

Series: Life's Defining Moments

VBC

Pastor John Johnson

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1 Samuel 17

“It Is Possible to Overcome Giants”

In his latest book, David and Goliath: Underdogs, Misfits, and the Art of Battling Giants, Malcolm Gladwell begins:

“*David and Goliath is a book about what happens when ordinary people confront giants*”

- be it a father coaching his daughter's basketball team against superior teams
- or a young man overcoming the disadvantages of dyslexia to become a successful trial lawyer

- or survivors in London during the blitzkrieg

- don't underestimate the power of the weak and marginalized

- with enough ingenuity, enough tenacity—underdogs can defeat their greatest obstacles

- that sounds a lot like the story in 1 Samuel 17—*but it is not!*

- the real David and Goliath story is about something else

- and if we miss it—we will be done in by giants*

- the storyteller intends to create great tension—but we are too familiar to probably notice—*we know how the movie ends*

- it opens on a battlefield—one about 15 miles east of Bethlehem, David's hometown—read verses 1-3

- there's a reason the Philistines are here—this valley offered a clear path to plunder Israel's harvest (SEE MAP)

- gaining entry—they would also gain access to the main north/south ridge route—which went to the main cities of Israel—Hebron, Jerusalem, Bethlehem

- things were at a standoff—something had to break—for a lot was on the line—read verses vs 4-7

- Goliath was the pride of Philistia—he is not called a giant—he is a benim—a “champion”—lit—“the man between”—*a single fighter who decides wars*

- Goliath carried piercing weapons—all optimized for close combat

- he was heavy infantry—covered with “scales”—like a snake

- emphasis is given to the details—the writer wants us to know Goliath was imposing

- massive enough to send shock waves, hearts reeling—read verses 8-11

- Goliath was a self-assured bully doing what men—self-possessed and full of themselves do—terrorize, make lots of noise, PLAY GOD

- but the only noise heard from Israel was the knocking of knees and the chattering of teeth*

-Saul would be the obvious fighter—he stood above everyone else—but he too cringed at the sight of Goliath

It's all backdrop—set up—for the hero—we assume it is David

-who does not fly in like Batman into Gotham

-does emerge as a champion wearing massive armor

-his entry is far more domestic and uninspiring

-David is the little brother going back and forth—whose main job was that of running errands—verses 14-19

-David is treated with contempt—verse 28

-Saul will meet David—but he is not too impressed either

-later on—Goliath will find David's appearance insulting—an affront to his capabilities
-this is the Seattle Seahawks finding Linfield on their schedule

-but David will not be dismissed—he is not content to be a curious bystander

-he will not run back every time Goliath roars—*like kids running and screaming back into shore before a big wave*

-David is not about to remain an errand boy—be defined by his daily chores

-be scorned by his older brothers—he wants in on this—why?

a) maybe it was the package deal Saul was promising the man who killed Goliath—verse 25

-big bucks, the king's daughter, and no obligation to fill out an income tax return on April 15

-apparently this impressed David—he inquired twice—26, 30

b) maybe David was just cocky enough, arrogant enough, self-assured enough—that he could take Goliath on—take him out

-it's not like he merely spent his time in his room playing Skyrim on his Xbox Machine

-he was a man of the field—taking on lions and bears—grabbing them by the fur and killing them—verse 35

c) maybe David had just read Gladwell's David and Goliath

-and was inspired by the stories of Vivek Ranadive, Teresa DeBrito and others—people who faced outsized challenges and overcame

-and David thought—I have a tactical advantage

-Goliath is heavy infantry—but I have speed and mobility

-I can take this man down in one second with one rock

BUT THESE ARE NOT the reasons David wants in

-he asserts himself in the story because HE KNOWS GOD!

-David is God's anointed—and when a man is anointed—set apart, infused by God, possessed by God, empowered by God, blessed by God, assigned by God

-he knows two things—

1. GIANTS ARE ILLUSIONS

-they may strut and intimidate and make lots of empty boasts—and play God
-but they are smoke and mirrors—the only power they draw from is the fear of others

-just like sin—that intrudes—but does not belong in this world

-Goliath is a gate crusher—who is nothing in and of himself—certainly—nothing before the living God

-everyone is amazed by Goliath—everyone but David—

-“Just who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?”—verse 26

-David uses earthy, coarse language to size him down

-“uncircumcised” is insulting as it gets—usually associated with someone who is uninitiated or unskilled or worse

-why would anyone who claims to know the living God be afraid of such types?

-fearing giants that mock God—that pretend to be God—doesn’t fit into David’s reality

-“Hey Israel—haven’t you learned anything—that appearance counts for nothing?”

-“Haven’t you learned from Saul, that just because a man is taller than everyone else does not mean he has substance?”

-but David is more than mystified by the fear of his armies

-he is incensed—enraged—by the actions of Goliath

-what man outside of a covenant relationship with God would dare to insult God’s people, assault the very character of God?

-how could anyone be so audacious—so foolhardy—as to want to take on God and His will and His ways?

-this is language coming out of a man radically aligned with the heart of God, the will of God, the glory of God

-a man JEALOUS for God—which explains why fear is completely absent in David’s life

-David knows giants are an illusion—he also knows—

2. GOD ALONE RULES

-and when a man gets this—giants take on dwarf-like proportion

-God is bigger than any of our giants—no, He is more than bigger—He is immeasurable, incalculable, limitless

-size does not apply

-“the nations (like giants) are as inconsequential as a drop, a speck in a bucket”—Isa 40

-too often we overestimate the size of our challenges because we underestimate the size of our God

-again—one can hear David asking—“Don’t you remember who brought you through the wilderness, parted the Red Sea, defeated the Egyptians, went ahead of Joshua, won the battle at Jabesh Gilead?”

-when we are overwhelmed by our fears—one can also hear God asking—
-don’t you remember Who went to the cross and conquered death and presently rules as the King of kings from heaven?

It’s at this point in the story David came face to face with his defining moment

-when faced with giants—there comes a moment one must take a stand—move with intentionality—read verse 32

-in this moment—everything was set in motion—this is no time for heart failure!!!

-and then—with undaunted courage, David said—I will go!

-there’s a time we wait on God—and there is a moment God waits on us

-there’s a moment you have to move from words to action

-maybe you in a similar moment—it’s been all talk—but it is time to act

-as the story affirms—David acted on his faith—read verses 45-50

-as Brueggemann notes—we have waited for 47 verses—and then the battle is over as soon as it begins

-rather than stand in fear—David acted with courage

-rather than run from Goliath—David pursued this giant

-two looping swings—one stone—it was over

CONCLUSION

In most of the biblical stories—there are giants—obstacles

-for Abraham—time became his giant—how long?

-for Jacob, it was a father in law; Moses it was Pharaoh; for Esther it was Haman; for Gideon it was the Midianites

-most of our giants are subtle—tramping back and forth on the silent battlefield of our souls

-for Samson—it was lust; for Saul—it was fear; for Elijah—it was depression; for Jonah—it was calling; for Peter—it was pride

-in all of our stories—there are giants as well

-they may be tangible—at our work, on our campus, even in our church

-an abusive boss, a difficult relationship

-church debts can feel like giants

-some work deep in our souls—

-like bitterness, jealousy, depression, loneliness, resentment, anxiety, guilt, fear

-often dressed to appear invulnerable, invincible

-and there comes a defining moment—will we succumb—or take them on?

-will we see them the way Israel saw them—as formidable and overwhelming...

-or will we see them the way David did?

-GIANTS ARE NOT THAT GIANT

-they make their demands—they want our fear

-they want to exhaust us

-but more often than not—they are like Wizard of Oz—all powerful until you look behind the curtain and see someone merely pulling levers

-the story calls us to ask some probing questions—

-are we shaped—more by our fears or by our God?

-are we relying on our ingenuity and courage—or are we living by God's power?

-are we living from our knees—or by our own strength?

-have we made this our battle—or do we see that it is His?

-what do you fear the most?

—LET'S PUT FEAR IN ITS PLACE

LG Questions

1. Can you name a giant in your life right now?
2. Can you sense David's jealousy for God. Do you feel that same jealousy?
3. How are you doing with worry and fear? Is there any place for them?