



Session 3: David & Goliath

Introduction

A website focused on business, entrepreneurs, and life coaching listed these “[Five Powerful Life Lessons from David and Goliath:](#)”

1. Be bigger than your fears
2. Size doesn't matter
3. Make use of what you already have
4. Believe it's possible
5. Don't underestimate your capabilities

What are some reasons why people find this story so inspirational?

David Fights Goliath

1 Samuel 17:1-58

Learning Activity: Actor/Actress for a Day

Today each small group will “play the role” of a character(s) in 1 Samuel 17. You will not be responsible for physically acting anything out, but you will be responsible for speaking for this character(s). “Put yourself in their shoes” and keep these questions in mind:

- Who exactly are you? Where did you come from? Where have you appeared before in 1 Samuel or the Bible (if anywhere)?
- What did you do in this chapter? Why did you do it?
- How did you interact with others in this chapter?

Your task will be four-fold:

1. Research or refresh your memory on some basics about your character from this chapter or perhaps other parts of the Bible. For that, look at the background notes for each character and look up other Bible passages listed there (if applicable).

2. Come up with at least two questions you have about other characters/events which were confusing or intriguing to you, which you can ask someone else. To clarify, these could be questions explicitly answered in the text, but they could also be questions implicit in the text, or questions not even hinted in the text.
3. Anticipate some questions others will ask you (esp. how or why you did what you did), and come up with some preliminary answers. To clarify again, these could be questions explicitly answered in the text, but they don't have to be. You may have to use your imagination a bit.
4. Appoint a person who will primarily (but not exclusively) speak for your group.

General Background Notes:

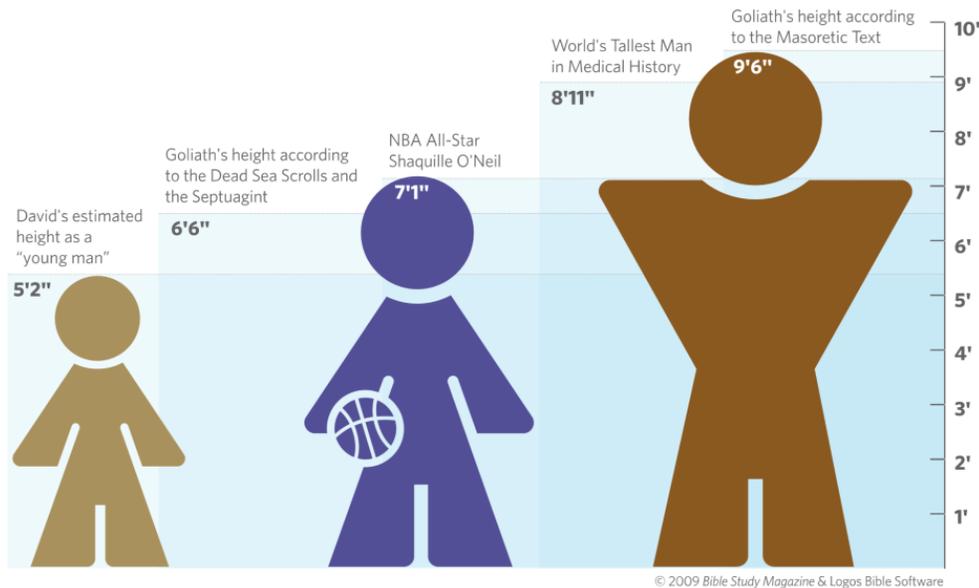
- *The Valley of Elah was an extremely important valley going through the foothills which connected Gath to Jerusalem. It continued to be of military importance until the Assyrian period. The Philistines are probably reacting against their defeat at Jonathan's hands (chapter 14). The location between Socoh and Azekah is only about 15 miles west of Bethlehem. The Philistines are pushing back into the hill country, controlled by the Israelites, although the location is generally around the border between the Philistines and Israelites. At this time the Philistines have the upper hand.*
- *From 13:16-22, it seems the Philistines had a monopoly on metalworking at this time. That's why the word "weaver's rod" is debated: it seems the Hebrews at this time had to make up a word to describe something they had not seen before. R.K. Harrison writes in Old Testament Times (p. 181), "Philistine military power had now reached such proportions that it threatened to disrupt the economic life of the Israelites, and a decisive victory in battle was an urgent necessity if Israel was to survive as a national entity. At this juncture David appeared as the champion of his people."*
- *The Archaeological Study Bible (p. 422) has this article regarding the ancient Near Eastern understanding of a "Battle by Champions," "The story of David and Goliath stands within the tradition of 'battle by champions' in the ancient Near East. Such battles differed from duels in that they had ramifications for entire armies or nations. The strongest member, or champion, of each party fought a similar representative of the opponent to the death, and the victory of one man vindicated the entire host [army]. Similar battles are found in [Egypt, Babylon, and Greece]. Second Samuel 2:12-16 also contains an account of a representative battle waged by 12 selected warriors. Such 'single combat' was practiced based upon the belief that the gods of each army actually fought or decided the battle. Therefore, only one 'champion' was needed from each side. The concept is clear in 1 Samuel 17:43-45, as both David and the Philistine call upon their respective gods. David's victory over the Philistine giant indeed proves that, against either pagan armies or false gods, 'the battle is the LORD's' (v. 47). Unlike those who trusted in the stature, strength and skill of their best warriors, Israel sent an untrained, ill-equipped boy into battle as its only willing champion. David himself, however, trusted in God's might rather than his own."*

Character #1: Goliath

Background Notes:

- See the chart below for Goliath's height.

A Man of Vast Bulk: Goliath's Height



Questions for others:

Anticipated questions from others & your possible answers:

Character #2: David

Background Notes:

- A "boy" or "young man" (17:33) in Hebrew refers to anyone under the age of 30, not necessarily a "grade-schooler" like we think of it.
- Slings at this time were actually quite powerful attackers. Slings were important weapons as the stones could be larger than baseballs. The point is not that David was not deadly, but that he attacked Goliath in a completely different way than Goliath was. Vs. 43 is more exaggerated rhetoric to intimidate David, as it was more false than true. Alfred Hoerth & John McRay write

in Bible Archaeology, p. 113-114, "This confrontation needs to be understood within the context of that day. Despite his bravado, Goliath knew David was approaching him with a deadly weapon. Slingers were common in the ancient Near East and the best ones could 'sling a stone at a hair and not miss' (Judges 20:16). The sling had an effective range of over 100 yards (91 meters) and the slingstone could be propelled in excess of 100 miles an hour. Clearly, both men were lethally armed, but David had the advantage of both mobility and range over any weapon the armor-clad Goliath carried."

Questions for others:

Anticipated questions from others & your possible answers:

Character #3: Eliab/Israelite Army

Background Notes:

- *For the introduction to Jesse's family, refer back to David's anointing in chapter 16.*
- *Samuel had predicted that the king of Israel would enlist the Israelites in his army and exact taxes on them (8:10-18). The words in 17:25 would be fulfilled in 18:17-27.*

Questions for others:

Anticipated questions from others & your possible answers:

Character #4: Saul

Background Notes:

- *Remember back to Saul's qualifications in 9:1-2, which were remarkably similar to Israel's original request for a king "like all the other nations" (8:5,20).*

Questions for others:

Anticipated questions from others & your possible answers:

Conclusion

Read this article, "[David vs. Goliath: We're Teaching the Story All Wrong](#)" on the Lutheran (LCMS) website/podcast 1517. What are the ways this story has been misunderstood in popular culture from its true emphasis?