

Long Live the King Sermon Series  
#2 - The Giant Killer  
1 Sam. 17  
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I faced a giant once. I played one year of football in high school. I didn't want to play, but my stepfather thought I needed some toughening up, so he signed me up. I wasn't built to play football; I was built to be the team manager. I ended up as a wide receiver because that was the position that was farthest from the ball and had the least amount of contact.

I always dreaded the drills we had to run in practice. My least favorite was the tackle drill. Two people stood about 20 yards apart. One person's job was to take the football and run full-speed at the other person; that person's job was not to die, and to try and tackle the person in the process.

One day when we were doing these drills, I realized that I was matched up to try and tackle Tim Blankenship, who played middle linebacker. Now, I think Tim was on steroids before it was popular to be on steroids. Although he and I were in the same grade, he was a head taller, about 40 pounds heavier, and he shaved three times a day. Plus, he was mean.

So there was Tim, about 20 yards away, football in his hand, smirk on his face, saliva drooling from his lips. And there was me, knees knocking together, trying to figure out how far I could run in the opposite direction before Tim caught me. It was like an 18-wheeler playing chicken with a moped. As I took my place, I thought I heard one player shout, "Dead man walking!" The coach didn't blow his whistle to start the drill; he played "Taps" on the bugle.

The last thing I remember seeing was Tim barreling toward me, and then a bright white light with angels and harps. When I came to, I was sore in places that I didn't know existed, and I wasn't quite convinced everything was still attached. I sat up, and I saw Tim sitting next to me – actually I saw about three or four of him sitting next to me. He looked at me and smiled and said, "Nice tackle." And you know what? After that experience, I wasn't scared of Tim Blankenship anymore.

In our scripture today, King David also faced a giant, although I bet Goliath didn't shave as much as Tim did. And David took his giant down, as well. Through David's courage, the nation of Israel was victorious over their biggest enemy, the Philistines.

We also face giants in our lives today, forces that threaten to take over our lives and hold us captive. The reality of life is that we have to face these giants: a diagnosis we've received; the fear of getting older; regrets that keep us stuck in the past; problems that keep us fearful of the unknown future; a sin we can't seem to conquer; a worry we can't seem to shake. I want you to take a moment to think about what the biggest giant is in your life, because we're going to learn from David how to defeat it. David can help us look our giant right in the eye and not be scared anymore. So what's the giant in your life right now? What's your biggest fear?

I want you to keep that in mind as we look at David's battle with Goliath. There are five things David did that helped him win this battle and that can help us win our battles. First, David didn't get fooled by appearances. The Bible is very vivid in its

description of Goliath. He was over nine feet tall, he wore armor that weighed almost 200 pounds, and he had a shield so big that it took a full-grown man just to carry it for him.

But David didn't let Goliath's appearance intimidate him. As we learned last week, God doesn't judge us by our appearance, but by our hearts. And David was seeing with God's eyes. Author Norman Archer said that while the rest of the Israelites were looking at Goliath and saying, "He's so big, how can I win?" David looked at him and said, "He's so big, how can I miss?" Often times, when we take a closer look at our giants, they aren't nearly as big as we've made them out to be. Our fear makes our giants grow bigger in our minds. Take a moment to see your giant for what it truly is, not for what you're afraid it might be. Don't be intimidated; see it with God's eyes.

The second thing David did was that he fought the right battle. While David is standing on the front lines with the soldiers, his older brother Eliab starts to make fun of him for being there. Now Eliab was probably feeling guilty for not volunteering to face Goliath, and what better way to alleviate his guilt than to take it out on his little brother? But David doesn't take the bait. It would have been easy for David to spend a lot of energy bickering with Eliab, but David knew he needed his energy for the real battle.

When we're preparing to face our giants, our anxiety can often put us on edge or make us over-sensitive. A loved one's innocent comment can push our button and release a lot of anger that has nothing to do with them. David reminds us to make sure we're fighting the right battles. If we're not careful, we can end up fighting the wrong people while the real enemy continues to do its work. Use your emotions in the right places to help you focus and win your battle.

The third thing David does to defeat his giant is that he doesn't listen to advice. David goes to see Saul and tells him that he, David, will be the one to go out and fight the Philistine giant. Now remember, Saul is still the king, the commander in chief. We were told in a previous chapter that Saul looked quite kingly, and stood head and shoulders above the rest. You'd think he would be the one to stand up and face Goliath.

Instead, Saul cowers in his tent, and is thrilled when someone else decides to handle this matter, even if it's just a shepherd boy. Trying to be helpful, Saul outfits David with his armor and helmet. The problem is that in those days, Saul's armor would have been custom-made just for him. Saul is a 52 long and David is a 36 regular, so the armor doesn't quite fit.

When we're facing our giants, many well-intentioned people will gladly offer up all kinds of advice. I'm not saying advice is a bad thing, and I'm not saying we should never take it. What we should realize, though, is that no one else can fight this battle for us. Our Goliath is OUR Goliath. Someone else may say, "Ah, that's not big deal," but to us, it's a Goliath. Someone else might say, "I dealt with that before; I know exactly what you need to do." But God custom-fits each solution for each person, according to their uniqueness. We can be like Saul and sit in our tent and wait for someone else to deal with our problems, or we can be like David and face them head-on.

The fourth thing David did is very important; he remembered his victories. When Saul tells David that he's too small to fight Goliath, David recounts several instances when he fought off animals that tried to steal one of his sheep. He said, "When it turned on me, I seized it by the hair, struck it, and killed it. The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of the Philistine."

Often times when we are confronted with a problem, we become so immobilized by intimidation and fear that, as one author said, “We forget what we ought to remember and remember what we ought to forget. We remember our defeats and we forget our victories. Most of us can recite the failures of our lives in vivid detail, but we’re hard-pressed to name the specific remarkable victories God has pulled off in our past.”

I’m especially bad about this. I’ll fret over a situation, refusing to put my trust in God. Then God will see me through the situation, and I’ll fall over myself thanking God. But then, when a similar situation arises again, I’ll revert right back to doubting and not trusting. How does God have the patience to put up with us?

God has helped us be victorious in the past, and God will help us do it again in the future. We have to have a place to put the memories of our victories, so that, like a photograph, we can pull those out at the right time and say, “Look at this! Remember when God did this?” The God who delivered us from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will surely deliver us from our giant. Don’t forget what God has done for you.

The last thing David did was probably the most important: he didn’t try to fight his giant alone. “The battle is the Lord’s,” he says. “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty.” Are you trying to fight your own battle? Trying to fight your way? You can’t do it. The enemy’s weapons are just too strong. You can’t defeat your giant. But God can.

We believe in a God who’s not intimidated by swords and coats of armor and bombastic speech. We believe in a God that’s not intimidated by tumors and hateful words and the power of sin. Our God is the true giant in this story, and in our lives. We don’t have to be eloquent or strong or handsome. We don’t have to be beautiful or brilliant or have all the answers. He honors our faith. All he asks is we trust him, that we stand before him in integrity and faith and call on his name.

To be fair, not all battles end in a rousing victory like David’s. Tim Blankenship definitely got the better of me in our collision. I wasn’t the winner. But in every one of life’s battles, if we live to tell the story later, there is a victory: we’re still here. It didn’t kill us, thanks be to God. There will always be giants for us to battle, but there will also always be God, standing beside us, ready to fight for us. Don’t let the giant problems of today eclipse the promises of a God who is, and was, and will always be.