

## LIFE LESSONS – 1 SAMUEL: Finding Courage<sup>i</sup>

### 1 Samuel 17

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

Good morning, Church Family! It is so good to see you this morning, as always. I do want to take the opportunity to welcome those of you that are guests. Thanks for trusting us with your Sunday. It is my prayer that our church already feels like home to you.

We would like to connect with you. There are a couple of ways you can help us do that. One, feel free to text, anytime, the keyword TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant to the number 94-000. When you do, you'll be sent a link where you can share with us basic contact information. I will then look forward to following up with you this coming week. Or another way you can connect with us is by stopping by our information center located in the main lobby area under the banner "Hope is Here." We have a gift there for you to say thanks for joining us today. It is the highlight of my week to visit with those of you that are our guests. We are thrilled you have joined us today.

#### **SERIES OVERVIEW:**

Last January, we began a study through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. We worked our way through chapter 16 right before Easter. We took a break from 1 Samuel and studied other topics. Today, we pick up where we left off in our Life Lessons teaching series. We begin again in chapter 17.

By way of review, 1 Samuel is a book about one of the darkest times in Israel's history and how God rose up leaders in the midst of those times. Chronologically, 1 Samuel comes on the heels of the book of Judges. The book of Judges ends by saying that everyone was doing what was right in their own eyes. In other words, there seemed to be no moral compass.

It was in those days, a godly woman named Hannah voiced a prayer to God. That God would open her womb and give her a son. She vowed that she would give him back to God all the days of his life. God answered her prayer and gave her Samuel. And Hannah made good on her promise.

Samuel was different from the evil spiritual leaders of the day. He pursued godliness. In Samuel, God was raising up a generation to bring the people back to Him. Severe punishment was in store for the evil spiritual leaders. But

Samuel had learned to hear God's voice and be obedient to it. Under Samuel's leadership, the nation of Israel saw the glory of following The Lord and the consequences of not.

Eventually, the people demand a king. They desire an earthly leader like all the nations surrounding them. This was not according to God's timing, but God gave them a king, Saul. Unfortunately, Saul was only after personal gain and not God's Kingdom. As a result, God rejects Saul's kingship and the search for his replacement began. The search ultimately identifies the unlikely David to be Saul's replacement. But he was just a boy and even though Samuel anointed him as king, it was not time for him to take the throne.

Today, we come to one of, if not the, most famous passages of Old Testament Scripture, the story of David and Goliath. We are going to pick up in our study by looking at chapter 17 in a message I've titled, "Finding Courage." So, I want to invite you to turn with me in your bibles to 1 Samuel chapter 17.

#### **OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Fears**

I came across an article this week that was entitled, "America's Most Common Fears."<sup>ii</sup> It listed all the usual suspects. Claustrophobia, fear of small spaces, Aviophobia, the fear of flying, and Trypanophobia, the fear of needles. But the number one fear has been that for ages is Glossophobia, the fear of public speaking. In other words, people fear public speaking more than fear death! As Jerry Seinfeld says, "That means for most people, if they have to go to the funeral, they'd rather be the guy in the casket than the one giving the eulogy."<sup>iii</sup>

Well, in our passage this morning, the Israelite army is suffering from Fee-Fi-Phobia, the fear of giants. Now that's funny. It'll hit you later. The Israelites are shaking in their armor because of Goliath. And in this popular story is a powerful spiritual reality that I want to share with you this morning. We are going to work our way through the story and then look at a few life lessons we learn in finding courage.

#### **MESSAGE:**

So, with that said, follow along in your copy of God's Word. 1 Samuel, chapter 17, beginning in verse 1. *<sup>1</sup>Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. And they were gathered at Socoh [So-Ko], which belongs to Judah, and encamped between Socoh and Azekah [Ah-Zee-Ka], in Ephes-dammim [E-fuss-Da-Mim]. <sup>2</sup>And Saul and the men of Israel were gathered, and encamped*

*in the Valley of Elah [El-Ah], and drew up in line of battle against the Philistines.*<sup>3</sup>*And the Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them.* The Philistines were the arch enemies of Israel. They were a group of people living in the Promised Land.<sup>iv</sup> When God led the Israelites into the Promised Land, He told them to drive out all the other nations. But, for a variety of reasons, the Israelites didn't do that. They made compromises along the way. And here in 1 Samuel 17, generations later, they're reeling from those compromises.

One of the reasons the Jews didn't drive out the Philistines is because they were afraid of them. The Philistines were strong and were technologically advanced for that time.<sup>v</sup> They were one of the first civilizations to work with bronze and iron. And The Philistines used their experience to make what would have been advanced weapons. And through military might, they controlled the three major cities on the most popular trade route.<sup>vi</sup>

Now, God told the Jews that He would give them the victory. But they doubted God and compromised. As a result, generations later, they are in a pickle facing the Philistines. A life lesson we learn here is to never doubt God. A lack of obedience to God always results in a very difficult circumstance later.

We are also told about the location. The Philistines were gathered on the mountain on one side and the Jews on the other side. Between the two armies was the valley of Elah. This valley was about a mile wide. So, the armies would have been very visible to each other.<sup>vii</sup>

That's the stage, now let's see what develops. Verse 4. *4And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a **champion** named Goliath of Gath, whose height was **six cubits and a span**.* The word, "champion," literally translated, means "a man between the two."<sup>viii</sup> The idea here is that Goliath was Philistia's champion. He was the one that fought to the death as a representative in combat. More on that in just a moment.

The Scripture also mentions Goliath's intimidating size. It says he was "six cubits and a span." That would make him about 9-and-a-half feet tall. Now, let me say this. What we are reading here comes from the Hebrew translation called the Masoretic text, which says that Goliath was about 9 feet, 9 inches tall. But the Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew text, says Goliath was 4 cubits and a span. That would make him 6 feet 9 inches tall.<sup>ix</sup>

I bring this up because skeptics often point to this discrepancy to try and prove the Bible's inaccuracy. But the point isn't the exact height of Goliath. The text is very accurate. The point is Goliath's intimidation of the Jews. The average Hebrew height in those days was about 5 foot 3 inches. So, even if Goliath is just 6, 9, he would still be massive.<sup>x</sup> And there are many potential reasons for this discrepancy,<sup>xi</sup> but the point is that Goliath was an intimidating figure.

Moreover, his armor was intimidating. Verse 5. *5He [Goliath] had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail [or coat of scales], and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze [or 121 lbs.]. 6And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. 7The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron [or 15 pounds]. And his shield-bearer went before him.* All in all, Goliath's armor weighed about 200 lbs.<sup>xii</sup> A massive man that carried an incredible amount of armor. Intimidation.

Let's keep reading. Verse 8. *8He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. 9If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants. But if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." 10And the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel this day. Give me a man, that we may fight together."* This is called representative warfare.<sup>xiii</sup> It was a common practice to have a warrior represent your army in battle. And the results of the battle between the warriors determined the outcome of the whole.

Verse 11. *11When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.* Now, it is interesting that Saul is named. Remember, the people wanted Saul as king because he was quote, "head and shoulders" above everyone else.<sup>xiv</sup> He was the people's strong and intimidating warrior. Yet we are told that he, specifically, was terrified.<sup>xv</sup>

That's the scene. At this point, the story shifts back to David. Verse 12. *12Now David was the son of an Ephrathite [F-Ra-Thight] of Bethlehem in Judah, named Jesse, who had eight sons. In the days of Saul the man was already old and advanced in years. 13The three oldest sons of Jesse had followed Saul to the battle. And the names of his three sons who went to the battle were Eliab [Ah-Lie-Ab] the firstborn, and next to him Abinadab [Ah-Bee-Nah-Dab], and the*

*third Shammah [Sha-Ma].<sup>14</sup>David was the youngest. The three eldest followed Saul,<sup>15</sup>but David went back and forth from Saul to feed his father's sheep at Bethlehem.<sup>16</sup>For forty days the Philistine came forward and took his stand, morning and evening.<sup>17</sup>And Jesse said to David his son, "Take for your brothers an ephah [E-Fa] of this parched grain, and these ten loaves, and carry them quickly to the camp to your brothers.<sup>18</sup>Also take these ten cheeses to the commander of their thousand. See if your brothers are well, and bring some token from them."*

David isn't old enough to be in the Israeli army, but his 3 older brothers were. Jesse, the dad, wanted to check on them so he had David run an errand and deliver a snack and report back.

Verse 19. *<sup>19</sup>Now Saul and they and all the men of Israel were in the Valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines.<sup>20</sup>And David rose early in the morning and left the sheep with a keeper and took the provisions and went, as Jesse had commanded him. [In other words, David still took care of his sheep.] And he came to the encampment as the host was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry.<sup>21</sup>And Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army.<sup>22</sup>And David left the things in charge of the keeper of the baggage and ran to the ranks and went and greeted his brothers.<sup>23</sup>As he talked with them, behold, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.<sup>24</sup>All the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him and were much afraid.<sup>25</sup>And the men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man who has come up? Surely he has come up to defy Israel. And the king will enrich the man who kills him with great riches and will give him his daughter and make his father's house free in Israel."* David comes onto a pathetic scene. 40 days, the Israelites go through this ritual of getting geared up for battle only to see Goliath and run and hide.

But watch how David responds when he sees all that's going on. Verse 26. *<sup>26</sup>And David said to the men who stood by him, "What shall be done for the man who kills this Philistine and takes away the reproach from Israel? [In other words, what's the reward for defeating this Goliath character?] For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?"<sup>27</sup>And the people answered him in the same way, "So shall it be done to the man who kills him."* Verse 25 is the reward. Riches from the king, marriage to

the king's daughter, making them royalty, and no taxes for that person's family for life.<sup>xvi</sup> And even with that kind of reward on the table, everyone was too afraid to battle Goliath. What good is all that stuff if you're not alive to enjoy it?!

But David is like, "Are ya'll going to just let this dude talk like that about God?!"

Verse 28. *<sup>28</sup>Now Eliab [Eh-Lie-Ab] his eldest brother heard when he [David] spoke to the men. And Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, "Why have you come down? And with whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know your presumption and the evil of your heart, for you have come down to see the battle."* Do you sense the bitterness of being looked over as the next king of Israel. Eliab was passed over for David.

Verse 29. *<sup>29</sup>And David said, "What have I done now? Was it not but a word?"<sup>30</sup>And he turned away from him toward another, and spoke in the same way, and the people answered him again as before.* Sometimes the harshest critics are the ones that are supposed to be on the same team. The most discouraging opposition often comes from those that should be on your side.

In verse 31, someone tells king Saul that there's someone willing to fight Goliath. Then walks in David. Verse 33. *<sup>33</sup>And Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are but a youth [bro, you're doing too much], and [besides] [Goliath] has been a man of war from his youth."* David, buddy. You're just a teenager. That guy is twice your size and way more experienced.

To that, David shares his resume. Verse 34. *<sup>34</sup>But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock,<sup>35</sup>I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him.* That's no joke. I don't know about you, but I'm not grabbing a bear's beard.

David goes on, *<sup>36</sup>Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for [he hasn't just taken a sheep], he has defied the armies of the living God."* Gotta love the confidence in this kid. Verse 37. *<sup>37</sup>And David said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."* And Saul said to David, "Go, and the Lord be with you!"

*38Then Saul clothed David with his armor. [Remember, Saul is head and shoulders taller than everyone and David is just a boy]. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, 39and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." So David put them off.* In other words, I can't wear this clown suit.

*40Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine. 41And the Philistine moved forward and came near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. 42And when the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was but a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. 43And the Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. Seriously? Are you for real sending this kid out here?*

*44The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field." 45Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, 47and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand." That's pretty good trash talking.*

*48When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground. 50So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. 51Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath [David didn't even have a sword] and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. 52And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the*

*Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron [Ek-Ron], so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim [Sha-Rhyme] as far as Gath and Ekron. 53And the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. 54And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent.*

### **LIFE LESSONS:**

What an amazing chain of events. A story filled with life lessons for us. But I want to just mention two life lessons to take away from this epic story. First, ...

#### **1) The Lord fights our battles.**

It's The Lord, Jesus, that fights our biggest battles. You know, I have heard many sermons on this story talk about the 5 stones to overcoming giants in your life. I think there is some application there. But I don't think that is the main point of this story. I think that is a sub-point.

The temptation here is to see ourselves as David.<sup>xvii</sup> But in reality, we are the cowering, helpless, intimidated by our circumstances, Israeli army. I don't know about you, and a little bit of transparency here, I am often more filled with fear than I am faith. We are often fearful of the uncertain future, fearful that our marriage isn't going to work, fearful we might lose our job, fearful of the medical diagnosis, fearful of failure, or fearful of some other issue in our lives. In reality, we lack the courage we need to face these giants, but Jesus is the one that fights our battles.

Just like the Jews in this story, we tend to focus on the wrong giant. Goliath is not really the problem here. He is what the people were focusing on, but think about it, a simple slingshot and a stone takes care of him. Goliath isn't the real giant. The real giant is the sinful disobedience of the people.

Scripture says that the wages of our sin, what we earn from our sin, is eternal death. And that, beloved, is a giant that we cannot conquer. Because it is impossible for us to do enough good deeds to measure up to the holiness of God because He is perfect. And you and I can never be perfect.

But Jesus, the real David in this story, the unlikely hero, enters into the representative battle, squaring off against the giant of sin, and by way of the cross and His resurrection, slayed the giant of sin on our behalf. The only thing that is required of us is surrender to Him as our Lord, and Savior.

The Lord fights our battles. The second life lesson we learn here is that...

## 2) We can find courage in The Lord.

Because Jesus had victory over the real giant in our lives, we can find the courage to face lesser giants. The one thing that David did differently from all the others is how he looked at the situation. Everyone is looking at the size of the giant, David is focusing on the size of his God.

I love what David said in this story. First, in verses 34 through 37. *<sup>34</sup>But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father. And when there came a lion, or a bear, and took a lamb from the flock, <sup>35</sup>I went after him and struck him and delivered it out of his mouth. And if he arose against me, I caught him by his beard and struck him and killed him. <sup>36</sup>Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." <sup>37</sup>And David said, "The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."*

David found courage in the circumstance because he had history with God. David saw things differently. The people were looking at the intimidation of Goliath, but David was recalling the times God had come through for him. Goliath defied the armies of the living God, he's the one in trouble here.

Listen, we often give the devil more power than he deserves. Oh, Satan is a formidable foe, but he has defied the armies of the living God. He is no match for our God. And the same God that delivered David from the paw of the lion and bear, will deliver him from the giant.

How are you building history with God in your life and in the life of your family. For David, he built that history in the face of scary situations. He didn't build history with God in the safe comforts of home. No, he dared to tackle big things and as a result witnessed God come through for him.

Building history with God requires stepping out on faith. It requires being vulnerable. Where are you stepping out on faith? How have you seen God's faithfulness in the past? How are you building a history with God?

When the people were fearful, David was fearless. And that was because of seeing God's faithfulness. The real fear of the future is not trusting God who

knows the future. The real fear of losing a job is not trusting God to provide for your every need. The real fear in relationships is in trying to hold things together on your own. But when you have trusted God in these things, then you come to know He is faithful in and through them.

I read one article this week that said, "Real courage does not arise from the assurance that we will never encounter trouble. Courage is not the absence of strife or the absence of fear in the midst of strife. Instead, courage comes from having a priceless and secure treasure that strife and fear cannot threaten. That treasure is Jesus Christ Himself."

The story of David and Goliath is more than an underdog story. It is proof that The Lord fights our battles and that we can find courage in The Lord.

### CONCLUSION:

As we come to a time of response, I simply want to ask you to listen to God's voice this morning and respond to Him.

Maybe you are here today, and you have never begun a relationship with Jesus. You are still facing the giant of sin. You need to trust Jesus as Lord this morning. You might be saying, "What does that mean? What does that look like? Our elders will be here at the front, and we would love nothing more today than to answer those questions and share with you how you can have a relationship with Jesus. Simply come during this time of response and take us by the hand and say, "I need Jesus." We would love to walk you through what that looks like.

Maybe others of you are here today and you are facing some things that seem to be giants. Maybe it's a relationship, maybe it's a medical circumstance, perhaps it's a fear of your future. We want to pray with you and over you. That our prayer would be a reminder that because Jesus has conquered the greatest giant, you can find courage in the lesser giants. We would love to come alongside you as you walk that road.

Whatever it is, I just want you to respond to The Lord's prompting on your heart this morning. I'm going to pray, we will stand and sing, but let's all respond as The Lord leads. [PRAY].

## ENDNOTES:

<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation for this message: Robert D. Bergen, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Samuel, Vol. 7*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, 1996; Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*, Holman: Nashville, 2016; Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003; Troy Rackliffe, “Life Lessons Message 12,” sermon preached at Glad Community Church in Daniels, WV; Ray Fowler, “Conquering by Faith,” published by Ray Fowler Ministries, accessed online: <https://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/1-samuel/conquering-by-faith/>; Alistair Begg, “It’s All About God – Part One,” published by Truth for Life, November 14, 2004, accessed online: <https://www.truthforlife.org/resources/sermon/its-all-about-god-part-1/>; J.D. Greear, “Courage, Your Giants, and THE Giant,” sermon preached at Summit Church, September 5, 2022, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/courage-your-giants-and-the-giant/>; Skip Heitzig, “Overcoming Giant Problems,” message taught at Calvary Church, July 3, 2002, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/66/sermon/999>.

<sup>ii</sup> The Washington Post, “America’s Top Fears: Public Speaking, Heights, and bugs,” article published October 30, 2014, accessed online: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2014/10/30/clowns-are-twice-as-scary-to-democrats-as-they-are-to-republicans/>.

<sup>iii</sup> Taken from J.D. Greear’s sermon.

<sup>iv</sup> Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear, page 128.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.

<sup>vi</sup> Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear, 128.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> Robert D. Bergen, page 188.

<sup>ix</sup> Rackliffe.

<sup>x</sup> Thomas and Greear, 128-129.

<sup>xi</sup> For more discussion on this subject, consult the commentaries I have listed in the works consulted in preparation for this message.

<sup>xii</sup> Rackliffe.

<sup>xiii</sup> Bergen, 190.

<sup>xiv</sup> 1 Samuel 9:2.

<sup>xv</sup> Pointed out by J.D. Greear.

<sup>xvi</sup> Thomas and Greear, 130.

<sup>xvii</sup> Ibid, 131.