

## CLINGING TO HOPE

## STUDY SEVEN

## When the Giants of Life Attack

*1 Samuel 17*

*Every one of us has giants in our lives. Unless I miss my guess, you're afraid of yours. Stay realistic rather than running scared. Remember, greater is He who is in you than whoever may be in this world.*

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

EVERYONE likes to see an underdog take on a champion. The most thrilling of all underdog contests was when the scrappy shepherd boy David faced mighty Goliath. Have you ever been in a lopsided battle like that, overmatched against a menacing opponent or overwhelmed by some seemingly impossible problem?

This *Searching the Scriptures* study examines the familiar biblical account of David and Goliath from perhaps a new perspective: *David's victory was not the result of a miracle.* Indeed, the battle belonged to the Lord, but David still had to utilize his talent as a master slinger. No one could overpower Goliath hand-to-hand; however, Goliath had hidden weaknesses that made him vulnerable against David's God-enabled skills.

Your giant may not wear armor and loom nine feet tall, but it's just as intimidating. Stand your ground. God has equipped you with the skills you need to meet your foe. All you need is David-like faith in God and a willingness to face your problem head-on.



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## When the Giants of Life Attack

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### PREPARE YOUR HEART

What are the giants that lumber and bellow in your life right now?

Take a moment to commit these problems to the Lord. In the space below, write a prayer inviting His Spirit to strengthen your faith and ask Him to help you see them through His eyes with the help of His Word.



### TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Open your Bible and read *1 Samuel 17:1–3*. These verses describe the Philistines' invasion against the Israelites via the Valley of Elah, a strategic gateway into Israel. You can locate the Valley of Elah in your atlas or Bible maps. Or, at [insight.org](http://insight.org), you can view the “*Kingdoms of Israel*” map, which shows Philistia and the city of Gath, Goliath's home. To view a satellite image of the Valley of Elah, a diagram of the possible site of the battle between David and Goliath, and photographs of the valley, see “*The Valley of Elah*” at [biblewalks.com](http://biblewalks.com).



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As you can see from these maps and photos, the Philistines' invasion was like the thrust of a spear into the heart of Israel. What was at stake if Saul's army could not defeat the Philistines and send Goliath back to Gath?



### Observation: The Combatants

Now that we've set the scene, let's observe the characters and action.

#### Goliath's Challenge

As the two armies faced each other on opposite hills, the imposing Goliath strode to the valley floor with his challenge. Read *1 Samuel 17:4–10* and write down what, from an external point of view, made Goliath a terrifying foe?



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Goliath's taunt took aim directly at Saul, who was Israel's obvious choice to fight the giant. How is Saul described in *1 Samuel 9:1–2*? And what was the reason he was made king, according to *8:19–20*?

The Philistines' strategy was not just to divide Israel but to demoralize the nation by humiliating Israel's king. What did Saul do in response to Goliath's challenge? Let's see.

### Saul's Fear and David's Determination

Read *1 Samuel 17:11* and *25*, and write down how Saul responded.

While Saul's knees knocked in fear, David's heart pounded with courageous determination. When David heard the giant "shout his usual taunt to the army of Israel" (*17:23*), what did David ask the soldiers (*17:26*)? How did his brother, Eliab, react to David's questioning, and how did Saul react (*17:28–31*)?



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David measured Goliath against the true object of the Philistine’s taunts—the Lord. What was Goliath’s might against the Almighty? How could this blasphemer shake his fist in God’s face and win? Observe closely David’s conversation with Saul in *1 Samuel 17:32–40*. Use the following chart to contrast David’s godly perspective with Saul’s human-oriented perspective.

David’s Godly Perspective <i>1 Samuel 17:32–40</i>	Saul’s Human-Oriented Perspective <i>1 Samuel 17:32–40</i>

Saul couldn’t fathom how a teenage boy could overpower the heavyweight champion. But that was Saul’s problem all along. He couldn’t view himself or his problems from the perspective of an all-powerful, faithful God . . . and he didn’t appreciate the deadliness of David’s skill.

*Slingers were like snipers. They traveled light. They wore no armor. They carried no weapons except a little pouch of leather with a long leather strand. They could hit their target up to 200 yards. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



**Interpretation: The Contest**

In the interpretive phase, we seek to understand the meaning of David’s victory. Take a few minutes to read the account in *1 Samuel 17:40–51*. What do you think were the reasons David was able to defeat Goliath?



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David acknowledged the Lord as the true victor (*1 Samuel 17:46–47*). And yet, the Lord won the victory not by thundering from heaven, as He had done in a previous battle with the Philistines (*7:10*). Instead, God prevailed *through David* and his stone-slinging skills.

David had honed his skill through countless lonely hours of practice in the wilderness, and it had been battle-tested against lions and bears (*17:34–37*). Little did David know all this was in preparation for the day he would fling a stone with the accuracy and velocity of a bullet to Goliath's forehead.

What principle can you draw from God working through David's skill to win the battle against Goliath?

*How did David do it? He remembered how God had strengthened him in days past. Don't forget those stories. Every one of us can name them. Remember the things God did for you in the past. It will strengthen your faith for today. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



### Correlation: God Looks at the Heart

Size and power may impress us, but God is more interested in a person's character and devotion to Him. Read the account of a previous episode when Samuel anointed David (*1 Samuel 16:6–13*). What do you learn about seeing people through God's eyes? How can this perspective help you when facing giants?

*Don't go by size. There's an important lesson here for all of us who face our own giants. The powerful and fearful in appearance are not always what they seem. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll*



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### Application: Lessons for Battling Giants

Pastor Chuck Swindoll lists four types of giant-sized challenges that can paralyze us if we let them.

- 1) **Domestic:** Marital discord is one type of domestic giant, along with the death of a loved one or a wandering son or daughter. These giants pound us with grief, confusion, and heartache.
- 2) **Personal:** This type of giant may involve a serious health issue, worry about aging, a distressing lawsuit, or a move to a strange new place. These giants hurl spears of loneliness, depression, negativity, and bitterness.
- 3) **Economic:** The name of this bellowing bully may be unemployment, financial collapse, or out-of-control spending. These giants inflict fear and insecurity.
- 4) **Spiritual:** The most dangerous giant of all is unbelief. We must overcome this giant with the aid of the Spirit who helps us trust our Savior. This giant mocks us with doubt and despair.

Under which category can you place your giants? What feelings have you experienced?

What can you do? Sit on the sideline and wish for a miracle? No, based on our study, first, *remember what God has done for you in the past*. Second, *develop a God-centered perspective*. While Saul retreated from the fight, David took the fight to the enemy and, in that way, had the thrill of experiencing the strength of the Almighty through him.



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David had to take action to defeat his Goliath. What David-like skills has the Lord given you to use as you face your giant?

Which principle from David's example gives you the most hope?

Don't overestimate the might of taunting giants, and don't underestimate the power of God! Many of the giants we face are nothing but empty shells, having no substance at all. Deep within David's life, there was the assurance that God was on his side. Nothing's more potent than God-given hope when facing giants.





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### A FINAL PRAYER

Close this study by praying the prayer of Patrick of Ireland, and express your dependence on the power of God today.

I bind unto myself today  
The power of God to hold and lead,  
His eye to watch, his might to stay,  
His ear to hearken to my need.  
The wisdom of my God to teach,  
His hand to guide, his shield to ward;  
The word of God to give me speech,  
His heavenly host to be my guard.<sup>1</sup>

#### ENDNOTE

1. Patrick of Ireland, as quoted in *The One Year Book of Personal Prayer* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1991), 4.

