this art!

Christian or not, religious person or not, most of us at some point along the way have seen a giant problem, situation or opportunity in our personal lives, in our work places or in our communities and decided to not see it anymore or just hope it goes away

And really for most of us the reason why we do that is because we do the wrong kind of math

We look at the giants we're facing, then we most naturally look at our own resources, skillsets and abilities and we do this math **I'm < the Giants**

the giants your staring down individually or that we're looking at as a country or a state or a county are all way bigger than me or you—and very often that's very, very true

But what the Scriptures invite us to do is to do a different KIND of math. The math that the Scriptures invite us to do is this: **God > the Giants**

That's why we pray. That's why we gather here today. That's why we sing. That's why we have hope even on our darkest days.

And that's why we don't run and hide: our God > the Giants

We're living in God's story, and God has invited us to step into the work he's prepared in advance for us to do

Sometimes that means God deciding that it's time for some giant to fall and that we're the ones to step in and deliver on it!

And that delivery question is key to the next part of this equation. It's not just will you tackle your giants or won't you, it's not even just are you doing the right kind of math

## **2. If you attempt to take on your giants, *how* will you do so?**

*The how matters.* When we're tackling a giant problem or situation or even opportunity that holds power of what kind of future you'll have

very often it's big and intimidating and very often it demands to be dealt with in a certain specific way

but when we fight the giant on the giant's terms, the giant almost always wins!

**THE HOW MATTERS:** And sometimes when we're taking on a giant, we get so desperate and eager for victory over that giant that we can forget the math equation that we've been called to participate in

And if GOD is the source of our courage then what that means is we're not allowed to do anything that would violate or undermine or go against the God that we're serving

It's not just that the giant falls, the HOW MATTERS

A couple of weeks ago we talked about how right here in Chatham county all around us, we've got kids who go to bed hungry all around us.

That's a giant problem that hangs over our whole county

And we announced here that together we're going to take on that giant problem in our community

And HOW we are going to do this is by partnering with local backpack programs in local elementary schools through our small groups, excited about this partnership and taking down this giant

Today, we're going to continue to work out the 'how' behind taking on giants as we continue to look at the life of one of the greatest characters in the whole Bible

His name is David, he's the greatest king in ancient Israel's history, and he's rather famous for being a giant slayer

in fact, if you're one of the five people who still watch the t.v. show Survivor, they called us back this summer and asked us if they could **riff off of our sermon series for this month: it's David v. Goliath this fall** for those of you who are Survivor fans

We looked at that David and Goliath story a couple of weeks ago, this week we're going to look at a different story from the life of David

Quick back ground: David was greatest king in ancient Israel's history about 1,000 B.C.

He was anointed king as a teenager after Israel's first king, king Saul, failed to honor God at a critical moment in his kingship

So David is anointed as king as a teenager and then he spends years and years and years of his life running for his life as king Saul hunts him down to kill him.

David's giant during this season of his life is that he's supposed to be king some day but meanwhile King Saul is dedicated to hunting him down and killing him—that puts my giant problems in perspective!

And ultimately David is going to become king some day, but today he's going to show us in a very clear and compelling way that HOW you conquer your giants matters.

That's what we're going to see as we look at a little part of David's story in 1 Samuel 24—Bible/no Bible

***After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, "David is in the Desert of En Gedi."<sup>2</sup> So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crag of the Wild Goats.***

3,000 MEN!! So David has maybe 500 men, Saul is bringing 3,000 men—which is perhaps a bit of an overkill! if you're ever hunted down by 3,000 men, be sure to shoot me a text, I'll pray for you!

this little detail shows us how rabid King Saul is about this whole finding and killing David thing!

**Here's a photo** of the Crag of the Wild Goats, still very similar to how it was 3,000 years ago, lots of caves, which comes in handy when you need a little privacy to go to the bathroom, which is exactly what happens next!

***<sup>3</sup> He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself.***

This is probably one of the greatest lines in the whole Bible, we don't hear about many bathroom trips in the Scriptures but whenever you do, you know that there's some fireworks about to happen and here they are:

***<sup>3</sup> He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave. <sup>4</sup> The men said, "This is the day the Lord spoke of when he said to you, 'I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.'"***

So let's set this scene: David has been on the run from king Saul for months and months, maybe even years at this point in the story

And Saul wants to kill him, everyone knows it

Now I want you to think about the person who has been your greatest enemy, your greatest nemesis, your greatest challenge in your life

And maybe they were awful to you, maybe they were even emotionally, verbally or even physically abusive to you

Maybe for a time, even right now, THEY were or are the giant problem in your life

And maybe you were a praying person in the midst of that season of your life and you're praying and praying and praying that God might do something to free you from this person

And then imagine after months and months and all kinds of prayer that you had the opportunity to deal with them once and for all in a definitive way that would free you from that person

Not kill them! today you'd go to jail for that! but just deal with them in a definitive, never bother you again ever ever kind of a way.

Would you take that opportunity? Whatever it looked like, in whatever way it came?

Would you maybe even say that God GAVE you this opportunity to deal with this person and this problem once and for all?

David and his men are way back in the back of this cave

Saul, David's great nemesis and the great giant obstacle between him and the kingship that God promised him is in about as vulnerable a position as he'll ever be in his life

And David's men speak to him what everyone looking on this story would say if they were on David's side of this conflict

“This is the day! God has answered your prayers! God has delivered you Saul in the squat position!”

We don't have a record of God saying this specific thing to David, but we do have all kinds of promises of God making David king some day

Saul is standing in the way of that promise being realized and here, in this moment, David has the perfect opportunity to SLAY THIS GIANT who's set out with 3,000! Men to slay him.

And his men, his friends, see it. And they speak back to David the promises of God in a way that sounds incredibly, incredibly convincing.

Because when we're up against a giant, ANY opportunity for that giant to fall, any WAY for that giant to fall, seems like a gift from God, especially when it looks like it'd be this easy

Here's what David does:

***Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul's robe.<sup>5</sup> Afterward, David was conscience-stricken for having cut off a corner of his robe.<sup>6</sup> He said to his men, "The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lay my hand on him; for he is the anointed of the Lord."<sup>7</sup> With these words David sharply rebuked his men and did not allow them to attack Saul. And Saul left the cave and went his way.***

A number of years ago I took what was then a new personality test called Strengths Finders the idea being that you find out what your strengths are and you try your best to lead with those as much as possible

And one of my top 5 strengths finders had a very nice name: Activator. Here's the definition of the **Activator**:

***People strong in the Activator theme can make things happen by turning thoughts into action. They are often impatient.***

I like the first sentence—yes, let's make thing happen!

But alas, that second is all too true of me as well—I'm not always terribly patient—I've always been in a bit of rush

I talk fast, my metabolism is fast, I like to get things moving—patience is not my forte!

Here's one of my favorite analogies that will show you a little something of how true this definition is

Remember the space shuttle launches you used to watch when you were a kid? Do you know when they burn the most fuel? Getting the thing off the launch pad. Once you get it up in the atmosphere, you can course correct all you want. The hard part is getting the thing moving.

And the same thing is true with churches and really anything that's worth doing—going from no movement to any movement is, in my book, very often, not always, better than having zero movement at all

**David here** demonstrates that he is NOT an activator! He's got a chance to turn the thought and idea of him becoming king into real ACTION

and he decides to not get his kingship started with an act of murder—he will not commit regicide

David has the giant in his hand and he has this one shining moment to put an end to this giant once and for all and to take his rightful place as king of Israel

And he won't do it. Because David's done the math, and the source of David's confidence is this equation: God > the giants

The Lord is the one who called him to be king, the Lord is the one who is fighting for him, the Lord is the one who David is here to serve

David's whole claim to kingship is based on the character and certainty of the Lord's presence with him and the LORD working for him and on his behalf

And so it's based on the LORD that David refuses to kill Saul—it has nothing to do with the Saul's character and everything to do with God's character

Look at how many times David references the LORD in this explanation to the men. Saul is still the Lord's anointed

God made Saul to be king and David is going to trust in God to depose him from his kingship whenever God is ready to do so

This giant WILL fall but this giant will not fall in this way, David will trust in the Lord for the timing and the results of all of this messy process

Because David knows that the HOW MATTERS.

If David is trusting in the promises of God to become king someday

then he will trust in the promises of God all along the way and he will ACT in keeping with the integrity that God would have him to demonstrate all along the way.

Because there are a couple of things happening here in this moment and both are critical for David's life--There are **two layers to this story**:

The **first layer that's happening is the outward action**, the running from Saul for his life, the opportunity to kill Saul and take the throne from him by force

That's what's happening on the surface of the story. And then just beneath the surface of the story is this **second, more important layer: who is David becoming underneath the action?**

If David achieves his God-given appointment to be king over Israel but he loses his God-centeredness on his way to getting there, what kind of a king would he have been?

Throughout the whole Bible, David is celebrated as the greatest king in Israel's history. He made plenty of stupid mistakes and did some awful things

But again and again underneath the outward activity, David takes this same posture he takes here in the cave:

God is > the giant problems he's facing; he's going to trust in God, wait on God, believe in God, and become the man that God intended him for to be in the beginning

I don't know what kinds of giants you're facing this morning, but I do know this: your story is unfolding with these same two layers to it

There is your outward action OR inaction if you're avoiding and hiding and running from your giants, that's part of the story

But then there's the question of who are you becoming underneath the activity? This deeper, more important layer to it

who we're becoming underneath all of that activity or inactivity, that's the bigger question, because that's what comes with us through every season of our lives

Throughout the course of our lives, our character is who and what we've cultivated ourselves to be while facing our giants, and that's what travels with us from one giant to the next

I want to suggest to you that God cares more about who you're becoming than what you're doing. The doing matters, the becoming matters more.

And because of that, the **HOW MATTERS. Because the HOW becomes a part of our WHO.**

How we handle our giants becomes a part of WHO we are and who we're becoming.

Because we start to practice and habituate how's, don't we? We habituate how's all along the way that become ingrained in our character

The HOW MATTERS because over time, eventually, the HOW becomes a part of our WHO

I spent many years growing up and into my young adulthood and into marriage avoiding and avoiding and avoiding conflict

What was my HOW when it came to conflict? I avoided it. Eventually, after years of that HOW, you know WHO I became? A full-fledged, full-blown conflict avoider, that was who I was

And then I met people who didn't do that. They handled conflict wonderfully. They could have hard conversations and be gracious and steady and strong without being rude or mean

And I started to learn from them *how* to do that kind of thing

And I've still got these avoider tendencies, but as I've changed my HOW, I'm changing my who. I'm not the conflict avoider I once was

Because God is greater than my giants, which frees me to from fear of my giants  
which frees me to re-think my how, which is re-making me over time  
Because the HOW eventually becomes a part of our WHO.

Question for you at this point is this:

1. **How has your past "how" shaped (for good or bad) your "who" today?**

If you look back HONESTLY on your life and REALLY HONESTLY EVALUATE how you've handled especially difficult situations, especially the giants you've been up against over the years  
how have your patterns of your how's shaped who you are, both for good and for bad?

David is working this out in real-time, at a critical juncture of his life when there's a short-cut that's oh-so-very-tempting

But he's cultivating a WHO that will demonstrate unparalleled character and God-centeredness in all of Israel's history and among all of Israel's kings

He is famous for being called the man after God's own heart. That's what kind of character he cultivated even amidst his bad decisions and his sinful decisions

David is making crazy faithful 'how' decisions that set him up for and pave the way for his WHO to become famous throughout all of history for the kind of man he becomes

And SOMETIMES that means that you have the giant in your hand and you RELEASE that giant because HOW that giant got there and what you would do with that Giant is outside the bounds and the scope of HOW God would have you to live and what he would have you to do and more importantly WHO God wants you to become

And so David refuses to take this shortcut, even though it's expedient, even though it seems like a nice and easy way to tackle this huge, life-threatening giant.

Here's how this story plays out, we'll go ahead and read the rest of it although we'll excerpt it a bit for time's sake, notice the role that the Lord plays as David recites to Saul what's happened:

***<sup>8</sup> Then David went out of the cave and called out to Saul, "My lord the king!" When Saul looked behind him, David bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground.***

***<sup>9</sup> He said to Saul, "Why do you listen when men say, 'David is bent on harming you'? <sup>10</sup> This day you have seen with your own eyes how the Lord delivered you into my hands in the cave. Some urged me to kill you, but I spared you; I said, 'I will not lay my hand on my lord, because***

**he is the Lord's anointed.'** [Who delivered Saul to David? The Lord did! The Lord put the giant in David's hand but he released him!]

**<sup>11</sup> See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you...I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life.**

**<sup>12</sup> May the Lord judge between you and me. And may the Lord avenge the wrongs you have done to me, but my hand will not touch you....<sup>5</sup> May the Lord be our judge and decide between us. May he consider my cause and uphold it; may he vindicate me by delivering me from your hand."**

Who will do the judging? The Lord. Who will bring justice? The Lord. Who will avenge any wrongs? The Lord.

This is the heart of WHO David is becoming on the other side of the HOW

Now on hearing David's voice, Saul has a moment of clarity and humility and repentance, here's what he says: x

**<sup>16</sup> When David finished saying this, Saul asked, "Is that your voice, David my son?" And he wept aloud. <sup>17</sup> "You are more righteous than I," he said. "You have treated me well, but I have treated you badly.**

**<sup>18</sup> ... the Lord delivered me into your hands, but you did not kill me.... May the Lord reward you well for the way you treated me today. <sup>20</sup> I know that you will surely be king and that the kingdom of Israel will be established in your hands.**

**<sup>21</sup> Now swear to me by the Lord that you will not kill off my descendants or wipe out my name from my father's family." <sup>22</sup> So David gave his oath to Saul. Then Saul returned home, but David and his men went up to the stronghold.**

And unfortunately for all parties, this isn't the end of it. Saul will continue to chase after David for many, many, many more months ahead

And David's kingship won't be fully realized for quite some time ahead—until Saul dies in a battle and word gets out to David that his time has come

And when David's time comes, the man that David has become is more God-centered than any other king in Israel's history

His stories and poems and book of prayers which make up most of Psalms will teach us more about how to trust God than just about anyone else other than Jesus himself

Where does that kind of wisdom and knowledge and understanding come from?

It comes from decisions like these, when David passed on a HOW that looked really good from afar but that he had the wisdom to see right through and understand that it would undermine him and his relationship with God

And that was what he was betting the farm on—this equation: GOD > my giants, God was the one David was trusting in to bring him to the place God had promised him

THEREFORE he was not going to violate God's principles or priorities or commands in order to get EVEN what was rightfully his!

The HOW MATTERS: HOW David became king was as or more important THAN he became king  
Because eventually the HOW becomes a WHO. Eventually OUR HOW's become our WHO's

David decided in all of this to put it in God's hands, and that positioned him for an imperfect lifetime of HOW's that shaped one extraordinary WHO

**Today's TAKE-WITH:** your wildly important take-home question to help you to integrate what happens here on Sunday mornings and apply it into the rest of your life:

***How might God > Your Giants shape your "how" in order to participate in God's "who" work in you?***

Not a God person: so glad you're here! The reason why I am and so many of us are around you is that we've met a God who is greater than our giants who loves us and who is for us

And who ultimately was so committed to taking down the giants of sin and death for us that he put on flesh, became a man, and died on a cross to take away our sins

And on the third day he rose again from the dead to conquer death

So that the giant problems of sin and death might no longer have the last word over our lives, over all of humanity

And so we declare that God is > all our giants, and we invite you to know this God and let him shape how you tackle and deal with the giants in your own life

Of course many of us ARE God people, and we believe at some level that God is greater than our giants

We sing songs about it, we'd say we believe it—but then we go out that door and we've got these giants and we act like we're functional atheists

We forget that God is greater than our giants and that if we're willing to walk in God's ways and follow God's leads he's faithful and good to make us into the men and women he intended for us to be in the beginning.