

**Introduction:** Back in the day, I was big into drawing portraits. I spent uncounted hours honing the craft and one key lesson stuck with me: it's all about the dance between light and dark. The best portraits, I learned early on, aren't just about nailing the features but bringing them off the page. You need that contrast, the play of light and shadow, it's what makes a face pop, gives it depth and gives the illusion of a 3-dimensional image on a two-dimensional surface. Just like a portrait needs its light and dark to come to life, the best stories draw stark contrasts.

The story of David and Goliath is a lesson in contrasts.

**Age and Experience:** A fresh-faced youth contrasted with an older cynical king and a battle-hardened giant.

**Weapons and Armor:** Slings, stones and shepherd staffs contrasted with heavy armor and conventional weaponry.

**Faith and Trust in God:** Faith is contrasted with fear, humility is contrasted with the hubris of a giant who worships a false god.

**Motivation:** While no one seems particularly interested in the honor and glory of Yahweh, the true God, David fights for the glory and honor of his God and country.

**Outcomes:** David is victorious, God's enemies are defeated, and everyone knows that Saul is washed up.

Main Idea: David teaches us that the trials we face reveal and refine our character.

1 Samuel 17:1–11 The Philistines set up camp at Socoh in Judah, facing the Israelites in the Valley of Elah. Goliath, a towering champion from Gath, challenged the Israelite army. He stood at nine feet, nine inches, clad in bronze armor weighing 125 pounds, with a spear and shield-bearer. Goliath proposed a one-on-one duel, striking fear in Saul and the Israelites. If an Israelite won, the Philistines would serve them; if Goliath won, vice versa. The Israelites, intimidated, lost their courage in the face of Goliath's audacious challenge.

Verses 8–11 read: He stood and shouted to the Israelite battle formations, "Why do you come out to line up in battle formation?" He asked them, "Am I not a Philistine and are you not servants of Saul? Choose one of your men and have him come down against me.<sup>9</sup> If he wins in a fight against me and kills me, we will be your servants. But if I win against him and kill him, then you will be our servants and serve us."<sup>10</sup> Then the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel today. Send me a man so we can fight each other!"<sup>11</sup> When Saul and all Israel heard these words from the Philistine, they lost their courage and were terrified.

David was the youngest of Jesse's sons Eliab, Abinadab, and Shammah—who were soldiers in Saul's army. David appears to be alternating between serving Saul and tending his father's flock in Bethlehem. For forty days, the Philistine champion came forward twice daily. Jesse instructed David to take provisions to his brothers at the battlefield. David obeyed, arriving at the camp just as the armies were deploying. Leaving his supplies with the quartermaster, David ran to the battle line to get a closer look. At Goliath's terrifying presence, the Israelites retreated in fear. Previously, a reward had been offered for anyone who could defeat Goliath, promising wealth, the king's daughter in marriage, and tax exemption for the victor's family.

David is intrigued by the promise of a reward for slaying the giant. As he asks around for confirmation of the King's reward, David's eldest brother, Eliab, grows angry, accusing David of arrogance and a malicious heart, but the news of his inquiry reaches the King's ear, and he is summoned.

We pick up the story in verse 32

David said to Saul, “Don’t let anyone be discouraged by him; your servant will go and fight this Philistine!”<sup>33</sup> But Saul replied, “You can’t go fight this Philistine. You’re just a youth, and he’s been a warrior since he was young.” Remember what God said to Samuel last week—men size other men up by their outward appearance. We measure the man by what we can see. But God measures the man by the size of his heart.

<sup>34</sup>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,<sup>35</sup> 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.<sup>36</sup> 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.”<sup>37</sup> 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.” Now, if you were to go there today you will not see a lot of wildlife scattered across the ranges on the land—at this time, however, you would see lions, bears and wolves all over the place, especially around sheep. David pulls out his resume and lets the king know, “I may not have military fighting experience—but don’t take me for some spineless lightweight. I not only chased the predators away, but I would also pursue them and kill them.”

Saul said to David, “Go, and may the Lord be with you.”<sup>38</sup> Then Saul had his own military clothes put on David. He put a bronze helmet on David’s head and had him put on armor.<sup>39</sup> David strapped his sword on over the military clothes and tried to walk, but he was not used to them. “I can’t walk in these,” David said to Saul, “I’m not used to them.” So David took them off.<sup>40</sup> Instead, he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the wadi and put them in the pouch, in his shepherd’s bag. Then, with his sling in his hand, he approached the Philistine. Conventional armaments do not fit David. And they don’t seem to fit the moment either. And David knows it. We often think of David with a sling and a rock whirring above his head as he releases the stone into the forehead of this Philistine titan. But he actually brings both the sling and his staff. The humble armaments of a shepherd defending his flock.

And notice Goliath’s response to this absurd scene:<sup>41</sup> The Philistine came closer and closer to David, with the shield-bearer in front of him.<sup>42</sup> When the Philistine looked and saw David, he despised him because he was just a youth, healthy and handsome.<sup>43</sup> He said to David, “Am I a dog that you come against me with sticks?” Then he cursed David by his gods.<sup>44</sup> “Come here,” the Philistine called to David, “and I’ll give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts!” Goliath is embarrassed for David, and frankly offended by this absurd sight of a shepherd boy coming at him with a sling and a staff. Should be an easy victory—one swift stroke from his sword, or one thrust of the spear and Israel will belong to Philistia. Finally.

David also responds at the sight of the giant;<sup>45</sup> 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 (*YHWH Sebaiyot*), the God of the ranks of Israel—you have defied him.<sup>46</sup> 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,<sup>47</sup> 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.” See, Saul and Israel’s armies think they have a Goliath problem. Goliath thinks he has no problem—certainly not this pip squeak in front him. But David knows the truth—God’s enemies have a God problem. And as we’ve said so many times before, it bears repeating as often as we can—*If you’ve got a God-problem, then you don’t have a more pressing matter to address.* Goliath doesn’t realize that he isn’t facing off against the runt of Jesse’s litter, he’s facing off against God’s anointed man—and the Lord of Armies will bring swift victory.

<sup>48</sup>When the Philistine started forward to attack him, David ran quickly to the battle line to meet the Philistine.<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup> David defeated the

Philistine with a sling and a stone. David overpowered the Philistine and killed him without having a sword. <sup>51</sup>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. <sup>52</sup>The men of Israel and Judah rallied, shouting their battle cry, and chased the Philistines to the entrance of the valley and to the gates of Ekron.<sup>[k]</sup> Philistine bodies were strewn all along the Shaaraim road to Gath and Ekron. Growing up I always pictured the Giant dying from the stone tunneling into his forehead, but actually, the stone only knocks him down face first—probably permanently damaging his brain—then, David takes Goliath's own sword and kills him by taking off his head.

Now notice that Goliath falls before David just as the idol Dagon had fallen years earlier before the Ark of the Covenant. Face down, losing his head. The imagery is unmistakable—the one true God of heaven defeats the false gods of Philistia.

The story ends and David has secured his place in the royal court...the shepherd will become the Son-in-law of the king, and the brother-in-law to the prince, Jonathan.

<sup>53</sup>When the Israelites returned from the pursuit of the Philistines, they plundered their camps. <sup>54</sup>David took Goliath's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put Goliath's weapons in his own tent. <sup>55</sup>When Saul had seen David going out to confront the Philistine, he asked Abner the commander of the army, "Whose son is this youth, Abner?" "Your Majesty, as surely as you live, I don't know," Abner replied. <sup>56</sup>The king said, "Find out whose son this young man is!" <sup>57</sup>When David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head still in his hand. <sup>58</sup>Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" "The son of your servant Jesse of Bethlehem," David answered.

**From this story we see one unmistakable principle...**

**Every trial we face reveals and can refine our character.** This story reveals the character and the relative strength or weakness of everyone involved. Did the moment make the man or had the man already been made?

**Illustration: Think of a Thermometer, it reveals the temperature but does not change it.**

A **Barometer** reveals atmospheric pressure but doesn't create it.

A **Seismometer** measures ground vibrations (earthquakes) but does not cause them.

A **Hygrometer** reveals humidity but does not add or remove moisture.

A **Geiger Counter** detects ionizing radiation but does not emit radiation.

A **Photometer** reveals light intensity but the instrument itself does not emit light.

And a **Flux Capacitor** is what makes time travel possible (just wanted to see if you were still listening).

**The trial of Goliath merely reveals that David is already the man that he needs to be in this moment—a man after God's heart, a man of courage and commitment, and a man of faith** and devotion to his God. David answered Saul, v.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."<sup>37</sup> 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"...<sup>45</sup> 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."<sup>46</sup> Today, the Lord will hand you over to me." David seems utterly flummoxed when responding to Goliath. "You mean to tell me that all you brought to this fight was size, strength, clad in the most sophisticated armaments mankind has to offer? Really?" David comes in the name of the LORD of Armies. Then he tells Goliath, "Yeah, this is how it's going down. First, I'm gonna kill you. I'm going to cut off your head, feed your and the Philistine carcasses to the buzzards and vultures today."

The text and the contest reveals that David already practiced being rescued by God.

**Illus. My wife loves to get out her Christmas mugs every year around this time. And they are super fun. But some of them are quite large, so I typically don't drink big vats of coffee out of them in the morning.** Now suppose we played a little game—guess what's in the Christmas mug? You could guess "eggnog" or maybe "Hot apple cider," or "hot cocoa," or "punch." Now, you keep guessing Christmas season drinks, and finally I reveal what's in the cup. I begin to violently shake it in the middle of the kitchen—and you see that all water comes sloshing and splashing out of it. What happened? Two things—you judged the contents by its appearance. And, you discovered its contents by the shaking of it.

And that's what happens to everyone in this story—the people who, by outward appearances, look like battle-hardened, experienced warriors are terrified of Goliath. And the one person who doesn't look like much (and looks like he shouldn't even be there) is revealed through the test to be a colossus of faith and trust in the LORD. David has spent his days as a boy shepherd preparing for the big dance. Courageously fighting lesser foes, and walking with his God, and trusting God to rescue him.

**Notice what Paul says about the hour of trial that comes upon all of us:** Eph 6:13 "For this reason take up the full armor of God, so that you may be able to resist **in the evil day**, and having prepared everything, to take your stand."

What "day" of evil is he talking about? There are two:

**(1) Any day when it seems like the forces of hell are unleashed on your life.** Daily we fight the battles against wallowing in our suffering, nursing our wounds and resentments, gossip, lust and dishonesty. But all of those routine skirmishes build our character in preparation for a day in the future where all hell breaks loose on us—and it seems as though we’ve entered a season where temptation is unusually intense, and everything seems to be hitting us all at once.

**(2) A “day” in the future when an Anti-Christ figure will be revealed who will bring mass persecution on the people of God before the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ.** I just don’t know how Paul could be more clear on this issue of Christ’s coming, our being gathered to him, and the signs that necessarily precede that event: 2 Thess 2:1–4 “Now concerning *the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* and our being *gathered to him*: We ask you, brothers and sisters, <sup>2</sup>not to be easily upset or troubled, either by a prophecy or by a message or by a letter supposedly from us, alleging that *the day of the Lord* has come. <sup>3</sup>Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way. For *that day* will not come unless *the apostasy comes first* and *the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man* doomed to destruction. <sup>4</sup>He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he sits in God’s temple, proclaiming that he himself is God.”

We fight the routine skirmishes of faith so that, like David, we might be ready for the big day—when an unusual season of trial by fire visits us; and so that we might be found faithful when whole denominations, scores of local churches, entire theological seminaries and divinity schools are denying the core tenets of the Christian faith.

Routine challenges forge in us the faith we will need for major tests that often arrive unexpectedly. You’ve heard the saying, “How you do anything is how you do everything.” To put it in David’s context, “How we face the small challenges is predictive of how we’ll handle the larger tests.” The decisions we make in those seemingly insignificant, routine contests of faith determine our character when we face those trials which are life-altering, or even faith-threatening.

The trial of Goliath doesn’t make David, it only makes him much more the man he already is—a man of unwavering devotion to his God, faith and courage as the avenger of his flocks, and now he stands before the most dangerous, formidable foe he could face in life—a man who embodies all the powers of hell against God’s chosen people.

And he’s ready.

**Application: How about you? Will you be ready to make your stand on that day?**

**What does your response to this present darkness in your life reveal about the state of your faith in Christ?**

**What steps can you take to begin to prepare your life and heart to meet the challenges for the future?**