

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

January 18, 2026

A Heart After God – The Story of David

“Courageous Heart”

1 Samuel 17:32-51

Rev. Mike Toluba

Do you love a great underdog story? One of my favorites is the story of Seabiscuit. During the Depression era, Charles Howard is an automobile maker who is trying to rebuild his life after the tragic death of his only child and the end of his first marriage. After Charles marries again, Charles gets into horse racing and ends up with a team of three underdogs.

The first is trainer Tom Smith who has a natural instinct to spot the abilities of horses. The second is the horse Tom chooses named Seabiscuit who is an unconventional choice despite his pedigreed lineage. Seabiscuit is racehorse on the smaller side with a slight limp who raced many times with mixed results. Most people would have considered the horse a lost cause, but Tom saw something special in Seabiscuit. The third underdog is the redheaded jockey, Johnny "Red" Pollard. Like Tom, Red has always demonstrated a natural way with horses. However, Red endured a difficult upbringing during the Depression and was a very angry young man which led Red into trouble on and off the racetrack. Red was also large for a jockey, and thus he always felt the need to battle with his weight.

Tom, Seabiscuit and Red were called crazy by those in traditional horse racing circles. Against the odds, Seabiscuit showed his winning abilities and captured the imagination of many Americans. Seabiscuit had many victories at smaller races. So Charles aimed high and wanted Seabiscuit to race Triple Crown winner, War Admiral, who was a much bigger and more successful horse. War Admiral's owner declined racing because his horse has nothing to prove against the smaller and less impressive Seabiscuit. After several failed attempts for the horses to race each other, Red experienced a terrible fall while racing on another one of Charles' horses. Seabiscuit, with a replacement jockey, finally faced War Admiral in an epic dual dubbed the Match of the Century on November 1, 1938. Guess who won - Seabiscuit! There was even another chapter to this comeback story. Seabiscuit also got injured, so Red and Seabiscuit rehabbed from their injuries together. The team of underdogs won races again until Seabiscuit finally retired in April of 1940.

As we continue in our story of David worship series, we encounter another compelling underdog story. It's might be one of the most famous stories of the Old Testament as David and Goliath face off in an epic dual. Let's turn together to **1 Samuel 17:32-51**:

32 “Don’t worry about this Philistine,” David told Saul. “I’ll go fight him!”

33 “Don’t be ridiculous!” Saul replied. “There’s no way you can fight this Philistine and possibly win! You’re only a boy, and he’s been a man of war since his youth.”

34 But David persisted. “I have been taking care of my father’s sheep and goats,” he said. “When a lion or a bear comes to steal a lamb from the flock, 35 I go after it with a club and rescue the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death. 36 I have done this to both lions and bears, and I’ll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God! 37 The Lord who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!”

Saul finally consented. “All right, go ahead,” he said. “And may the Lord be with you!”

38 Then Saul gave David his own armor—a bronze helmet and a coat of mail. 39 David put it on, strapped the sword over it, and took a step or two to see what it was like, for he had never worn such things before.

“I can’t go in these,” he protested to Saul. “I’m not used to them.” So David took them off again. 40 He picked up five smooth stones from a stream and put them into his shepherd’s bag. Then, armed only with his shepherd’s staff and sling, he started across the valley to fight the Philistine.

41 Goliath walked out toward David with his shield bearer ahead of him, 42 sneering in contempt at this ruddy-faced boy. 43 “Am I a dog,” he roared at David, “that you come at me with a stick?” And he cursed David by the names of his gods. 44 “Come over here, and I’ll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals!” Goliath yelled.

45 David replied to the Philistine, “You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven’s Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 46 Today the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! 47 And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord’s battle, and he will give you to us!”

48 As Goliath moved closer to attack, David quickly ran out to meet him. 49 Reaching into his shepherd’s bag and taking out a stone, he hurled it with his sling and hit the Philistine in the forehead. The stone sank in, and Goliath stumbled and fell face down on the ground.

50 So David triumphed over the Philistine with only a sling and a stone, for he had no sword. 51 Then David ran over and pulled Goliath’s sword from its sheath. David used it to kill him and cut off his head.

David had gone to the battlefield at the Valley of Elah where the Israelites and Philistines are standing off. David's father, Jesse, sent David to deliver food and check on his three oldest brothers who were soldiers in the Israelite army. David heard the challenge offered by the Philistine champion warrior. Goliath called for combat between him and an Israelite as representatives of their two nations. The survivor's nation would be the victor of the war. The giant has taunted Israel for forty days, and no one from Israel has accepted the challenge. The Israelite army was paralyzed with fear.

David heard the champion's challenge and was not afraid to face Goliath. David trusted God to bring the victory. King Saul told David that taking on Goliath was ridiculous. David was just a youth. He was likely barely old enough to be Saul's official armor bearer. David was evidently not part of the regular Israelite army leading many to think he was under the age of twenty. David was still the family shepherd while going back and forth between Bethlehem and serving as a musician in Saul's court.

Saul attempted to outfit the young, untrained soldier with his own armor. Saul's armor would have been the best in Israel even though Saul's armor was likely inferior to Goliath's armor. Saul offering his armor to David might make sense to protect him, but it was not useful for this situation. Saul's armor was designed to fit the king and probably looked very oversized for the smaller David. Plus, David had no experience with armor. Goliath is presumably experienced in battle and armed with the best combat weaponry of the day. Plus, the Scripture today tells us that Goliath is over nine feet tall. In the Hebrew texts, Goliath is measured at 6 cubits and 1 span which measures about 9 feet 9 inches. However, in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Greek versions of the text, it reads 4 cubits and 1 span which is about 6 feet 9 inches. We are not sure how tall Goliath was, but he was surely a lot bigger than David. In human terms, only one outcome seemed likely. Goliath would quickly and easily defeat the teenage shepherd.

David is fiercely confident that God will provide the victory in this battle against all odds. David might not be a soldier, but he is shepherd who knows how to protect his flock. David has defeated bears and lions and experienced life and death situations before. Has anyone ever rescued a sheep or a goat from a lion or a bear? Despite being the youngest of Jesse's sons, David is not paralyzed by fear. David seems to understand that the battle with Goliath is more spiritual than physical. The living God will defend His own name and bring judgment on Goliath for so brashly defying and shaming the Lord's army.

God uses David's courageous heart and skillful hands, which regularly protect his flock, to do something that seemed impossible. David is certainly brave, but his faith in God is truly impressive. It's not that David thinks of himself as a stronger warrior than Goliath. David seems very confident the Lord could use any willing person to carry out His plan and purpose. The key lesson of this story is not that God provided a supernatural miracle, but that God wanted someone to act in simple faith.

David trusted God to overcome fear and face a gigantic challenge. God is calling us to overcome our fears and take on the giants of our lives too. What are the giants you are

facing today? It feels like we are always facing some kind of giants. On a global scale, there is political unrest in so many places around the world. We have incidents of terrible violence almost daily. Maybe you are having a giant challenge at work or at school. Maybe there is a huge financial burden or health challenge happening in your life right now. Whatever giants you are facing, you are not facing them alone. Hear this Good News! God is right by our side. God never leaves or abandons us. I love this word of encouragement from the book of James. Come near to God and he will come near to you. (James 4:8) No matter how far away God might feel, come near to God. He promises to come near to you.

If you are not feeling a close connection to God right now, lean on your brothers and sisters in Christ. There are people in your life who want to support you with the love of Jesus. Reach out to them. Don't suffer fear in silence. There is no need to feel shame or embarrassment. We are a church family committed to support each other. We want to pray for you, visit with you, bear your burden with you, and see how God will fight this battle for you. When you feel like the giants are surrounding you, remember God is the One who surrounds us. God wants to give us a courageous heart like David.

If you feel like God is calling you to something that feels impossible, God has already equipped you with the heart and the skills to overcome what feels impossible. Lean into the challenge. Ask others to pray for you. When we pray for each other, we experience love and encouragement that is hard to describe. There is no ministry challenge that is too great for God. There is nothing in our culture that God cannot overcome. There is no amount of evil that can extinguish God's light. There is no neighbor in our community or across our city who cannot experience God's saving grace. There is no sin that God cannot forgive. God is calling us act in simple faith to overcome whatever giants we face.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES: (Books marked with * are available to be checked-out in the Asbury Discipleship Resource Center)

- *The Holy Bible* (Several FREE copies are available in the DRC)
- *A Godward Heart*, John Piper
- *Renovation of the Heart*, Dallas Willard
- *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, Dallas Willard
- *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*, W. Phillip Keller

Icebreaker Questions

1. What's your favorite underdog story—biblical, historical, sports-related, or personal—and why does it resonate with you?
2. Have you ever been underestimated or felt unqualified for something God placed in front of you? What was that experience like?

Sermon Discussion Questions

1. David's confidence didn't come from size, strength, or status—but from past faithfulness. How do David's experiences as a shepherd (lions and bears) prepare him for Goliath, and what might that teach us about how God prepares us for bigger challenges?
2. Saul tried to give David armor that didn't fit. What might "Saul's armor" look like in our lives today—expectations, roles, methods, or comparisons that God never intended for us to wear?
3. David understood the battle as spiritual before it was physical. How does David's perspective challenge the way we typically define success, power, or victory in our own battles?
4. The sermon emphasizes "simple faith" rather than a spectacular miracle. Why do you think God often works through ordinary obedience instead of dramatic interventions?
5. Fear paralyzed the Israelite army, but it didn't paralyze David. What fears tend to freeze you spiritually, and how does David's response give us a healthier model for facing fear?
6. The sermon closes with a strong emphasis on community and not facing giants alone. Why is it sometimes difficult to ask for prayer or support, and how can this group practically live out being a church family that bears one another's burdens?
7. What impacted you most from the sermon? How might you apply this week's sermon to your life?
8. How might this group pray for you this week?