

Natalie W. Bell
June 23, 2024

Facing Our Giants
1 Samuel 17:4-11, 23, 32-49

And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was four^[a] cubits and a span. ⁵ He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. ⁶ He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. ⁷ The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron, and his shield-bearer went before him. ⁸ He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose^[b] a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. ⁹ If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants, but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." ¹⁰ And the Philistine said, "Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together." ¹¹ When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

²³ *As David talked with them, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.*

³² *David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." ³³ Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth." ³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father, and whenever a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth, and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God." ³⁷ David said, "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you!" Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. ³⁹ David strapped Saul's sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I am not used to them." So David removed them. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the wadi and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.*

⁴¹ *The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him.* ⁴² *When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance.* ⁴³ *The Philistine said to David, “Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?” And the Philistine cursed David by his gods.* ⁴⁴ *The Philistine said to David, “Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field.”* ⁴⁵ *But David said to the Philistine, “You come to me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.* ⁴⁶ *This very day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head, and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel* ⁴⁷ *and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not save by sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hand.”*

⁴⁸ *When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine.* ⁴⁹ *David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.*

Did you ever see the *movie Hoosiers*?

It was a 1986 film about a small-town Indiana high school basketball team that went from nothing to win the state championship in 1952, when all high schools in Indiana, regardless of size, competed in one state championship.

The Hickory team has hardship, a coach with a spotty past, and players that are not always committed. And this classic underdog, in the final moments of the championship game, watches one of their unexpected players, Bobby Plump, make a game-winning shot to win the title, 42–40.

Think of all the great underdog movies— Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Slumdog Millionaire, Erin Brockovich, Rudy...

Don’t we love it when the [underdog wins](#)?

Research shows that people often root for the underdog. ***Why?***

Researchers believe that those who are viewed as disadvantaged, increase people’s ***sense of fairness and justice***.

Using both sports and politics, researchers in 2007 asked participants to react to various scenarios, and people favored the underdog in almost every situation.

(Psych Central News, Dec 24, 2007)

Do YOU ever root for the underdog?

How often have YOU *FELT like* an underdog?
 Haven't we *all been in a place where the odds are against us?*
 And we're fighting with giants—giants like worry, doubt, fear,
 Or maybe prejudice, or discrimination?

*Haven't we felt a lot like the Israelites looking across a valley at Goliath?
 It certainly didn't look good for David.*

The Israelites and Philistines met in the Valley of Elah to battle.
 And everyday for 40 days, Goliath would go to the battle line, and trash talk Israel!
 The Philistines were a larger people, and Goliath was HUGE!
 He was at least 6 ½ feet tall, and wore bronze armor that weighed over 100lbs!
 He was formidable!

*For 40 days, Goliath said, Choose a man to fight me, and if I defeat your man in
 battle, you will become our servants!*

And in verse 11 it says that Saul and the Israelites, "*were terrified*".

Meanwhile, little shepherd boy David was sent by his father
 to check up on his older brothers ...
 and when he heard Goliath,
he wasn't afraid—he was ready to fight!

David says: *who is this...Philistine,
 that he should defy the armies of the living God?....
 "Let no one's heart fail because of him;
 your servant will go and fight with this Philistine."*

Saul first says that *David is too small, and too young.*
 Then, Saul tries to *put his own armor on the boy.*
 But David decides to fight *on his own terms.*
 And he WINS.

So, HOW did David win?

Well, first, David didn't give into any *fear.*
 And he didn't *try to be someone or something he was not.*
 If we look at the story closely, we find that David's *focus* was different.
 He had a *different perspective than the rest of the Israelites.*

Malcolm Gladwell has a great book entitled "*David and Goliath*",
 And he suggests that we look at these 'David and Goliath stories' all wrong.

The giants are *not always who they seem to be*.
And it's *not always about the size* of the opponents.

In fact, sometimes *the 'strength' of the giant is also the source of his WEAKNESS*.

Some have even suggested that Goliath was so big, and so covered in armor, that he was slow and sluggish, he couldn't really fight well.
Whereas David was lean, quick, unencumbered.

Gladwell also suggests that the underdog wins because he's willing to look at the battle *from a NEW perspective*, and **FIGHT DIFFERENTLY**.

In his book, he writes about Vivek Ranadivé, who decided to coach his daughter's basketball team in California-- A bunch of inexperienced 12 year-old girls. He saw how typical basketball teams were playing the game, and he decided to play in a new way. Occasionally, teams would play on a full-court press—but only for a few minutes. He decided to play full-court *all the time!* He trained the girls to be outstanding athletes, By telling them that *their ATTITUDE would take them farther than anything....* and they made it all the way to a national championship!
Malcolm Gladwell, "David and Goliath Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants", Back Bay: NY, 2013, pgs. 6-39.

What if David won by fighting differently?

From a different *perspective*, with a different *focus*?

David was not focused on Goliath.

He was **FOCUSED ON GOD**.

His faith was in God---not even himself or his own skills.

His heart and mind were centered on God.

From the moment he heard Goliath

David focused on what GOD could do!

David remembered what God had done for him before.

How God had rescued him from the lions and bears.

Which is interesting—because all throughout the Bible,

God reminds people of what he's done for them, saying:

"I am the Lord your God---who brought you out of Egypt!"

*What if WE could change our perspective?
 What would that mean with the giants YOU are facing today?
 And what about giants we are facing together as a church?*

What if instead of focusing on the giant—
 we focused on *God, who can fight for us?*
 Some of you may have seen a plaque in my office that says:
***“Don’t look at the MOUNTAIN,
 Look at the one who can MOVE it!***

I remember hearing:
***There are NO hopeless situations,
 Only people who are hopeless IN their situations!***

Or the humorous words, like:
“If you have to swallow a FROG, don’t stare at it too long!”

What giants are causing YOU to feel afraid?
 It might help to be reminded, that our God is not the author of fear.
2 Timothy 1:7 says: *“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, love
 and sound mind.”*
 And **1 John 4:18** says *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear*

***We have been given STRENGTH by God—
 And yet, even Jesus had to deal with the fear of his disciples, all the time!***
 Remember how they panicked when storms hit their boat?
 So, what did Jesus do?
 He calmed the sea, and calmed their fears.

We ALL have giants we face.
 It might be health or money, work, or family concerns.
 It might be a lack thereof.
 It might be a difficult relationship, or the grief of losing one.
 It might be prejudice or discrimination.

***June is PRIDE month—when we remember our LGBTQ brothers and sisters,
 And the struggles they face.***
 Talk about Giants.
 Over 510 anti-LGBTQ bills have come up across the country in the past year,
 Trying to cut gender healthcare, or gender books in schools.

These friends regularly face hatred, and discrimination,
 Even hate-filled assault or death--
 Just for their identity or orientation!
 We as followers of Jesus Christ are called *to stand up with and for them*,
 Because they are beloved children of God.
 How can we fight the Goliaths with them? Even more? Even better?

Gladwell says that *Giants can INTRODUCE us to ourselves.*
Crises do not have to BREAK us—they can MAKE us---
 They can show us *who we really are!*

And *who are we*, as followers of Jesus Christ?
 We are beloved children of God,
 Filled with the *POWER of the Holy Spirit!*
 And God regularly uses the underdog to win the greatest battles!

Max Lucado writes, in his book, “Facing Your Giants”:
What odds did David have against his giant?
Better odds perhaps than you give yourself against yours.
Your Goliath doesn’t carry sword or shield;
he brandishes blades of unemployment, abandonment, sexual abuse, or depression.
Your giant doesn’t parade up and down the hills of Elah;
he prances through your office, your bedroom, your classroom.
He brings bills you can’t pay, grades you can’t make, people you can’t please,
alcohol you can’t resist.....a past you can’t shake, and a future you can’t face.
The God who made a miracle out of David stands ready to make one out of you.
Max Lucado, Facing Your Giants, Thomas Nelson:2010.

What if we faced our giants, FOCUSED on God!
 You know, in this passage, David makes 9 references to God.
 But he only talks about Goliath 2 times.
 God-thoughts outnumber Goliath-thoughts 9-2.
 How does this ratio compare with your thoughts?
 Do you think about ***God’s power in your life more than your giants?***
 Do you ponder ***God’s grace more than your guilt?***

Friends, hear the Good News of the Gospel today,
 We all have giants to face, But if we turn our ***focus to God,***
 God can turn our fear—into faith. And we can win the battles!
 And for this, all God’s people can say together, Amen.