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David and Goliath

1 Samuel 17:1–58 · Bud · Ages 9–12

In 1 Samuel 17, Israel and the Philistines face each other across the Valley of Elah in the hill country west of Bethlehem. The Philistines were a powerful coastal people with iron weapons, and they were Israel's most dangerous enemy.

Their champion is Goliath of Gath, a giant in a bronze helmet and heavy scale armor, with a massive spear and a soldier carrying his shield. Morning and evening for forty days he challenges Israel to send one man to fight him, winner takes all. He mocks Israel's army. King Saul, who stood a head taller than anyone in Israel, and all his soldiers are terrified.

David, the youngest of Jesse's eight sons, has already been secretly anointed by Samuel as the future king (1 Sam 16), but he is still tending sheep. Jesse sends him to the front with roasted grain and bread for his three oldest brothers, and cheeses for their commander. David hears Goliath and asks why anyone should be allowed to insult God's people this way. His oldest brother, Eliab, scolds him for showing off. David doesn't back down.

Saul sends for him. David tells the king that he has rescued lambs from lions and bears, and the Lord who saved him then will save him now. Saul tries to dress David in his own

armor and sword, but David isn't used to it and takes it off. He goes out with what he knows: his staff, his sling, and five stones, worn smooth by the stream, in his shepherd's bag.

Goliath sneers and calls on his own gods to curse David. David answers that Goliath is trusting in his weapons, but David is trusting in the Lord, the God whom Goliath has insulted. He is counting on God, not on his own strength or on any weapon, to win, and he wants every nation to see what the God of Israel can do.

David runs toward Goliath and slings a stone. It strikes the giant's forehead, and Goliath falls to the ground. David has no sword, so he takes Goliath's own and uses it to finish the fight. Goliath is dead. The Philistines flee, and Israel's army chases them.

The story isn't mainly about a brave boy. It's about trusting God when the odds look impossible. David is a sign of a greater Son of David to come, Jesus, who defeats sin and death not with an army but by trusting his Father completely.

Talk about it

1. Why were Saul and the Israelite army so afraid?
2. What did David say he was trusting in, instead of weapons?
3. What 'giant' might you face, and how could you trust God with it?

Key verse: 1 Sam 17:47. Look it up in your Bible.