



Theme: The Many Faces of David **“Facing Life’s Challenges”**

Weekly Memory Verse:

⁴⁰ [David] 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.

Monday, August 29 – Read 1 Samuel 17:1-11. This is the first story about Israel’s King David most children learn in Sunday School. Even in sports or business, we often talk about a “David and Goliath” story when a “little guy” takes on an established power. The Philistine giant, whatever his exact size (ancient manuscripts differ), was big enough to terrify King Saul and the whole Israelite army. But he didn’t scare David. For him, the size of his God mattered much more than the size of his enemy.

☛ Goliath sounded sensible when he said, “Select one of your men, and let him come down against me. If he is able to fight me and kill me, then we will become your slaves, but if I overcome him and kill him, then you will become our slaves and you will serve us”. If a one-on-one fight could solve things, why kill more? But it was a big lie. Goliath was sure he’d win. When he didn’t, his people didn’t “serve” Israel, but fled in 1 Samuel 17:51. When has someone tried to mislead you with an outwardly “sensible” but actually one-sided idea?

☛ When have you had to face a “giant” problem or person? Were your feelings, whether you showed them or not, more like those of Saul and the army, or like David’s? What role, if any, did your trust in God play in the way you faced the daunting situation? Did you learn anything that helps you with giant problems or persons you face today, or may face in the future?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, whenever I face a giant problem, teach me how to keep my trust in you, not in my own strength. And work through whatever gifts you’ve given me to help defeat life’s giants. Amen.*

Tuesday, August 30 – Read 1 Samuel 17:22-27 and 31-37. David, with no military training, was eager to face a foe who terrified Israel’s king and army. Scholar John Goldingay wrote in his commentary *1 and 2 Samuel for Everyone*, “David...has fought lions and bears and lived to tell

the tale Yet David also knows that he might not have escaped from the lion or the bear unless God had also been involved. Though he may not know how these two considerations interweave, he knows that they do. No courage and shrewdness, and he dies. No involvement of God, and he dies. He has needed both and will need both again.”

🕯️ In verse 24 and in verse 36 God is called a “living God” in contrast to the idols of other nations, which were considered lifeless, and who were even described in their own Canaanite myths as gods who would die. What life challenges make you wonder if you truly serve a “living God?” What helps you to hold to the same faith that David had in our living God?

🕯️ In *1 and 2 Samuel for Everyone*, Goldingay writes, “[David’s] concern is that Goliath is bringing reproach and shame on the army of the living God. When a church does something shameful (as if!), this brings discredit on God. When Israel quakes in fear before the Philistines and their champion, this brings discredit on God.... David knows this and is passionately concerned to do something about it.” What are one or two ways that you can live out a passionate concern to bring credit, not discredit, to your God?

Prayer: *Lord God, help me live a life that does you credit. And help me ensure that most of the credit goes to you, not me. Amen.*

Wednesday, August 31 – Read 1 Samuel 17:38-51. We may not be familiar with the type of sling David had. It used no rubber bands. The sling that David used probably had a leather pouch with strings on each end. It was swung over the head and then the strings on one end were released, propelling the stone in the direction of the target. Given the earlier report of Goliath’s armor in 1 Samuel 17:5-7, his forehead may have been the one exposed, unprotected part of his body. The sling was the ideal weapon to reach it.

🕯️ Goliath was a veteran fighter, but he seemed to count more on fear and insults than on physical skill. The giant’s scornful slurs toward David did not awe or distract the young Hebrew. To what extent are you able to stay “inner directed,” rather than overly sensitive to what others, especially any giants you face, think of you? What makes that important in potentially scary situations?

🕯️ Saul, trying to help, offered David his armor and weapon. People might have wanted their king to “suit up” and face the threat himself, but by this time Saul’s poise and faith were long gone. His equipment didn’t fit the young shepherd—it would have made him a less effective fighter. When has someone who meant well wanted you to fight in their “armor,” not your own? How have you learned, like David, to use what you’re good at, and not try to be someone else?

Prayer: *King Jesus, you didn’t create “carbon copy” people. You made each of us unique. Guide me in using my uniqueness to serve you as faithfully and effectively as I can. Amen.*

Thursday, September 1 – Read 1 Samuel 24:1-4 and 26:1-7. After David killed Goliath, we read in 1 Samuel 18:7-9 that King Saul became jealous, even paranoid, over Israel’s praise for David. Saul tried to kill David, forcing David to hide in the Judean wilderness in 1 Samuel 18:28-29. But chasing David and his men through that wild country just shamed Saul, who was far less clever and nimble than the man he saw as a rival. At least twice the king cluelessly put himself in a spot where David could have killed him if he’d wished.

🕯️ King Saul was alarmingly violent in his plans to kill David, yet absurdly inept at tracking the brilliant young man he saw as a threat. Last week we read 1 Samuel 10:23-24, in which Israel hailed Saul as king because he was so tall and handsome. Now we see how shallow

that judgment was. Has an outwardly impressive person ever awed you at first, but turned out to be much less adept than appearances made you think?

☛ The stories don't explicitly say it, but while King Saul was vainly chasing David in the wilderness, he must have been ignoring some of a king's key duties. Have you ever found yourself obsessing about something in a way that drained your energy and distracted you from more important matters? What helps you avoid falling into the trap King Saul created for himself?

Prayer: *Lord God, remind me today of the importance of pursuing your priorities, and not some personal obsession that takes me away from the duties to which you call me. Help me trust your wisdom more than my own. Amen.*

Friday, September 2 – Read 1 Samuel 24:6-17. In today's reading, Saul relieved himself in a cave with no idea that David was near enough to cut off a piece of his robe. In 1 Samuel 26, Saul and his guards slept soundly, heedless that David and his men were so close they could slip into the camp unnoticed. But as his men said, "Here's your chance to get rid of your pursuer," David wouldn't harm Saul. Scholar Eugene Peterson wrote in his book *Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians*, that David, "saw not Saul the enemy but Saul the God-anointed David was able to see God's glory where no one else could see it—in Saul."

☛ When he realized David's generosity toward him, Saul "broke down in tears." But by 1 Samuel 26:1-2, he was back, with a lot of soldiers, trying to get rid of David. Again, David refused to harm him. This may remind us of Jesus' teaching about repeated forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-22. How easy or hard do you find it to be generous (yet not naïve) with someone whose sincerity or stability you doubt?

☛ Our deeply divided times tempt us, no matter what our specific political or religious beliefs, to insult, mock, despise and even try to "kill" the reputation of those who think or behave differently from us. How can David's treatment of King Saul point us toward the kind of assertive respect David showed even toward a king trying to kill him?

Prayer: *God of mercy, I've lost track of how many times you've had to forgive me. Teach me how to see your glory in your human children even where no one else can see it, and to treat others more the way you treat me. Amen.*

Saturday, September 3 – Read Psalm 57:1-11. The Hebrew word translated as "refuge" began as a word for a physical hiding place. But as used in this psalm, which tradition credited to David "when he fled from Saul into the cave," it wasn't about a place at all—it was about God, our truest refuge. The psalmist remembered that God had come through in the past, related that to his perilous present state, and affirmed confidence in God for the future. As scholar John Goldingay put it in *Psalms for Everyone, Part 1: Psalms 1–72*, "Remembering the past is key to living in the present and having hope for the future. It doesn't make prayer unnecessary; it does make it possible."

☛ His life in danger, David went into the wilderness, and Saul went after him. But the two men were very different, as scholar Eugene Peterson noted in *Leap Over a Wall: Earthy Spirituality for Everyday Christians*: "While Saul was the occasion for David's being in the wilderness, Saul neither defined nor dominated the wilderness. The wilderness was full of God, not Saul.... Saul was running after David, obsessed with hunting him down, his life narrowed to a murderous squint. Meanwhile, David was running to God and finding himself in his God-refuge praying." When has your life been "in the wilderness"? When

might it be again? How can David and Psalm 57 help you learn how to find your refuge in God in whatever wilderness(es) you face?

Prayer: *Lord, I take refuge in the shadow of your wings—at least that's what I want to remember to do. Keep teaching me to always put my ultimate trust in your loyal love and faithfulness. Amen.*