

DAVID: A MAN OF PASSION AND DESTINY

STUDY FOUR

David and the Dwarf

1 Samuel 17:1–54

David stood before this massive creature unintimidated. That’s our battle when we face the giants. They intimidate us. We forget whom we represent. And standing there with our knees knocking, I wonder what God must think. He says, “My power is available. There’s no one on this earth greater than I. Trust Me.”

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EVERYONE loves an underdog story. When the slow-and-steady tortoise bests the quick-yet-careless hare, when the once last-place team hoists the championship trophy, when an employee in the mail room climbs the corporate ladder to CEO, you can’t help but smile seeing the payoff for all the hard work, patience, and determination.

History tells of no greater underdog than the shepherd boy named David. When Israel’s strongest warriors shrank under the threat of the giant Goliath, David stood tall, ready to fight for his people and his God. Though everyone doubted David’s chances, David fought Goliath anyway.

For what David lacked in strength and stature, he made up in faith.

The account of David and Goliath preserved in 1 Samuel 17:1–54 places the reader within the ranks of the army of Israel staring down Goliath. This *Searching the Scriptures* study will ask who the *real* giant is, and it will consider what it takes to have giant-sized faith.



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David and the Dwarf

1 Samuel 17:1–54



PREPARE YOUR HEART

The book of Psalms has preserved many of David’s songs for the people of God to sing. These songs touch every circumstance—joy and lament, prosperity and poverty, defeat and victory. Pray these words of victory from *Psalms 27:1–3* before you open God’s Word today.

*The LORD is my light and my salvation—
so why should I be afraid?
The LORD is my fortress, protecting me from danger,
so why should I tremble?
When evil people come to devour me,
when my enemies and foes attack me,
they will stumble and fall.
Though a mighty army surrounds me,
my heart will not be afraid.
Even if I am attacked,
I will remain confident.*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

If David’s life could teach one lesson, it would be, “People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart” (*1 Samuel 16:7*).

The people of Israel saw that Saul stood head-and-shoulders above everyone else, so they chose him to be their king. Those who knew David saw him just as a modest shepherd—*nothing special*. God, however, saw the hearts of these two men. He flipped the people’s expectations upside down and chose David to replace Saul as king because David had a heart for God.

When the Israelites beheld the enormous stature of their enemy Goliath, they proved once again that people look only at external appearances. When no one else in Israel believed that God would preserve His people, God knew that David had faith, and 1 Samuel 17:1–54 shows how God used this faith to fell even the giant Goliath.



David and the Dwarf

1 Samuel 17:1–54



Observation: The Physical Giant Goliath

Good observation requires a careful reading of the text, even when it's tempting to skip over familiar sections. Read *1 Samuel 17:1–54* slowly. Look at every word, answering the question, “What does this passage say?”¹

Goliath before Israel—1 Samuel 17:1–11

As the army of Israel stared down the Philistines on the opposite side of the Elah Valley, a lone man stepped out of the Philistine ranks and stood between the two armies. Their champion. Goliath. Describe the appearance of this figure in *1 Samuel 17:4–5*.



Searching the Scriptures Study Tool: Geographical Setting

Using a Bible *atlas*, locate the city of Gath, Goliath's home. To see a satellite image of the Valley of Elah, a diagram of the possible site of the battle between David and Goliath, and photographs of the valley, see “*The Valley of Elah*” at biblewalks.com.

What challenge did Goliath pose to the Israelites in *17:8–9*? How did Saul—along with the rest of Israel's warriors—respond in *17:11* to Goliath's challenge? (See also *17:24*.)



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David before Saul—1 Samuel 17:12–39

While his brothers joined the fray, David stayed behind to tend to the flocks. But David's father Jesse sent him to bring his brothers supplies. What did David say to Saul in *1 Samuel 17:32* after first seeing Goliath? How did Saul respond to David in *17:33*?

According to *17:34–36*, what evidence did David offer to convince Saul that he could fight Goliath? According to *17:37*, what was the *real* reason for David's confidence?

I imagine about now David was blinking and thinking, "What giant? The only giant in my life is God. God doesn't fight on the basis of size and intelligence. God is omnipotent! And if He's on my side, I can't lose." Saul hadn't learned that. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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David before Goliath—1 Samuel 17:40–54

King Saul offered David what help he could—from his weapons to his personal armor. But David rejected Saul's assistance and chose to fight Goliath using only his shepherd's staff, his sling, and five smooth stones. When David—looking small and unprepared for battle—approached Goliath, what was Goliath's impression of David according to *1 Samuel 17:42–44*?

In one or two sentences, summarize David's address to Goliath in *17:45–47*. (Note how often David mentions God!)

Goliath may have stood taller than any man David had ever encountered, but David felled him with a perfectly timed shot from his sling. None who witnessed this battle would have bet on David outmatching Goliath's strength. No, David could not have won this battle on his own. And David himself admitted this fact, declaring, "This is the LORD's battle" (17:47).



David and the Dwarf

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Interpretation: The Spiritual Giant David

In *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs*, Pastor Chuck Swindoll described the benefit of good Bible study. He writes, “You’ll become more stable in your faith; you’ll be able to stand on your own as you master the science of interpretation.”²

The account of David’s miraculous triumph over Goliath is more than a fanciful myth or a tall tale designed simply to tell a good story. Rather, it was a *real* event whose record God chose to preserve in His Word to teach His people timeless theological truths upon which they can stand.

While Goliath was the most intimidating Philistine, Saul was the strongest and tallest Israelite. That’s why he was king! Yet when Goliath demanded a champion from Israel, the king hid behind the shepherd. How did Saul’s attitude contrast with David’s in this episode with Goliath? What do their differing attitudes reveal about their faith in God?

What timeless theological truths can believers in Jesus Christ learn from this passage? How is David’s example instructive for Christians who face impossible circumstances today?

Hindsight gives a lot of insight. When you look back, you always know a better way. Unless you’re David. David had the character it took to see the present as though seeing with hindsight. What a wise young man! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Fighting the Real Battle

A thousand years after the life of David, God would send a new champion to fight on behalf of his people—His own son, Jesus Christ. Yet Jesus did not come to battle for wealth and land. Rather, He entered the fray to win *souls* back from sin and death, and He fought to defend God’s purposes and plan against Satan’s schemes.

Read *Matthew 16:13–19*. What powerful confession did Peter make about Jesus’ identity?

What truth did Jesus share with Peter about the church and its battle against the powers of hell, the *true* giant at war with His people?

God magnifies His name when we are weak. You don’t have to be eloquent or strong or handsome or beautiful or brilliant to be blessed by God. All He asks of you is that you trust Him, that you stand before Him in integrity and faith, and He’ll pick up the pieces.

—Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Facing Goliaths Today

God's people encounter their own unique "giants"—impossibly huge challenges—every day. Regarding these giants, the following application principles still ring true:

1. *Facing giants is an intimidating experience.*
2. *Doing battle is a lonely experience.*
3. *Trusting God is a stabilizing experience.*
4. *Winning victories is a memorable experience.*

In the space below, record a time you experienced victory through your faith in God. How did this experience shape your perspective, allowing you to see your circumstances more clearly from God's perspective the next time you faced hardship?

What giants do you face today?



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How can you lean on your Christian community as you face your giants? Remember, you never are alone because Christ is with you in the fight. What are some practical ways you can show your trust in Him amid these difficulties?

Through his faith in God, David proved to be the *true* giant who would conquer the spiritually weak Goliath. Some may think their current circumstances are so hard that they'd *rather* face Goliath. But no matter how great the giant, God is greater. And He will give you the strength to face that challenge. All He asks is that you trust Him.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I praise You because You are greater than my harshest doubts, my biggest worries, and my most fearsome enemies. Increase my faith, and help me remember this truth when I feel too small to face the challenges of this life. Give me the courage to face whatever giants threaten me today and to trust You each step of the way. I ask these things in Jesus' mighty name. Amen.

ENDNOTES

1. To learn about Pastor Chuck Swindoll's *Searching the Scriptures* method of Bible study, go to the web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](#)."
2. Charles R. Swindoll, *Searching the Scriptures: Find the Nourishment Your Soul Needs* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2016), 110.



