



David: A Faith That Meets Adversity Head-on

The Point: Faith moves with confidence in God.

The Passage: 1 Samuel 17:3-8; 32-37; 45-47 (CSB)

Date: Sunday, September 13, 2026

OPENING QUESTION: What's the most chaotic day you've had in recent weeks? What made it chaotic? What difference do you notice in your day when you have spent time with the Lord vs. not spending that time with Him?

No one knows what a day will bring, but we're certainly better off facing challenges when we've spent time with God beforehand. We're told in Scripture that David was a man after God's own heart. That heart for God was developed in the grazing fields of his father's flocks. It was soon to be challenged by its greatest adversary yet.

GUIDE: Call attention to **The Point:** *Faith moves with confidence in God.*

PRAY: Transition into the study by thanking God that we can have confidence in Him. Ask Him to help us walk in that confidence, individually and as a group.

STUDY THE BIBLE

READ: 1 SAMUEL 17:3-8

³The Philistines were standing on one hill, and the Israelites were standing on another hill with a ravine between them. ⁴Then a champion named Goliath, from Gath, came out from the Philistine camp. He was nine feet, nine inches tall ⁵and wore a bronze helmet and bronze scale armor that weighed one hundred twenty-five pounds. ⁶There was bronze armor on his shins, and a bronze javelin was slung between his shoulders. ⁷His spear shaft was like a weaver's beam, and the iron point of his spear weighed fifteen pounds. In addition, a shield-bearer was walking in front of him. ⁸He 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."

Recap: Soldiers put their faith in their training, their weapons, their team, and their cause.

Victory depends upon training, leadership, and knowing the enemy and attacking its weaknesses. The Israelite and Philistine armies knew this tried-and-true principle. These armies camped across the valley from each other. Stalemate seemed to be the order of the day.

Psychological warfare can reveal your enemies' weaknesses and help break stalemates. The Philistines' most powerful psychological weapon was one man. Although he lived thousands of years ago, his name still brings fear into the hearts of men: Goliath. Adversity comes in all shapes and sizes. Israel's adversary was one man from the ranks of the Philistines, one whom the Israelite soldiers had only seen in their worst nightmares until now.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for these verses to describe Goliath and the Philistines

Recap: *Faith in the wrong things can be like a squirrel's zig-zag path rather than a strong faith in God, represented by a straight line through adversity. The object of our faith reveals our faith. Our actions or inaction reveal the size of our faith. Don't put your faith in a uniform or in a leader. King Saul turned out to be lacking in faith for his men. We'll soon see how this stalemate ended.*

Discuss: **When have you seen adversity be an opportunity for someone to display their faith?**

When have you been faced with a challenge you felt you couldn't overcome?

Transition: Adversity provides the opportunity to display our faith. In the next verses, we see that past experiences can grow our faith.

1 SAMUEL 17:32-37

³² David said to Saul, "Don't let anyone be discouraged by him; your servant will go and fight this Philistine!" ³³ 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." 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."

Recap: *The stalemate between Israel and the Philistines had extended past forty days. Every day, the armies stood in formation hearing the same threats from Goliath. When would this end?*

Finally, a young man with a strong faith in God entered Israel's camp. David, the son of Jesse, had three older brothers who were in Saul's army. His father sent him to deliver food to his brothers. David heard the pagan giant's taunts and asked what would happen to the man who killed Goliath. This question put him in the presence of King Saul.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for these verses to explain the context of this passage.

Recap: Saul's farewell blessing seemed half-hearted at best. He had little faith that David could accomplish this seemingly impossible task. In hindsight, it's easy to be critical of King Saul. He had a great army with many battle-hardened warriors, yet none wanted to fight Goliath. But this young shepherd, David, knew God's power; Goliath didn't stand a chance.

Discuss: What past experiences have prepared you to face current challenges?

What strikes you most about David's speech in this passage?

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Use the "Short Testimonies" option to help the group share their own stories of faith like David.

"Short Testimonies" - In advance, give everyone a piece of paper and pen. Point to David's approach of four sentences:

1. Context
2. Fearful situation
3. The truth of what happened
4. Place faith in God's ability to do it again.

Encourage them to use David's four-sentence model (1 Sam. 17:34-37) as an example for how to record their own stories of faith. Give them time to complete it and then invite people to share with the group and marvel at what God has done.

Transition: In the next verses, we see that in the face of adversity, faith moves us forward.

READ: 1 SAMUEL 17:45-47

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.

PRAY: Consider prayer requests people in the group have lifted up in light of this passage. Invite the group to stop and pray for those individuals in the name of the LORD of Armies, that God would overcome the giants they face.

Recap: Did David's brothers know about their younger brother's plan? If so, did they try to stop him?

Those details aren't contained in the narrative. David did reject the use of Saul's military clothes and weapons. Instead, he scooped up five smooth stones and stepped out of the faithless crowd of soldiers into the role of a national hero whose fame remains today.

GUIDE: Use the commentary for the verses on the next page of the Leader Guide to explain how David called upon the name of the "LORD of Armies."

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): Complete the “Facing the Giants” activity to help the group consider the giants they face.

Facing the Giants. Like David, we all face “giants” as God develops our faith. Put a mark beside the types of giants you’ve encountered. Then answer the question.

_____ Physical _____ Financial _____ Spiritual
_____ Relational _____ Career _____ Community
_____ Other _____

Pick one of these giants. How has God helped you grow in faith through that experience? (What are the tools God has made available to us for overcoming these giants?)

Recap: Jesus described faith in Matthew 17:20: “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will tell this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move.” Think of David. Goliath was a mountain of a man, and God “moved it” with the faith of David.

David’s fight was the Lord’s fight. David was the giant, a giant in faith. Goliath never had a chance.

Discuss: What do you appreciate about David’s faith during this encounter?

What are some ways God has taught you that the battle is His?

LIVE IT OUT

Faith moves with confidence in God. Choose one of the following applications.

Remember. Think back to the times in your life when you faced adversity and hardships. Did your response reveal weak or strong faith? Did your actions reflect God’s Word? Trust God to keep His word as you pray and ask God for greater faith in adversity.

Review. How did God respond when you showed strong faith? Remember how wonderful it felt for God to act on behalf of your faith? Don’t hesitate to continue to trust God as your faith grows. Journal the victories God has given you.

Relationship. Your relationship with God will mature along with your faith. Teach others to strengthen their relationship with God through Scripture, prayer, and personal experience. Spend time mentoring someone who is working on his or her faith journey.

Pray: Thank God for helping us face our giants. Ask Him to give us boldness to share of His grace and victorious glory with others.

COMMENTARY

1 Samuel 17:3-8

Connection to The Point: The Israelite army faced a great challenge from Goliath.

The Philistines (v. 3). The Bible first mentions the Philistines in Genesis 10:14 in what is called the Table of Nations. After that, both Abraham and Isaac are described as having related to the Philistines at different times in their lives (Gen. 20:1-2; 26:1).

A ravine between them (v. 3). As the armies of Israel and the Philistines prepared to go to battle, they stood on opposite hills with a *ravine*—probably a wadi, a dry riverbed—dividing them. Just as there was a physical chasm between the two armies, there was also a spiritual chasm of fear (v. 11). It was into this valley, both physically and metaphorically, that the Lord’s anointed stepped forward in order to overcome the Israelites’ fear through a demonstration of faith in the power of the Lord to overcome even the most overwhelming enemy.

Goliath (vv. 4-5). The first probable reference to giants in the Bible is in Genesis 6:4 where the Nephilim are mentioned. These men, whose name is derived from the Hebrew word for “fall,” were likely giants. They serve as an example of the rampant sin and resultant fallen state of the world that led to God sending the great flood. The next example of giants comes when Moses sent the spies into the promised land in the book of Numbers. The spies returned with reports that giants were in the land. Showing a lack of faith, the people of Israel feared the giants instead of trusting the Lord. This sinful fear drove them to disobey the Lord. As a result of their disobedience, they were not permitted to enter the promised land. The exceptions to this ban were Joshua and Caleb who, contrary to the other ten spies, declared that God would give the people of God victory—even over the giants. By mentioning giants here in the story of David, the author of 1 Samuel seems to have been calling back to that time when the people of Israel were faithless and, as a result, were kept from entering the promised land (Num. 13-14). As the story begins to unfold, that shadow of fear, faithlessness, and disobedience was hanging over the army of Israel. Only one man would step forward and face the giant. That man of faith was the Lord’s anointed—David, the son of Jesse.

Goliath was a giant. He stood **nine feet, nine inches tall**. The Hebrew identifies his height as six cubits and a span. A cubit measured the length of the forearm from the elbow to the fingertip of the middle finger, averaging about eighteen inches. A span was the width of a hand from the fingertips of the thumb and little finger when the hand was spread out, averaging about nine inches, or half a cubit. Further evidence for Goliath being a giant is the description of his armor. Goliath’s armor was also massive, weighing **one hundred twenty-five pounds**. Only a massively powerful man would be able to wield such heavy armor and still be able to carry out his duties.

Saul (v. 8). According to 1 Samuel 9:2 and 10:23, Saul was taller than most other Israelites. Therefore, he was seemingly the man best suited in all of Israel to go to battle against the giant Goliath. However, by giving into his fear and trusting his physical eyes instead of trusting the word of the Lord, Saul walked in the way of Adam and Eve, who trusted their own eyes and the words of the serpent instead of the word of God. In following in the way of Adam and Eve, Saul showed himself to be an incapable defender of Israel and, therefore, an unsuitable king, a hint to readers of things to come.

Choose one of your men (v. 8). The account of David and Goliath is an example of the ancient practice of representative warfare. In representative warfare, each side was to choose a soldier. Those soldiers would fight to the death as representatives of their respective armies. The results of this one-on-one battle were clear and so would be the consequences. The side represented

by the dead man would become the servants of the victor's army and nation. Despite representative warfare being their idea, the Philistines would later show themselves to be unfaithful even to their own proposal (1 Sam. 18:30).

1 SAMUEL 17:32-37 Commentary

Connection to The Point: God had been with David in past challenges, and David was confident God would be with him again.

Context. The events of verses 9-31 demonstrate that Saul was exactly the kind of king Israel asked for earlier in the book—one who acted like the kings of other nations (8:5). Saul trusted in what he could see, in his own abilities, and in the power of his armies instead of the power of the Lord. A truly faithful king would have trusted in the Lord and had faith in His power rather than being filled with fear. However, when Saul saw that his own abilities came up short and that no one in his army was big enough to face the giant Goliath, he was full of fear instead of full of faith.

In 1 Samuel 13:14, Samuel told Saul, "The LORD has found a man after his own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over his people, because you have not done what the LORD commanded." By the time Saul faced Goliath in 1 Samuel 17, the Lord had already rejected Saul as king (15:23), and David had been anointed by Samuel (16:1-13). The phrase "a man after his own heart" describes King David who, instead of being the kind of king that the people's hearts desired, was the kind of king God's heart desired.

Don't let anyone be discouraged (v. 32). The king and soldiers' fear and inaction are indicative of a lack of faith in the Lord. Their relative ability is secondary to their trust in the Lord, whose power is infinite and whose authority is unlimited. Earlier commands from God to be strong and courageous were based not on the strength, cunning, or size of the Israelite army but on the fact that "the LORD your God is with you" (Josh. 1:9). In an age that calls for self-confidence, we need to recover a confidence not in ourselves but in the Lord.

Your servant (v. 32). Saul had been rejected as king (chapter 15), and David had been anointed by Samuel (chapter 16). Here however, despite already having been anointed in the previous chapter, David still humbled himself by submitting to Saul and to Saul's kingship. This kind of submission would mark David's relationship to Saul throughout the rest of Saul's life. In the following chapters, David would have opportunities to dethrone and even kill Saul, but he would not take them. Instead, he would continually submit himself to Saul as king. This submission was not, ultimately, to Saul but to the Lord. In 1 Samuel 24:6, David would even be convicted for cutting off the corner of Saul's robe and would confess this guilt to his men: "As the LORD is my witness, I would never do such a thing to my lord, the LORD's anointed. I will never lift my hand against him, since he is the LORD's anointed." David's loyalty and devotion was to the Lord—not to Saul. In this behavior, David indeed showed himself to be the kind of king whom the Lord desired to lead His people.

Just a youth (v. 33). The Hebrew word translated *youth* suggests David was likely under twenty years-old—too young to be conscripted into service in the king's army. In contrast to David's faithfulness, Saul was demonstrating faithlessness. He was showing himself to be just like the Israelites who had earlier requested that Samuel give them a king like all of the other nations (chapter 8). Just as the Israelites had done earlier, Saul was looking on the surface rather than at deeper issues. In fact, even the faithful prophet Samuel had been guilty of trusting his own

physical eyes rather than having eyes of faith: “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’” (16:7). In the New Testament, Paul would instruct his young apprentice Timothy in a similar fashion: “Don’t let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12).

David answered (v. 34). David’s response in verses 34–37 shows that his confidence in facing Goliath was not faith in his own abilities. Instead, his faith was in: “**The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear**” (v. 37). David’s walk with God was a walk of trust, faith, and hope. David looked at all of God’s faithfulness to him in the past and demonstrated faith that God would continue to act in accordance with His nature.

1 SAMUEL 17:45–47 **Commentary**

Connection to The Point: David faced Goliath confidently because his confidence was in God.

Sword, spear, and javelin (v. 45). These three weapons represented some of the most advanced forms of military technology in the ancient world. By recognizing that Goliath had all three of these weapons at his disposal, David was demonstrating that his confidence in the Lord was not naïve optimism. Instead, David had true confidence in the Lord and His ability to save.

In the name of the LORD of Armies (v. 45). These two overlapping grammatical phrases—*in the name of the LORD* and *the LORD of Armies*—both represent significant theological ideas. First, in the ancient world, and in some cultures today, a person’s name was vitally important and represented something greater than the individual. The phrase “in the name of the LORD” recalls not just the vocalization of God’s divine name but the entirety of God’s work in the world—especially through

Abraham’s descendants and even more specifically through the people of Israel, since they had been rescued from slavery in Egypt. God had revealed His divine name to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3). It was in that name that David was going into battle with Goliath. The reference to the name of the Lord is a subtle reminder of the Lord’s power to do the impossible—just as He had done when He brought thousands upon thousands of Israelites out of slavery in Egypt while drowning Egypt’s army in the sea.

The second phrase, *the LORD of Armies*, is a less subtle reminder of the Lord’s power. Some translations use the phrase “the LORD of Hosts” which obscures that David was making reference to the power of God’s heavenly armies that dwarfs any and all earthly powers. David would later write in Psalm 20:7–9, “Some take pride in chariots, and others in horses, but we take pride in the name of the LORD our God. They collapse and fall, but we rise and stand firm. LORD, give victory to the king! May he answer us on the day that we call.”

God of the ranks of Israel (v. 45). This phrase is an example of a Hebrew poetic element called parallelism, specifically, synthetic parallelism. In synthetic parallelism, the second phrase or clause builds on the previous phrase or clause. In other words, the phrase *God of the ranks of Israel* builds on the phrase *the LORD of Armies*. David was confessing that not only is the Lord the Lord over the heavens above, but He is also Lord over the earth below. The Lord’s sovereignty will always accomplish exactly what He intends for it to accomplish. This phrase also reminds the reader that the people of Israel ultimately belong to the Lord and not to any hu-

man king. The incarnation of Jesus would overcome any limitations that existed when Israel was ruled over by an earthly king. As the God-Man, King Jesus will rule as the one and only true King of Israel.

The LORD saves (v. 47). The name *Joshua* means “Yahweh saves.” In the New Testament, the name *Jesus* is the Greek version of the same name. David’s confidence that the Lord would save him is both an echo of the way that the Lord saved Joshua and His people as they entered the promised land and also a foreshadowing of the way the Lord would save His people through the work of Jesus. Christians are saved by the Lord—not only at the beginning but from first to last (Gal. 3:1-3). As Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, “I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6).

The battle is the LORD’s (v. 47). David understood a fundamental principle about the life of God’s people—a principle that is seen both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. Whenever we are faced with a challenge to living the life that God has called us to, we need to understand that those battles will only be won in the power that God provides, not in our own power, cleverness, education, background, or anything else. All of our spiritual battles belong to the Lord. He is the “King of glory” who is “mighty in battle” (Ps. 24:8).

Hand you over (v. 47). The work of military victory would be done by the Lord and His armies—not by David or any earthly army. At the end of David’s life, he would give credit to the Lord for all of the victories in his life. The consummation of this confession of God’s power is that David “will give thanks” to the Lord “among the nations” (2 Sam. 22:50).