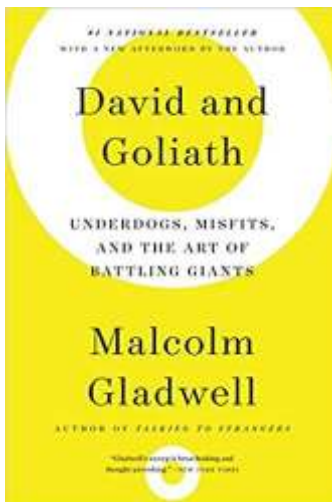


Shortly after becoming a church planter to start a new church in Markham with a multicultural/intercultural vision, I attended a Q&A session on pastoral ministry in a leadership conference. When the question about church planting came up, the speaker mentioned that it'd be one of the most challenging works and that every church planting pastor would become the target of all the forces of darkness – all hell would break loose!

I felt the weightiness of ministry and fear and anxiety gripped my heart – I had no model to follow and no mentor for guidance. I was called to face this giant and fight this battle, alone!! But that's a story for another time; today we will learn from David who was chosen by God in his teenage years and became king when he's 30, ruled for 40 yrs., as we continue this new series called ***Faith Heroes: Lessons to Help You Face a Crisis.***



In Malcolm Gladwell's bestseller he argues with many different stories how underdogs win in situations where the odds are stacked unfavorably against them.

While there is an element of truth about the improbable win of the underdogs, but that is not the essential message of the story of David and Goliath, as we shall see.

The Apostle Paul says:

**Acts 13:22** God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart ... <sup>36</sup> David had served God's purpose in his own generation ...

David played a significant role in the story of God's cosmic redemption – he's a fascinating character from whom we can learn much about faith but today we will focus on David's battle with Goliath in 1 Sam. 17.

We read in 1 Sam 14 that God had given Israel a miraculous victory over the Philistines. Now in ch. 17 they regrouped and reorganized, trying again to take down Israel: the two armies camping on opposite hills, separated by a valley.

Instead of taking a chance on losing a lot of lives as the Philistines did before, they confronted the army of Saul with a single fearsome champion-giant-warrior, Goliath, who was at least 9' 6" tall, loaded with heavy armour, taunting the Israelite army twice a day for forty days.

David entered the battle scene: Jesse sent his youngest son, David, to bring some supplies to his soldier brothers and to report back. He asked some questions and was shocked by what's happening. To the amazement and embarrassment of his brothers and soldiers around, David accepted Goliath's challenge.

King Saul first tried to discourage him but after David's insistence he offered his armours and sword, wishing him luck in this suicidal mission.

David entered the battlefield with his sling and five stones; Goliath was extremely insulted by this unarmed boy and his guard was down. David took this opportune moment to use his sling; Goliath was fell by a single stone to the forehead, crashed to the ground – dead!

The Philistine army watched in horror as the young kid cut Goliath's head off with the giant's sword; they fled with the Israelite army in hot pursuit.

Based on this story let me suggest two practical lessons.

- 1. Get beneath “the sound and fury”<sup>1</sup> and expose the paralyzing blockage to move forward.**

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://nosweatshakespeare.com/quotes/famous/sound-and-fury/>

<sup>2</sup> Perception acts as a lens through which we view reality. Our perceptions influence how we focus on, process, remember, interpret, understand, synthesize, decide about, and act on reality. In doing so, our tendency is to assume that how we perceive reality is an accurate representation of what reality truly is. But it's not.

<sup>20</sup> Early in the morning David left the flock ... He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions ...

<sup>22</sup> ran to the battle lines and ***asked his brothers how they were.*** <sup>23</sup> As he was talking with them, ***Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance,*** and David heard it. <sup>24</sup> Whenever the Israelites saw the man, ***they all fled from him in great fear.***

On the surface the collective fear is caused by Goliath's intimidating appearance and defiance. But David was sensitive to the presence of God and empowered by His Spirit (cf. 15:13), he showed by asking questions that there's more than meets the eye and that there's something deeper than what's perceived.<sup>2</sup>

So what's really beneath this collective fear? The clues are found in Goliath's taunts and Saul's rewards to the person who kills Goliath:

***Freedom*** [<sup>8</sup>Choose a man and have him come down to me. <sup>9</sup> If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill

The problem is that the lens through which we perceive is often warped ... In fact, a substantial disconnect between perception and reality can lead people to a complete inability to function ... [Jim Taylor of University of San Francisco, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/blog/the-power-prime/201908/perception-is-not-reality>]

him, ***you will become our subjects and serve us.***” - power and control]

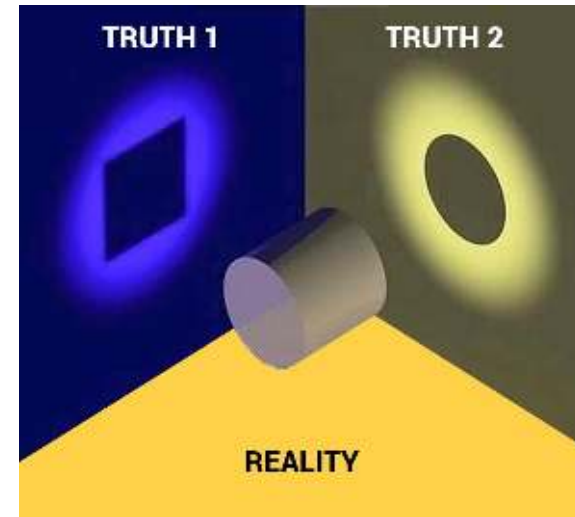
***Fortune*** [“<sup>25</sup>***The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him ...***” - material comforts and security]

***Fame*** [“***He will also give him his daughter in marriage ...***” – prestige and prosperity]

***Favours*** [“***and will exempt his family from taxes in Israel***” - special influence and benefits].

Whatever crisis we are facing today, we must learn from David by ***asking penetrating questions***: Is it about our ***freedom*** [power & control]? or ***fortune*** [material comforts & security]? or ***fame*** [prestige & prosperity]? or ***favours*** [special influence & benefits]?

This is one of my favourite graphics:



It'd be wise to be honest about what powerful and entrenched ***assumptions, beliefs, or values*** we hold about God, the world, others, and self which are behind our feelings and behaviours that drive us in a certain habitual ways.

In her most recent book, *Faithfully Different: Regaining Biblical Clarity in a Secular Culture*, Natasha Crain identifies 4 pillars of the secular mindset:

***Feelings*** are the ultimate ***guide***.

***Happiness*** is the ultimate ***goal***.

***Judging*** is the ultimate ***sin***.

***God*** is the ultimate ***guess***.

These are best revealed whenever we feel ***stressed, frustrated, or hindered*** in various ways by challenging situations or people.

When we respond the same way repeatedly, ***we are actually stuck in a vicious cycle and interpreting the present through the same lens, making the same mistakes or poor judgment, damaging relationships, and missing the opportunity to realize our full potential for the glory of God.***

Getting beneath surface and expose what's really stopping us to move forward is a good start. And here is the second practical takeaway:

## **2. Live out our identity and live on purpose.**

Everyone was in despair and scared by Goliath, but David looked at this giant in relation to God:

“<sup>26</sup> David asked the men standing near him ... Who is this ***uncircumcised Philistine*** that he should defy the armies of ***the living God?***” ... <sup>34</sup> But David said to Saul ... <sup>36</sup> Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this ***uncircumcised Philistine*** will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of ***the living God.*** <sup>37</sup> 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.”

The repeated references to “***uncircumcised Philistine***” and “***the Living God***” are instructive:

Circumcision is a sign of the covenant [promises & pledges] God made between Him and the Israelites, a religious practice that goes back all the way to Abraham, the father of the nation who has become a channel of God’s blessing to many nations (Gen. 17:1-14).

***Circumcision is an identity marker of a special relationship and calling/mission based on God’s grace, promise, and blessing as well as a physical expression of a loving obedient heart.***<sup>3</sup>

By alluding to Goliath (and hence the Philistine army as well) as an “***uncircumcised Philistine***”, David’s underlying message to Saul and the Israelite army is that ***it is inconceivable for a covenant people that belongs to the Lord tremble before this pagan – uncircumcised – brute.*** The way they live should be determined by their identity as ***a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, who declare the praises of him who***

---

<sup>3</sup> The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul,

and live. (Deut. 30:6; cf. Deut. 10.) See also P. D. Woodbridge, “Circumcision,” *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, p. 414.

***had rescued them out of darkness and brought them into his wonderful light.***<sup>4</sup>

Every act is an act of self-definition.

***Neale Donald Walsch***

Today we are challenged to ask ourselves these questions no matter what circumstance we are in:

***Do we have the courage to identify ourselves as Christ-followers? [Mention baptism on Aug. 21<sup>st</sup>; <https://cornerstonechurch.ca/baptism/>]***

***Are we living out our identity as Jesus-followers?***

***How do we express our Christian identity in this post-Christian, post-truth, post-modern, and post-pandemic world?***

There are no simplistic answers to these questions; but one thing I do know if we are obedient to God's word, we need His grace, strength, and wisdom from above to overcome the multiple Goliaths ahead of us.

And, from David's perspective, we can be sure of this:

***A giant that defies the Living God is a midget.***<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Ex. 19:6; 1 Pe. 2:9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Paul Sadler, <https://www.gracebc.ca/blog/2018/3/27/what-can-david-and-goliath-teach-us-about-how-to-read-the-bible>

<sup>6</sup> 1 Sam. 8:10.

We see here that the conflict between Saul (& the Israelite army) and Goliath (& the Philistines) concerns the critical issue of ***idolatry***, if ***idol is anything we put our trust in other than God***.

When Israel rejected Yahweh as their King and asked for a human king, like all the other nations, to lead them to fight their battles,<sup>6</sup> ***fear and insecurity rush to the surface when someone taller (than the tallest person Saul),<sup>7</sup> stronger and smarter appears***.

The Lord used Goliath to expose Israel's idolatry.<sup>8</sup> As the stage is set for battle, we get the sense that ***this conflict isn't about stones or slingshots – it's about spiritual allegiance, obedience to God's word, and faithfulness in carrying out God-entrusted mission***.

Goliath cursed David by his gods (v. 43), but David declares, ***"I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied"*** (v. 45) and adds, ***"for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand"*** (v. 47).

Goliath flexed his muscles, shook his weapons, shouted and appealed to his Philistine gods; David, again being sensitive to the presence of God and empowered by His Spirit (cf.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Sam. 9:2.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Christopher J. Gordon, senior minister of Escondido United Reformed Church in Escondido, Calif., and host of *Abounding Grace Radio* <https://tabletalkmagazine.com/posts/david-goliath-and-jesus-2020-05/>

15:13), appealed to Yahweh, the God of the heavenly armies.

When God's name and honour are at stake and when His servant remains faithful to the covenant, He will fight His battles and His people need only to do their part and follow Him in faith.

While people like his brothers, King Saul, and Goliath didn't think too much of this young shepherd boy, David saw himself in light of ***his responsibility and his training as well as God's faithfulness, power, and protection.***

***God never wastes our past and He honours those who honour him.***

David's preparation was aligned with God's purpose and he put his trust in Him for the result of the battle; having regular practice and proficient use of the sling, he did the best and found victory in this battle.

So the crucial question for us is this:

***Is the giant in front of us just a competition to or a reflection of something/someone we put our trust in other than God?***

Let me finish by quoting what someone says:

