



1 Samuel 17 Small Group Study Material

- Being adaptable in using what God gives you to get a job done no matter how hard it looks.
- With God on your side the impossible is made possible.
- It is about how God's Spirit works through his people to achieve his purposes.

Discuss each of the above. A rule of thumb is that the main application should flow from the main point of the passage. Try and work out why some applications might be worse than others.

What does this passage tell you about

- God
- Trusting God
- Courage
- Fear

Have you ever been galvanised by your faith in God to attempt something that in human terms was beyond you?

Pray

This study has been written to accompany a sermon series at St Columb's Anglican Church Hawthorn. It is written for small group and personal study. It is meant as a resource so feel free to select the parts that are most useful to you or your group. It is advised that you at least do the section "Getting Inside the Passage," some parts of "Personal Application" and "Pray." The section "Going Further" will take you further into the 1 Samuel and the Bible as a whole.

With acknowledgement and thanks to Rev. Peter MacPherson
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Courage

Context

In Chapters 13 & 15 Saul has been told that because of his disobedience his family will not inherit the kingship. God directs Samuel to David as the next king in ch 16. David is only a young boy at this stage, the youngest of the 8 sons of Jesse who lives in Bethlehem. Nevertheless when he is anointed the Spirit of the Lord comes on him in power. In the second half of ch 16 he enters into royal service primarily because his harp playing soothes Saul's troubled spirit (16:14-23) It is important to note that the Spirit of the Lord has departed from Saul (16:14) but he would remain king for along time yet. This creates a tension between him and David which we will see described throughout the rest of 1 Samuel.

In ch 17 it appears that Saul does not know who David is. As with the gospels the strict chronology may have been changed to serve theological purposes. Thematically ch 17 links with all the previous chapters where there has been war with the Philistines (ch 4 -7; 9:16; 13-14) and especially ch 5 in which the Philistine fish-god, Dagon, is beheaded. The Philistines represent a constant threat to Israelite safety and the people's willingness to trust Yahweh. As we saw Saul lead his people to victory in ch 11 now we see the boy-king, David, do likewise. It is the first public indication that Saul has a serious contender.

Getting Inside the Passage

1-11 Goliath intimidates the Israelites. What is at stake?

12-24 David hears Goliath's challenge and see Israel's fear.

Is there any significance in the fact that this challenge has been going on for 40 days?

25-40 David accepts the challenge.

How would you describe David & Saul's relationship from this incident?

Why does David accept the challenge when others have not? nb.v 37

41-51 David's victory.

Is David's retort to Goliath just bravado or is there something deeper than that? What might it already tell us about his relationship with God? v 45-47

52-58 Israel's victory.

Why might Saul be interested in whose son David is? v 55-58

How does the contrast between Saul & David emerge from this incident?

What is the main message is point of David's victory over Goliath?

Going Further

This chapter is crucial in understanding the relationship of Saul and David. The critical turning point has come in the previous chapter:

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him (David) in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah. Now the Spirit of the LORD has departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the LORD tormented him. (1 Sam 16:13-14)

How does this change in God's anointing help us understand chapter 17?

Read 1 Sam 5 and see how the fall of Dagon in the presence of the Ark is the foreshadowing of the fall of Goliath.

It may appear that David is young and without fear. Later in life when he was fleeing from Saul and was in Philistine territory he was very much afraid (1 Sam 21:10-15). When he reflects on this in Ps 34 & 56 he shows that despite danger and fear he can trust God for his safety:

"When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me?"

Ps 56: 3-4

"All those who gathered here will know that it is not by the sword or the spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's and he will give all of you into our hands"

1 Sam 17:47

This is an important idea: that the battle is God's. It is not simply a battle that is happening in the human sphere of history. God's divine purposes are being worked out through his servants. This helps us to understand the idea of 'holy war' and particularly helps us in understanding 1 Sam 15 when the Amalekites are killed (also see 2 Chron 20:15)

Does this also help in understanding the New Testament idea of spiritual warfare? see 2 Cor 10:3-6 & Eph 6:10-18

Can you see any connections between David's defeat of Goliath and Jesus' defeat of Satan (Lk 4:1-13)

Personal Application

Is this story just too far away from our lives today to have any personal application?

Can you remember being taught the David & Goliath story as a child? Do you remember what you were told was the point of the story? Has your view changed now that you have read it again and read it in context with the earlier chapters of 1 Samuel?

Here are some possible applications to discuss.

The main application is:

- The victory of the underdog in the face of overwhelming opposition.
- The slaying of giants in our life (i.e. giant problems, negativity, hindrances etc)