

THE ART OF BATTLING GIANTS

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

1 Samuel 16 & 17

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I. Introduction to this Study

With this study we embark on a four-week focus on the art of battling giants. The study and messages come from the Bible and draw on some themes and relevant thoughts derived from the best-selling book by Malcolm Gladwell entitled *David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants*. My hope is that you will gain a deep and meaningful understanding of how faith in God enables you to confidently, boldly, and courageously face the threats that loom large in your life, and how God shapes you through engaging the giants. This is more than an intellectual exercise. I trust it will be a life- and faith-transforming experience, giving you a keener awareness of God's power and your abilities that God can use for the benefit of others and to the honor of the Lord Jesus.

II. Connecting with One Another

What have been the most menacing, threatening "giants" you have faced in your life? How have those experiences changed you? **(Remember to only disclose what you are comfortable disclosing)**

III. Study the Text

- a. To set the stage for this study, read through 1 Samuel 16.
- b. What strikes you about the person God selects to be anointed as king to replace Saul? Note: the term "ruddy" in the NIV can mean "reddish" or "flushed" or "healthy looking") Refer to verse 7 - what are David's "credentials" that qualify him to be the leader of the people of Israel? In contrast to David, what has become of Saul according to verse 14? (see also 1 Samuel 15.10-11) **Note:** it seems odd that God would send an "evil spirit" into Saul. This can be translated "bad spirit" or some kind of malady. It can also suggest that God allows a demonic spirit to take control of Saul. It's hard to understand fully but two things remain: 1) God is ultimately in control - even over demonic spirits, and 2) God's ways are not our ways, but all things serve his purposes.
- c. Chapter 16 ends with David serving Saul. What sense of David's character and "ego strength" do you get from verses 19-23?
- d. Now continue into 1 Samuel 17.1-51. What clues do you find in verses 1 - 32 that God is orchestrating things? What sense of his abilities does David have according to verses 33-37? How were his previous experiences used to build his confidence in those abilities? Why do you think David rejects the typical armor and weaponry (verses 38-39) and opts for the sling and stones (verse 40)? **Note:** Slings were common weapons used by armies at this time, and, at that hands of skillful "slingers", could be lethal against targets as far away as 400 yards. Malcolm Gladwell suggests that David was

"changing the rules" of warfare engagement at this point. What do you think about that idea?

- e. Goliath is described in verses 4-11. He is the Philistine's "champion" which is the one who would fight one of the enemy's warriors to determine which side will have the victory. How is he described? **Note:** if a shekel weighs about 2/5 of an ounce Goliath's armor would weigh about 125 pounds and the tip of his spear about 8 pounds. He is a veritable fighting machine of epic proportion.
- f. Goliath defies the ranks of Israel (verse 10). Is there a connection with his defiance of the troops and defiance of their God? What is the condition of the Israelite army according to verse 11?
- g. Back to David. Upon what is David's confidence of victory based according to 1) verses 34-37 and 2) verses 45-47? How would you describe David's faith and reliance upon God as he faces the overpowering and overwhelming threat of Goliath? What is suggested about David's wisdom in his choosing to battle Goliath by using an alternate approach? **Note:** It would be expected that he engage Goliath in the same manner Goliath is prepared for - spears, swords, armor, etc. in "hand-to-hand" combat.
- h. Goliath approaches, David approaches. The battle is imminent. What risk is David taking as he approaches Goliath (verses 48 and 49) with just a sling and five stones? What might have happened if the stone simply glanced off Goliath's helmet and its protective nosepiece? What if the stunned giant suddenly awoke just before David could end his life? What does this suggest about David's willingness to take risk in order to carry out what God has led him to do?
- i. What does this encounter of the shepherd boy, David, against the giant, threatening warrior, Goliath, convey about 1) seeking wisdom in battling giants; 2) utilizing the strengths and abilities you have in that battle; 3) seeking alternative solutions when facing threats or giants?
- j. How do you think this experience transformed David? How did it prepare him to step into the role of king of Israel? (look at 1 Chronicles 15.8-25 or so... David's song of thanks when the Ark of the Covenant is returned to Jerusalem)
- k. If you have time, look at Philippians 4.12-13. How can Paul be content in any and every set of circumstances - some wonderful and others deplorable? What was his experience of God's strength in those varying experiences? How does this encourage you?
- l. One last reference - Joshua 1.1-9. What is promised to Joshua as he stands on the bank of the Jordan River preparing to lead the people of Israel into the land promised to them? Notice verse 9 is in the form of a direct command: "Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go." How do this promise/command and the experience of God's strength in all circumstances encourage you as you face the threats that loom large in your life?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. What are the threats that loom large in your life today?

- b. How can you apply the promise of God's strength, God's wisdom and guidance, and God's presence and power to those threats?
- c. Are there ways you can more confidently rely on God's help as you face these giants?

V. Pray

- a. Ask God for the help - guidance, wisdom, confidence, courage, etc. - that you need as you face the threats that loom large.
- b. Pray for the patience and openness as God seeks to shape you and deepen your faith through your battles with giants.
- c. Pray for Good Shepherd as we face the giant of seeking dismissal from the PC(USA) and affiliation with ECO: A Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians. Ask for a gracious separation without contention or challenge as the Presbytery votes on May 31st regarding our request for dismissal.
- d. Pray for Good Shepherd as we enter a time of pastoral and other staff transitions. Ask God to give our Session wisdom as it processes the recommendations from the Staffing Consultant we have been working with.
- e. Give thanks to God whose power raised Jesus from the dead and whose power also works in and through our circumstances.