



Unit .11

Session .01

A Shepherd Slays a Giant

Scripture



1 Samuel 16:7; 17:23, 26,34-37,45-51

7 But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or his stature because I have rejected him. Humans do not see what the Lord sees, for humans see what is visible, but the Lord sees the heart.” ... **23** While he was speaking with them, suddenly the champion named Goliath, the Philistine from Gath, came forward from the Philistine battle line and shouted his usual words, which David heard. ... **26** David spoke to the men who were standing with him: “What will be done for the man who kills that Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Just who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?” ... **34** David answered Saul: “Your servant has been tending his father’s sheep. Whenever a lion or a bear came and carried off a lamb from the flock, **35** I went after it, struck it down, and rescued the lamb from its mouth. If it reared up against me, I would grab it by its fur, strike it down, and kill it. **36** Your servant has killed lions and bears; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God.” **37** Then David said, “The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.” Saul said to David, “Go, and may the

LORD be with you.” ... **45** David said to the Philistine: “You come against me with a sword, spear, and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of Armies, the God of the ranks of Israel—you have defied him. **46** Today, the LORD will hand you over to me. Today, I’ll strike you down, remove your head, and give the corpses of the Philistine camp to the birds of the sky and the wild creatures of the earth. Then all the world will know that Israel has a God, **47** and this whole assembly will know that it is not by sword or by spear that the LORD saves, for the battle is the LORD’s. He will hand you over to us.” **48** When the Philistine started forward to attack him, David ran quickly to the battle line to meet the Philistine. **49** David put his hand in the bag, took out a stone, slung it, and hit the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell facedown to the ground. **50** David defeated the Philistine with a sling and a stone. David overpowered the Philistine and killed him without having a sword. **51** David ran and stood over him. He grabbed the Philistine’s sword, pulled it from its sheath, and used it to kill him. Then he cut off his head. When the Philistines saw that their hero was dead, they fled.

Intro Options



Main Point:
God is looking for a king
who reflects His heart and
will fight for His people.

Option 1

Split your crew into small groups or individuals. Tell each group they have been put in charge of issuing Time magazine's next "Person of the Year" issue. They should decide who that person should be and give reasons why. Give them some time to prepare their people and reasons, and then have each group share.

Now tell them they have the same assignment again, but for a different magazine: Eternity. Eternity is heaven's version of Time; they have to issue the Eternity "Person of the Year" issue (it's just like Time's "Person of the Year," but it's from a heavenly perspective). Give them time to consider their person and their reasons, and then they should share them.

How did the people and reasons differ between Time and Eternity? Talk about how the world often judges people by their outward appearance, accomplishments and status, but God judges people by their heart. We'll see one such example in the king whom God chooses.

Option 2

Ask each student to share his or her favorite Bible passage and why.

After each student has gone, point out which students shared passages about God delivering his people (e.g., the Passover). Then point out which students loved their Bible stories because they wanted to be like a figure in that story (maybe someone wanted to be a good leader like Moses). Point out which students loved their Bible stories because they loved its portrayal of God or Jesus.

Tell the students that our lesson today has a very familiar Bible story; that lesson will point out several ways we should use great Bible stories: to trust in the Lord because of his past victories; to imitate good examples of faith; and to see and love Jesus more. Connect these ideas to as many of the students' passages as you can.

TEACHING PLAN

In the previous session, we saw how the Israel's first king, Saul, failed to live up to God's standard and the expectations of God's people. In the middle of the Book of 1 Samuel, after the prophet Samuel confronted Saul about his disobedience, the narrative transitions from the story of Saul to the story of David.

God sent Samuel on a mission to find the next king of Israel. In 1 Samuel 16:1-13, we see a man named Jesse present seven of his sons before Samuel during this time. Eliab was the oldest of Jesse's sons, so he came forward first, looking as kingly as possible. Samuel took one look at him and thought he had found his man—good-looking, tall, and strong. Definitely kingly material. God, however, was unimpressed. Eliab's appearance, height, and stature did not even register as relevant qualities.

One by one we read that each of the seven sons that Jesse initially presented was rejected. We are not given specific reasons why, only that while outwardly they may have seemed qualified, God weighed their hearts and found them lacking. One by one, Jesse trotted his sons out, and one by one, Samuel shot them down.

Read 1 Samuel 16:7.



- **What are some expectations our culture usually holds for those who will become effective leaders?**

The Lord sees through outward strength and physique. While there is nothing wrong with these, they don't impress Him. Instead, He looks at the heart. Samuel finally asked about the youngest son. David was a shepherd, which was not a coveted position in Israel. He was also the smallest, perhaps to the point Jesse didn't even think his youngest son could be a king. The text implies that David was outwardly unimpressive, even to those who knew him best. No one who saw David that day imagined that they were looking at perhaps the greatest king Israel would see. Why? Because they all judged him by the world's standards. They were taking an outside-in approach, one which would have placed Eliab, and even Saul, above David when it came to choosing a king. But the Lord judged David by a different standard, a higher and truer one: He began with his heart.

- **What are some snap judgments we tend to make about others based on their appearance? How does this account warn us against misjudging others?**
- **How is the truth that “God looks at the heart” both bad news and good news for you?**

After David was anointed the future king of Israel (1 Sam. 16), we next see him in battle against a horrendous warrior named Goliath. The author's aim was to demonstrate why it was fitting that David should replace Saul as the nation's ruler. God was going to give the Israelites a glimpse at their future king, to see faithfulness on the inside manifest itself on the outside.

The account took place in the Valley of Elah where Israel's army, including David's brothers, was encamped against the Philistines. Jesse sent his son to visit his brothers, see about their well-being, and take them supplies (1 Sam. 17:17-19).

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God is looking for a king
who reflects His heart and
will fight for His people.

1 Samuel 16

6-7. Saul had looked like a king, and clearly, Eliab looked like one as well. Had Samuel anointed him and proclaimed to all of Israel, “Behold, King Eliab!” no one would have been shocked. But isn’t that the problem?

Each of us has a picture—a standard in our mind—of what a king should look like. We all see certain qualities as essential for someone to be successful in leadership. They need to be good looking or athletic or intellectually inclined or skilled in some particular field. In fact, we prefer they have all of these qualities, and perhaps even more. Why is that? Because we are quick to judge people, and other things, strictly by appearance. This is how the world measures value and success, and it is often how we do too. You might call this the outside-in approach to life: if someone looks good, they must be good. If they look powerful and strong and courageous on the outside, then they must be that way on the inside. The key to a better interior life is to have a better exterior life, at least according to the world.

The Bible speaks of the heart as the center of who we are. It’s not less than our emotions, but it’s certainly more than our emotions. The heart drives all that we do: our motives, intentions, and desires all reside in our heart, which is why we are told in Proverbs to guard our heart above all (Prov. 4:23). This is what God sees. He doesn’t merely look at a person—He looks into a person. He takes an inside-out, not an outside-in approach like we take. When God looked through Eliab’s impressive exterior, He didn’t see the interior He desired. We aren’t told why; we are just told that Eliab wasn’t chosen as king. But when God looked through David’s modest exterior—youngest of the brothers—He saw something different. He saw something He desired in the one who would be Israel’s next king.

This is where the Lord always starts. He pursues the deepest part of who we are, which is why we must labor to guard our hearts. We should have a constant awareness of our motivations, our emotions, and our internal struggles with temptation and sin. We should invite others to ask us hard questions concerning our hearts so that we can fight where the battle really takes place, on the inside. The greatest threat to our spiritual life is nothing “out there.” Rather it’s “in here,” which is why our hearts demand our time and attention above all else.



99 Essential Doctrines *(p. 32, DDG)*

Christ as King

God has always been King over His creation, whether in heaven or on earth. Yet some of His creatures in both realms have rebelled against Him, leaving destruction in their wake. To restore His broken world, God promised a King who would deliver His people and restore all of creation. The promise of a coming King finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ and looks forward to its perfection when Jesus returns for His bride, the church.

TEACHING PLAN

For the past forty days, David's brothers—along with the rest of Saul's army—had been idly watching and listening to Goliath shout against Israel in defiance, taunting them to send one of their best men to fight him. Whoever won would win the battle for his people. Verse 23 is where David entered the fray:

Read 1 Samuel 17:23,26,34-37.



In this scene, we observe something different about David, something radical. His immediate desire to take action demonstrates the depth of his trust in the Lord. David would stop at nothing to put an end to Goliath's mockery of the living God. David believed that the same God who delivered him from the bear and lion would also deliver him from Goliath. But David also knew this would not be automatic: he would have to fight. He would have to gather stones, take a stand before Goliath, and face the giant who mocked his God. This is how it happened in the wilderness before. Yes, the Lord delivered him, but the Lord's deliverance came through David's action. That is what trust looks like.


- **What are some areas where you need to step out and demonstrate your trust in God through action?**


At first, Saul would not allow David to face Goliath and for good reason: Goliath had challenged one warrior to face him in a "winner take all" contest. If Saul marched David out to battle Goliath and he lost, which appeared to be the certain outcome of the battle, the young shepherd would not be the only loser. The Philistines would have defeated the Israelites. But Saul would relent, and David would go out to face Goliath in one of the briefest yet most epic battles in Scripture.

Read 1 Samuel 17:45-51.



People today love to use this as an analogy about the underdog: no matter the odds, you can do it! Just believe in yourself! Sadly, this misses the point. God does not want us to read this story and come away with a cocky assurance that given the right confidence, we can achieve whatever we set our minds to. Yes, we can glean insight from David's courage and how he overcame insurmountable odds. But that's not the main point of the story.

The entire scene of David's conflict with Goliath is cast in the light of representative warfare. When David took on Goliath, it was not merely one man against another; this was Israel and Philistia squaring off. What's more, the battle between Israel and Philistia represented the struggle between their gods, as both David and Goliath mentioned in their taunting monologues. And when David won, the entire nation of Israel shared in his representative victory, even though they did nothing to earn it themselves. 

In David, we see a picture of courageous faith in God's power. We also catch a glimpse of the bigger story of the Bible and of the coming King whom no one would have expected or chosen to win the victory, but through His death and resurrection, He is mighty to save. 

- **What are some giants in your life right now? How can the work of Christ in your place give you the courage to face them?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God is looking for a king
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1 Samuel 17

45-51. David offers us a great model of faith in this moment, but we know that he was far from being a perfect king. He was sinful and in need of a Savior, just like we are. Later, he would make this abundantly clear in his affair with Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband Uriah. No, we cannot hold up David as our ultimate example; we need a better one, a perfect one. And thankfully, as we look further into redemptive history, we find One. We have the luxury of knowing in full what the author of 1 Samuel knew only in part. We are aware that a greater David would come one day. Many years later, David's descendant would come into the world and do what David did but to an even greater degree. We have much to learn from David: his bravery, his faith, his zeal for God's name. These are all qualities that we should (and must) imitate. But if we stop there, we miss the (redemptive) forest for the (moral) trees. We fall into the works-based trap of trying to muster from within ourselves the attributes we need to possess—those that God says He is looking for. And in doing so, we will experience nothing but failure and frustration. We will miss the better way; we will miss the true King who God has put forth for us and the One who did for us what David did for Israel.

Activity

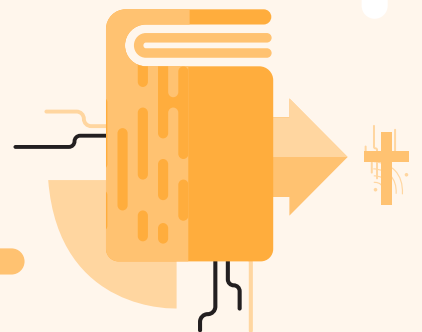
Have your students come up with a list of as many real-world problems as they can. They should list each problem on its own index card or Post-It note. These problems can be personal (a friend who constantly lies, financial difficulty) or global (air pollution in a city, human trafficking). Collect all the problems and put them into a hat or box labeled "Goliaths."

Next split your students into small groups or individuals. Pass out one problem to each group or individual. Once they've seen what problem they've been assigned, they should prepare two solutions for that problem. The first solution should be the "Israelite" or "Saul" solution: a solution that trusts in man and not in God. The second solution should be the "David" solution: a solution that trusts in God, not in man. Students can either state or act out their solutions based on time or preferences.

Afterward, debrief: how did the two solutions differ? How does trusting in the Lord's deliverance look radically different from relying solely on human power? How can we exercise such trust in our lives?

(p. 34, DDG) Christ Connection

In David, we see a picture of an unexpected warrior and king. David defeated a seemingly unbeatable enemy with courageous faith in God's power. Jesus is the greater King who no one expected to win the victory over sin and death, but through His death and resurrection, He is mighty to save.



Our Mission

God's Story has always been designed to connect with our story. It is because of His Story that our stories make sense, have meaning, and carry on into eternity. Use the questions below to help think through how His Story connects with your own. Suggested answers to these questions can be found on the right-hand side of the page for leaders.

Head



What was it about David's past and experience that fueled his confidence in the Lord?

How can the victories you have seen God accomplish in the past strengthen you for future battles?

Heart



Who did Jesus regularly call out in the New Testament for appearing to be one thing on the outside but completely opposite within?

When have you judged someone strictly by the world's standards? Why did you?

Hands



How might this story challenge the way you live this week?

How can you, like David, seek to make God's name and glory known to others this week?

Main Point:
**God is looking for a king
who reflects His heart and
will fight for His people.**



Head

David's confidence in God did not begin that day in the Valley of Elah. Long before he ever faced Goliath, David encountered lions and bears while tending sheep in the wilderness. Before he could defend the house of Israel, he first learned to defend his father's flock. On those occasions, David learned to trust in the Lord and lean into His strength, not his own. Even though he was likely a skilled fighter (which we see when he fought Goliath), David never boasted in his own strength. He was clear to credit the Lord as the One who rescued him from the lion and the bear.

This is important for us to remember. As soon as we see an enemy or a trial approaching, before we look ahead and develop a battle plan, we must first look behind on what God has done in the past. We should reach into the rich archive of victories the Lord has won for us to find the courage and ability to press on into the challenge before us. Looking back in this way can provide the confidence and hope we need for any new battle before us.



Heart

The Pharisees were impeccable on the outside. Their spiritual and religious disciplines were second to none in their day (and ours). Few of us are familiar with the kind of devotion the Pharisees gave to their traditions and rituals, and not many of us could measure up to it. But that wasn't their problem. In fact, Jesus never critiqued them for their meticulous standards. Their problem was that they cared so much about the outside and so little about the inside. This is why Jesus criticized them: for neglecting their inner life and for thinking that God was somehow swayed by external appearances. Yet, before we condemn the Pharisees, we should turn our gaze to our lives. We often do the same, focusing on our appearance or behavior instead of our hearts. We believe we are good with God because we attend worship, read our Bibles, give charitably, or abstain from certain behaviors. But that is not what God is after. He is after our hearts. So be careful about picking up that stone—you might need to notice you are standing in a glass house.



Hands

As God's people who have been given new hearts and transformed characters through a relationship with Christ, we should seek to live out this transformation in front of those around us, pursuing them with the same message of grace that found us when we were lost in our sins. In a similar way that David was jealous for God's name and glory, we too should seek to make much of Christ and His salvation by pointing others to His great name and glory.