

WITH A SLING AND A STONE

MAIN POINT.

We can trust God with our impossible circumstances.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Our most impossible battle is the one against sin and death. We are powerless to defeat them, but Jesus Christ defeated sin when He sacrificed Himself on the cross. He defeated death when He was resurrected from the grave. All believers share in Christ's victory by calling on Him for salvation through confession and repentance.





FEAR WITH FAITH

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

1 Samuel 17:1—1 Samuel 17:58

SOMETIMES OUR BATTLES SEEM IMPOSSIBLE

1 SAMUEL 17:4-5,10-11

4 Then a champion named Goliath, from Gath, came out from the Philistine camp. He was nine feet, nine inches tall 5 and wore a bronze helmet and bronze scale armor that weighed one hundred twenty-five pounds. . . . 10 Then the Philistine said, "I defy the ranks of Israel today. Send me a man so we can fight each other!" 11 When Saul and all Israel heard these words from the Philistine, they lost their courage and were terrified.

GOD PREPARES US FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

1 SAMUEL 17:32-40,45-50

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." 38 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. 39 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. 40 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. . . . 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." 48 When the Philistine started forward to attack him, David ran quickly to the battle line to meet the Philistine. 49 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. 50 David defeated the Philistine with a sling and a stone.

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

We can trust God with our impossible circumstances.

Leaders: God is mighty in you and will supply all your needs (Phil. 4:19).

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

SOMETIMES OUR BATTLES SEEM IMPOSSIBLE

1 SAMUEL 17

“Although David and Goliath are real historical individuals, they play a representative role in their battle. Goliath is twice described as ‘the pagan Philistine’ (17:26,36). He was the embodiment of an uncircumcised culture, which was diametrically opposed to the way of life of God’s people, Israel. David, on the other hand, represents the ideal of the true covenantal king, that is, a king who was to be the instrument of God’s rule over his people. So the conflict between David and Goliath symbolically transcended the personal and the national to reflect the enmity between the seed of the serpent and the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15)—the enmity between the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. At certain points in the history of redemption, such as the confrontation of David and Goliath, the struggle between these two kingdoms becomes more sharply defined than it is at other times.”¹

GOD PREPARES US FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

1 SAMUEL 17:33

“Saul’s reference to David’s adolescence suggests that David was under twenty years of age, the earliest age at which an Israelite was permitted to serve in the military (Num. 1:3; 26:2).”²

1 SAMUEL 17:38-40

“David allowed Saul to put the armor on him. Ironically, Saul’s actions confirmed and foreshadowed the royal status God promised David: the Lord had clothed David with the Spirit that enabled kingship; now Saul clothed David with the symbols that exemplified kingship. Yet David was unable to grow accustomed to Saul’s military gear, and he removed it. The writer’s inclusion of the clothing incident probably was meant to serve two functions: first, to preserve an unusual but interesting occurrence in the background of the Goliath event, indicating the greater value of divine enablement over human devices; second and more importantly, to symbolize David’s rejection of Saul’s approach to kingship. Saul chose to dress in royal clothing ‘such as all the other nations have’; David would wear none of it. Instead, he would identify with the great shepherd-leaders of the Torah—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and especially Moses—and live by faith in the promises of God (Heb. 11).”³



CONTEXT

The Philistines were a powerful people group living in the promised land. They were among those whom God had ordered Israel to drive back and destroy, but after decades, they still hadn't succeeded. Why? Well, it was mostly due to a lack of faith that God could drive out their enemies if Israel trusted Him in battle. The Philistines were more advanced; in fact, they were some of the first to use bronze and iron in creating weaponry. To say they intimidated Israel would be an understatement. They gathered for forty mornings to taunt Israel—and her God. The Philistines made an offer for individual combat: one Philistine verses one Israelite. Goliath, the Philistine champion, was likely over nine feet tall and covered in heavy, impressive armor. His challenge: lose to me and your entire nation will become our slaves; win, and we'll become your slaves (1 Sam. 17:9). Instead of stepping up, Saul cowered in fear, leading the entire nation to do the same—except for one, young David, a shepherd.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

Work of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit empowers and indwells believers, intercedes on their behalf, and equips them with special gifts for the service of God's kingdom.

LEADERS' PRAYER

GOD, YOU ARE THE ONE WHO GOES BEFORE US IN EVERY BATTLE, ESPECIALLY THOSE THAT SEEM IMPOSSIBLE. HELP US WALK IN FAITH, KNOWING YOU ARE FOR US AND ARE FIGHTING FOR US.



KICK STARTER

♥ HEART CHECK

Last week, we talked about imitating Christ in humility and service to others. Where do you struggle with this the most?

These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

ME, BRAVE?

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **WHO IS THE BRAVEST PERSON YOU KNOW?**
- **WHAT MAKES THAT PERSON BRAVE?**
- **DO YOU THINK EVERYONE CAN BE BRAVE? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

We all have an idea of what bravery means. It involves stepping up to do something even when it is scary or may cost a great deal to do so. It's taking a huge risk. Most of us can think of someone who exhibits bravery even in impossible circumstances. But many of us also believe we could never be brave. God's Word shows us a different view: faith in Him empowers us to do more than we could ever do in our own strength.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

What are we supposed to do with our fear? And is feeling afraid a sin? Here's the truth: fear is our body's natural, built-in response to a threat. Our bodies are designed to alert us to harm. Fear is actually meant to protect us from danger. So, the fact that we experience fear isn't sinful. What we do with that feeling determines if we're walking by faith and trusting the Lord. When we face battles, we may rightfully feel afraid. Over and over in Scripture, God commanded His people not to fear—not to be afraid. The command was almost always partnered with a reminder that God was with them. So, He instructed them on what to do with the fear; He told them to cast it aside. He reminded them of His nearness—of the truth that He was aware of their circumstances and fighting for them. When fear threatens to shut us down, we must remind ourselves of what is true: God is near. He is faithful. He hasn't forgotten us. He is fighting for us.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

We can trust God with our impossible circumstances.

SOMETIMES OUR BATTLES SEEM IMPOSSIBLE

READ 1 SAMUEL 17:4-5,10-11

WHY WERE SAUL AND HIS ARMY SO AFRAID OF THE PHILISTINES?

Leaders: share context about the outcome of one-on-one combat. The Israelites knew they were outnumbered, and their technology paled in comparison to the Philistine's advancements. Plus, Goliath was massive when compared to any Hebrew man! Scripture tells us he stood at least nine feet tall (v. 4). Any courage Israel may have felt dwindled to nothing. If Israel lost to Goliath, they would become slaves to the Philistines. They'd inherit the slavery of their ancestors in Egypt. **They were terrified to lose, but they were too terrified to step up in faith to fight.**



HOW DO YOU THINK GOD WANTS US TO RESPOND TO OUR FEARS?

Saul and the Israelite army gave in to their fears because **they forgot God's promises.** God promised to drive out the tribes in the promised land. This wasn't so much a battle between Israelites and Philistines as a battle between God and false religion, idolatry, and evil. God would simply use Israel to extend His judgment. All they had to do was trust Him. We're often like them, right? God has promised to be with us. We know He has ultimate victory over sin and death. Yet, we struggle to trust Him with our daily battles. **We hide in fear and believe the shouts of the enemy instead of the steady, sure voice and Word of God.**



WHEN HAVE YOU FELT LIKE YOU WERE FACING AN IMPOSSIBLE BATTLE? WHY CAN IT BE DIFFICULT TO TRUST GOD IN THESE TIMES?

Like the Israelites, we often feel fearful when we face battles that feel impossible. We lean toward doubt instead of faith. We may even find ourselves asking why God would allow certain things to happen to us. You may be facing a scary medical diagnosis, a terminal illness, or the death of someone you love; you may be facing the fact that you won't pass school this year; you may be facing a cycle of addiction in your family that no one seems to be able to break; or you may be facing your parents' divorce. All of these situations threaten our security in some way, don't they? **Here's the deal: nothing on earth can ever be truly secure.** Our health fades. People let us down or hurt us. We may struggle to break generational cycles or to pass tenth grade. But Jesus has overcome! Because of His death and resurrection, we have hope of eternity with Him, and we have no reason to fear. **Even when we face battles that feel impossible, our God is mighty; He works all things for our good—to draw us closer to Himself (Rom. 8:28). Instead of letting fear take over, we can trust the Lord and move toward Him because we're secure in Him.**

GOD PREPARES US FOR THE IMPOSSIBLE

READ 1 SAMUEL 17:32-40,45-50



WHAT DID DAVID LIST AS EVIDENCE FOR GOD BEING WITH HIM? HOW DID IT AFFECT DAVID'S FAITH IN BATTLE?

Though David was young, he explained that God had rescued him from harm in the past. His duty had been to protect and rescue sheep from predators; even in that work, he depended on God. **He knew God was with him, and he knew God was faithful.** As believers, we have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us. He goes where we go. He knows our thoughts. He empowers us. He even intercedes for us to the Father when we don't have the words (Rom. 8:25-27). **God is with us in such a real way, and this truth should motivate us to walk in faith.**



HOW SHOULD KNOWING GOD IS WITH US CHANGE THE WAY WE FIGHT OUR BATTLES? WHY DOES IT OFTEN NOT CHANGE ANYTHING?

The fact is many of us mentally know God is with us, yet we approach our battles as if He isn't. We cower in fear; we run away. We allow the enemy to warp our thoughts and cause us to doubt God's faithfulness and nearness to us. **Knowing God is with us should change everything. We have the God of all creation on our side!** He has already won the most important battle against sin and death. And while we may face difficult circumstances here, absolutely nothing can take away the victory Christ has already won. Mentally knowing this and letting it truly affect our lives is putting our faith into action.

NOTICE DAVID'S ACTIONS IN VERSES 38-40. HOW ARE THEY IMPORTANT? HOW DO THEY POINT TO CHRIST?

Saul offered David his suit of armor. David attempted to walk under the weight of this heavy armor and bronze helmet, but he couldn't do it. It simply didn't fit him. Instead, he dropped it all to the ground for his customary staff, sling, and five stones. This says a few things: David shedding Saul's armor foreshadowed that he would be a very different type of king. He wouldn't walk in Saul's ways. He would lead as he always had—as a shepherd. He would depend on the Lord rather than on his own strength for protection and provision. **David's reign wasn't perfect, but in so many ways, he pointed to Jesus, who would later call Himself our "good shepherd" (John 10:11). David's victories would be from the Lord because David would allow the Lord to fight his battles instead of fighting them in his own strength.**

WRAP-UP



HOW WOULD IT CHANGE THE WAY YOU HANDLE FEAR AND FIGHT YOUR BATTLES IF YOUR MOTIVE WAS FOR OTHERS TO KNOW GOD?

Verses 46-47 give us a glimpse into David's motive: he wanted the world to know Israel's God—the only God—and that He alone won the battle. This motive changed everything about the battle. David didn't face Goliath operating in arrogance or ego. He wasn't seeking worldly gain or the respect of other men. He wasn't seeking attention, power, or fame. He was seeking opportunity for God's name to be made known. We all fight our own Goliaths. **The way we fight our battles—even the worst ones—shows the world what we believe about God. It reveals our deep faith and dependence on the Lord, or it reveals a lack of trust. It reveals that we believe God is who He says He is, or it reveals we don't really trust Him when things get difficult.** The truth doesn't change in battle, though. God is who He claims to be. He does what He says He'll do. We can absolutely place our faith in that and step into battle with the motive to make Him known.