

## Helps for the Teacher: David and Goliath

My goal in this overview of David and Goliath in I Samuel 17 is to show the key verse, the theme, and the overall structure that I would use if I were teaching it.

**Let's get started.**

**The key verse** to this whole section is summarized in I Samuel 17:26 "Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, since he has taunted the armies of the living God."

It highlights the **underlying theme** that unfolds in the story details:

*David protected the sheep when he was hidden from the public eye, and it was the training grounds for protecting God's people from God's enemies.*

### **The story unfolds in 3 main sections:**

First off...

- **David kills a lion and a bear (this is not the first detail mentioned in the story. It is said in retrospect when David is talking to King Saul, but chronologically it happens before the events here, and I would teach it first in setting up the story of David and Goliath.)**
  - A. Tedious job; often given to the youngest or least important in the family
  - B. Sheep are threatened by a LION and a BEAR
  - C. David kills them and rescues the sheep out of their mouth

Second section is...

- **David kills Goliath**
  - A. He is sent by his father to check on his brothers and send supplies to the Valley of Elah
  - B. Goliath makes his challenge: instead of armies fighting, send a man to fight me. The loser's army will be the slaves of the winner's army.
  - C. David hears his challenge as an affront to GOD and to the army of Israel and asks what will be done for the man who kills him.
  - D. He finds out there is a great reward
  - E. Message is taken to Saul and armor is put on David; he doesn't use it
  - F. David selects 5 smooth stones and tells Goliath that he is coming out to him in the Name of the Lord HIS GOD!
  - G. David knocks Goliath down with the stone and then cuts off his head with his own sword.

In the third section...

- **David is rewarded**
  - A. God is praised
  - B. David's family exempt from taxes
  - C. David gets a good name.

**Here are some useful facts to have as you study the passage:**

First, this is NOT about how the “underdog beats all odds” and it is not about “you can conquer the giant things in front of you if you just have faith in God.” Those are two popular themes often used for motivational or devotional purposes, but that is not what is happening in the story.

Second, this is about David’s training, which was done in obscurity, now being brought into the public limelight and it shows that the character that was forged in private is the same character that is going to rule in public. Personally, although I can’t prove it, I think the attacks of the lion and the bear happened after David’s anointing to be king. (Remember we saw God give Samson strength when he was attacked by a lion.) I believe God is using these events to train David. Notice that David was honing his accuracy and skill with the one weapon he had: his sling. It took practice and training to be a warrior. Notice also that David was protecting the SHEEP from danger—and God’s king was tasked with the job of protecting God’s people from the military and moral dangers posed by the ungodly nations surrounding them. Notice that David was willing to lay down his life for the sheep, not because of how it made him look, but because he was devoted to the sheep under his care. Remember, this is in contrast to Saul, where, you remember, appearance was very important to him.

Third, there are several details that all point to David’s “low” position—or at least that he was perceived and treated as not very important by those around him. He was from a small town, Bethlehem, and he was the youngest. His older brothers were tall, strong, and impressive enough to be selected for Saul’s army. When Samuel came to anoint the king from Jesse’s sons, David wasn’t even summoned, because he had the lowly job of caring for the sheep. His oldest brother asks him, a little bit sarcastically: “With whom have you left those few sheep in the wilderness?” as if to underscore that David had nothing to offer the army and reminding David how insignificant he was. (I Samuel 17:28) David doesn’t fit into Saul’s armor—probably a reference to his youthful size and that he hadn’t filled out as a man yet. (I Samuel 17:38-39) When Goliath sees David’s youthful appearance, he ridicules him. (I Samuel 17:43) Part of the reward for killing Goliath was to get Saul’s daughter in marriage, but Saul doesn’t come through on the bargain—and when he changes the conditions, David doesn’t see himself as worthy to become the king’s son-in-law because of his lowly upbringing compared to Saul’s and Saul’s position. (I Samuel 18:18)

Fourth, in chapter 16, when David was playing the harp for Saul, he had access to Saul’s court and the inner workings of the kingship. Again, notice the training in obscurity—David is just “that kid from Bethlehem” who comes occasionally to play the harp. David already knows that he is the king-in-waiting but he does not push himself forward; he waits to be revealed. And his true identity flies right under Saul’s hyper-sensitive radar.

Fifth, when the women sang the song after Goliath is dead, it was common for the singing to be done antiphonally—one woman would lead out with the first line, and the group of women would respond. Imagine you are Saul and you hear the loud, clear voice sing out: “Saul has slain his thousands!” It is truly music to his ears! And then you hear the group reply: “And David his tens of thousands!” The sting would have been great. But now imagine you are David—you’ve been in obscurity. You hear the first line sung out—“Saul has slain his thousands!” and you’re thinking, “Yes! There’s our king!” and then your name is exalted higher. Although David was motivated to exalt God’s Name by killing Goliath, this event

resulted in testing David's handling of public praise and notoriety. Would he take God's glory for the victory God had given?

Finally, there seems to be a discrepancy about David's relationship with Saul. In chapter 16 he is seen going back and forth to the court and playing the harp, but after he kills Goliath, Saul asks, "Whose son is this?" almost as if he's never met David. I think this is another indication that "lowly David" has now come into the limelight. Even in today's world when an athlete or actor suddenly has a stand-out performance, the first thing people want to do is to look up background information: "Who is this?! Where did he come from?! How come we didn't notice this before?!" Remember, this is going to happen to Jesus as well when He starts His public ministry. It's not that Saul had never met David, but in his pride and self-absorption he totally missed that the real King and Shepherd of Israel was the lowly harpist that was right under his nose. But now Goliath, the foe that Saul was not willing to fight himself, is dead and everyone is saying: "Wow! Look at what David did!" Saul has promised tax-exemption to the warrior's family and his daughter to the warrior in marriage. This volunteer soldier—what family is he from? Are they of standing? Are they worthy?

As you prepare this lesson to teach, take a minute to ask yourself:

What is currently on your list of responsibilities that you find to be boring or tedious? Are you disgruntled that others don't recognize your work or your value? Are you faithfully working and developing character and skills in private before they are tested with praise and notoriety?

Many blessings as you teach God's Word!