

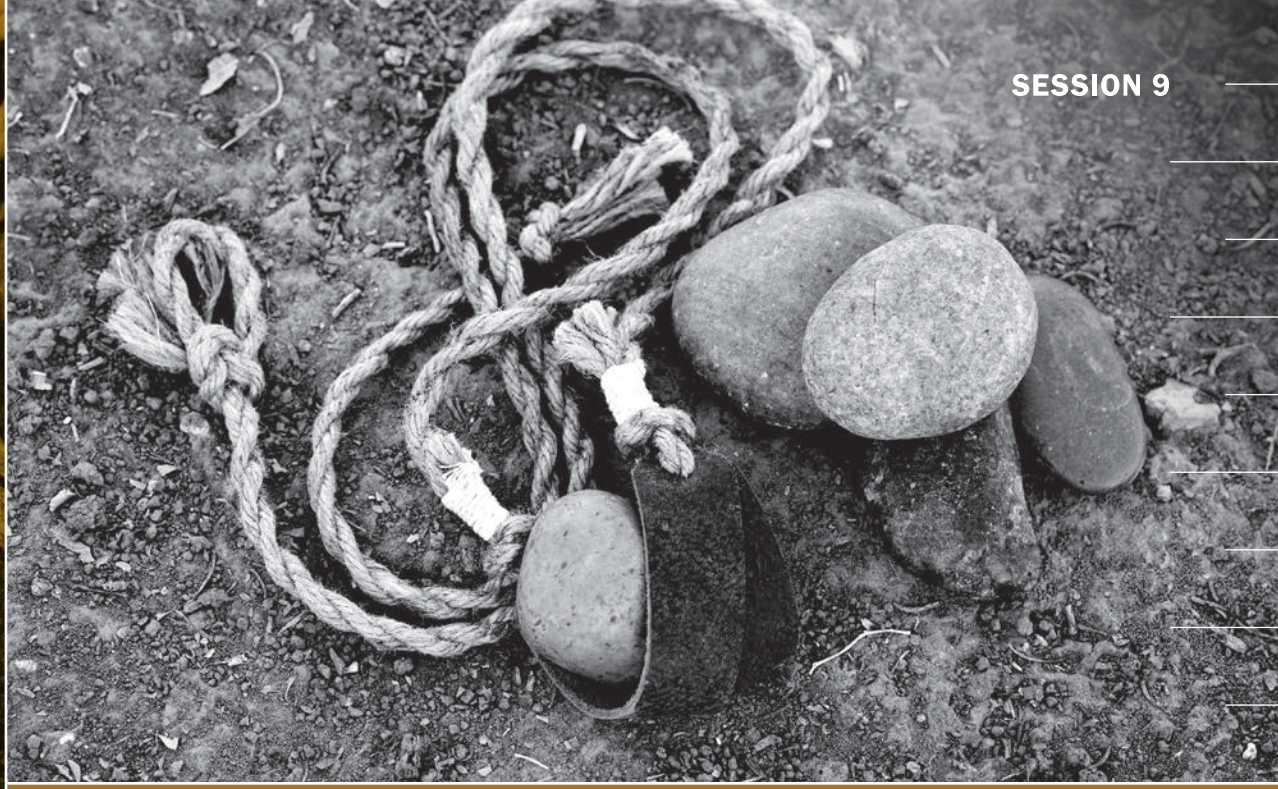

Victory

DAVID FOUGHT AGAINST GOLIATH WITH GOD'S POWER AND FOR GOD'S HONOR.

Scripture Passage: 1 Samuel 17:32-47 **Memory Verse: 1 Samuel 17:37a**

Sometimes we find ourselves facing overwhelming odds in life. The source of those odds can be anything stretching from a financial crisis to sudden health issues to relationships that have soured. Our response most likely includes a sense of desperation or resignation. If we can't figure out a solution, we typically throw up our hands and give up.

Sadly, the last solution we often apply is the first one we should have employed: seeking the presence and power of God. The Lord has promised that He will never abandon His people (Ps. 94:14; see also Deut. 31:6 and its New Testament counterpart, Heb. 13:5). He will be their shield (Pss. 3:3; 18:2; 28:7) and provide them with a peace that passes understanding (Phil. 4:7).

As you study this familiar story of David and Goliath, ask God to remind you of His power when you are weak. Seek ways you can stand for Him boldly. And look for opportunities to encourage the adults in your group to find victory in Him as well.

Weekly Podcast: Group Leader Training

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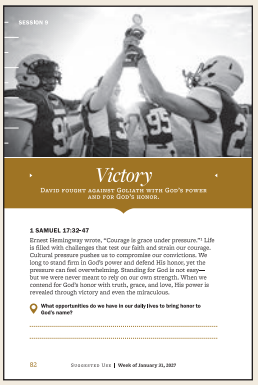
Ernest Hemingway wrote, "Courage is grace under pressure."[1] Life is filled with challenges that test our faith and strain our courage. Cultural pressure pushes us to compromise our convictions. We long to stand firm in God's power and defend His honor, yet the pressure can feel overwhelming. Standing for God is not easy—but we were never meant to rely on our own strength. When we contend for God's honor with truth, grace, and love, His power is revealed through victory and even the miraculous. (PSG, p. 82)

What opportunities do we have in our daily lives to bring honor to God's name?


SESSION 5

Victory

DAVID FOUGHT AGAINST GOLIATH WITH GOD'S POWER AND FOR GOD'S HONOR.

1 SAMUEL 17:32-47

Ernest Hemingway wrote, "Courage is grace under pressure."[1] Life is filled with challenges that test our faith and strain our courage. Cultural pressure pushes us to compromise our convictions. We long to stand firm in God's power and defend His honor, yet the pressure can feel overwhelming. Standing for God is not easy—but we were never meant to rely on our own strength. When we contend for God's honor with truth, grace, and love, His power is revealed through victory and even the miraculous.

What opportunities do we have in our daily lives to bring honor to God's name?

82 SUGGESTED USE | Week of January 31, 2027

Understand the Context (1 Samuel 17:1-58)

The story of David and Goliath is one of the most familiar stories in the Bible. Just the phrase "David and Goliath" has become a metaphor for any mismatch or daunting situation. It's how we describe the interaction between an underdog and a powerful rival. From a biblical perspective, it's also the longest and most detailed account of any incident recorded about David's life.

The Philistines were aggressive enemies of Israel who lived along the Mediterranean coast in modern-day Gaza. They were a powerful people who harassed and subjugated Israel for many decades during the period of the judges and the reign of Saul. They finally were subdued by David (2 Sam. 5:17-25).

First Samuel 17 is just one installment of the ongoing conflict between Israel and Philistia. This confrontation, though, had a unique twist in the practice of "representative combat" or single combat. In this, a champion from each opposing army would fight. The army of the winner became the victor, while the army and nation of the loser had to submit to the victor. Such an arrangement seems to have been common with the Philistines, but it's not clear if this was Israel's first experience in such a contest.

The Philistine champion was a "giant" named Goliath, a man who stood nearly ten feet tall (1 Sam. 17:4). In addition to his intimidating appearance, his armaments were massive. The writer of 1 Samuel emphasized the weight of the items Goliath wore or carried (17:5-7). His physical size and heavy armaments were large, but his challenge to Israel was lengthy as well (vv. 8-10).

Following this detailed description of Goliath, the text reintroduces us to David, giving us a little of his genealogy and the names of his three oldest brothers (v. 12). David was sent by his father, Jesse, to check on his brothers and to take provisions to them and their commander. Once David arrived in the Israelite camp, the upcoming confrontation between David and Goliath began gaining momentum. The narrator shared picturesque details to explain David's victory and the subsequent victory of Israel over the Philistines.

One puzzling event is found in this chapter following the slaying of Goliath. In verses 55-58, King Saul seemed to wonder who David was, despite the fact that David had been serving in Saul's royal court (see 16:22-23). However, the reality is that Saul had promised the family of the one who killed Goliath would be exempt from taxation. Most likely Saul was inquiring about David's father so that the exemption could be enacted.

Read 1 Samuel 17:45-47. What repeated phrases or ideas about the Lord appear in David's speech? (PSG, p. 83)

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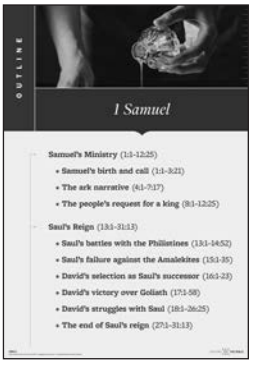
ENGAGE







PREPARE: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Kingdom of Saul*) and **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of 1 Samuel*) on a focal wall.

ASK: **What opportunities do we have in our daily lives to bring honor to God's name?** (PSG, p. 82)

READ: Call on a volunteer to read the opening paragraph on page 82 of the PSG. Highlight the Hemingway quote and encourage adults to share if they are familiar with it.

ASK: **Do you agree with it? Why or why not?**

DISCUSS: Discuss responses, affirming that taking a stand can be hard. Direct attention to **Pack Item 2** (*Poster: Outline of 1 Samuel*) and encourage adults to pick an outline point that sounds familiar to them. Affirm that "David and Goliath" is one of the most familiar stories in the Bible and serves as the focal passage for this session.

CONTEXT: Set the stage for the battle between David and Goliath.

> *Out of the Philistine camp stepped their champion warrior. Goliath stood 9 feet, 9 inches tall. His military clothing weighed 125 pounds. Goliath's weapons were imposing. Everything about him was imposing. His challenges struck fear in the Israelite soldiers. . . . David might have been young and inexperienced in battle, but he had fought lions and bears to protect his sheep. More than this, David feared the Lord. He lived to honor the Lord's name.* (PSG, p. 83)

TRANSITION: *David took a stand for God in the face of an incredible challenge. In this session, we'll see how God gave him an awesome victory. This is a familiar story, but that doesn't mean God can't show you something new. Look at this passage with an open heart and hear what God is saying to you today.*

Group Activity Option

Music

Provide hymnals and direct adults to "Be Thou My Vision" (*Baptist Hymnal 2008*, No. 83). Sing the hymn together. Then, direct the group to list the metaphors for God. Lead them to break that list down further by categorizing the metaphors as either spiritual defense or offense. Invite adults to share which stanza has the most meaning for them and why. Encourage adults to look for God's directions on dealing with spiritual battles in today's session.

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David's Faith (1 Sam. 17:32-37)

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."

(v. 32) Once he heard the Philistine's challenge, David asked what was going on. Perhaps he had never heard someone insult Israel's God like Goliath had. David was shocked at the defiance displayed of the giant, but he also was shocked at the lack of faith among the Israelites.

Word of David's reaction soon reached Saul, who summoned the young shepherd. David's words to Saul were direct: ***Don't let anyone be discouraged***. No doubt David sensed the fear throughout Israel's army. Without any hesitation, David volunteered to ***go and fight*** Goliath.

(v. 33) King Saul immediately pointed out that David was ***just a youth***. In 1 Samuel 16:18, one of Saul's men called David a "valiant man" and "a warrior." This commendation had not registered with Saul. All he could see was David's age.

In this era, twenty years old was the minimum age for service in Israel's fighting force. David was too young in Saul's mind. Goliath's age meant he had much more experience, not to mention his size compared to the youngest son of Jesse. All that Saul perceived, he saw with human eyes rather than with eyes of faith. God was nowhere in Saul's thinking. David, on the other hand, saw the situation from God's perspective. He believed God could and would bring victory over Israel's enemies.

(vv. 34-36) After serving in Saul's court as the king's personal musician, David evidently had been permitted to go back and forth from Saul to the fields of Bethlehem to tend ***his father's sheep*** (1 Sam. 17:15). David reminded Saul of this and narrated how his experience of protecting the flocks had prepared him for facing Goliath. On more than one occasion, the young shepherd had faced ***a lion*** or ***bear*** trying to carry off a ***lamb from the flock***. Lions are mentioned 135 times in the Old Testament and were used as a symbol of strength. Lions became extinct in Israel during the 13th century. The bear was most likely a Syrian bear, which could grow to six feet in height and weigh around five hundred pounds.

David's description of these encounters paints a vivid picture. Instead of waiting back, he ***went after*** the animal. If it ***reared up*** to attack, he would ***grab it by its fur, strike it down, and kill it.*** As far as David was concerned, Goliath would be no different from the predators he had defeated. Plus, Goliath had ***defied the armies of the living God***. He was convinced that the Lord ultimately would defend His own honor before this ***uncircumcised Philistine***.

(v. 37) Throughout his conversation with Saul, David exhibited an unfailing confidence in God. That confidence is seen in the declaration that ***the LORD,*** who had been faithful to him in other dangerous situations, ***will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine***.

Saul's response to David's determination was simple: ***Go, and may the LORD be with you***. In reality, this was probably just a cursory statement and expressed little, if any, faith in God. In many ways, Saul's words were dismissive toward David and his faith. Nothing about Saul suggested that he believed David could defeat Goliath. He was willing to equip David with his own armor. Beyond that, Saul continued in his apathetic and fear-filled leadership of the nation.

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APPLICATION POINT: **God's people can be confident that He is greater than their enemies.**

READ: **Invite a volunteer to read aloud 1 Samuel 17:32-37** as the group identifies David's attitude toward Goliath.

BACKGROUND: Direct attention to **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Kingdom of Saul*) and highlight the land of Philistia along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Remind adults that Israel and the Philistines had a long history of aggression toward one another during the time of the judges and the reign of Saul. Note that these battles would continue until David finally subdued the Philistines after he became king.



NOTE: Point out that Saul, much like his own brother (v. 28), was not impressed with David's faith and courage. Suggest that the king was wallowing in fear like his troops, and his shallow commitment to God did not inspire confidence in the Lord. Instead, he focused on what he saw as David's limitations.

ASK: **When have you faced a difficult situation that challenged your faith?** (PSG, p. 85)

RECAP: Note that, unlike Saul, David had experienced God's work in a personal way and that fueled his faith.

> *When David heard that Israel's enemy stood in opposition against the armies of God, he could not believe no one dared defend God's honor. . . . David's courage was founded in faith. He believed the Lord would rescue him from this Philistine in the same way He had previously rescued him from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear. David was focusing on God's faithfulness in the past to strengthen his faith for this future battle.* (PSG, pp. 84-85)

ASK: **How does God's past faithfulness prepare you for today's battles?** (PSG, p. 85).

DISCUSS: Direct adults to find a partner and discuss the following question: **What experience with God in your life strengthened your faith and gave you the confidence to trust Him with a big challenge later?** Allow the pairs a few minutes to discuss their responses, then encourage volunteers to share their stories briefly. Affirm that God's work in the past can make a difference in how we approach our "enemies" in life right now.

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David's Weapons (1 Sam. 17:38-40)

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.

(vv. 38-39) Saul's attempt to put ***his own military clothes*** on the young shepherd speaks volumes about his limited faith in the Lord. His *clothes* would consist of a loose-fitting garment that extended to the hips or thighs. Over this, he would place a metal covering. Depending on construction, this could be a heavy piece of protection.

Saul also put his ***bronze helmet on David's head*** and ***strapped his sword*** into place over the armor. It's possible that Saul was trying to emulate the bronze helmet of Goliath. In his mind, that might have given David a measure of hope in this lopsided match.

It's also possible that Saul was trying to make David into his own image. To some in that day, wearing another person's clothing and armament meant taking on the essence and strength of that person. Such a move on Saul's part might have been an attempt to share in any victory that David experienced.

To David's credit, he quietly submitted to Saul's feeble attempt to prepare him for battle. Yet, despite all the physical armor involved, David's confidence was not in helmets, swords, or any other weapons King Saul could provide. Instead, he was putting his full trust in the Lord. In the Psalms, David expressed a similar thought. While he was older then, he still confessed boldly that, "Some take pride in chariots, and others in horses, but we take pride in the name of the LORD our God" (Ps. 20:7). If he didn't trust in chariots or horses, David certainly would not rely on the armor of a human king.

It is worth remembering the probable height difference between Saul and David. While scholars believe David was the smallest in his family, Saul stood head and shoulders above any man in Israel (1 Sam. 10:23). This discrepancy helps explain the difficulty that David faced as he ***tried to walk*** in Saul's armament.

On top of all that, David had never worn armor until this moment: ***I'm not used to them***. As a result, he ***took them off.*** David's plans for fighting Goliath were far different from what Saul had in mind. As noted, his confidence was in something less tangible than a suit of armor. His confidence was in the God of Israel who had been faithful to David in the fields with the sheep and faithful to the nation of Israel for hundreds of years.

Key Doctrine

God the Father
God is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. (See 2 Chronicles 20:6; Jeremiah 32:17.)

(v. 40) David's choice of weapons stood in sharp contrast to what Goliath was relying on and what King Saul had offered. Instead of the dress and weapons of a warrior, David chose the tools of a shepherd. The ***staff*** was a long stick or pole used for walking, defense, and for measurement. In some cases, the term "rod" is interchangeable.

The ***sling*** consisted of two long leather straps with a larger piece of leather between them. The sling would be whirled above the thrower's head. Then, at just the right moment, the thrower would release one strap to launch a projectile. Slings were common weapons in ancient warfare, and the soldiers who used them were quite accurate (Judg. 20:16; 1 Chron. 12:2).

For his ammunition, David selected ***five smooth stones***, which he placed in his ***shepherd's bag***. He picked the stones up from a ***wadi*** (or stream) on the battlefield. After equipping himself, David ***approached the Philistine***. Just as he had stepped up to fight the lions and bears, David moved forward to face Goliath.

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EXPLORE 1 Samuel 17:38-40



APPLICATION POINT: **Believers need to know that the battle to defend God's honor cannot be fought by worldly methods.**

READ: **Direct the group to read 1 Samuel 17:38-40** silently and to contrast the actions taken by King Saul and the actions taken by David.

ASK: **What happens when we look at life only from a worldly point of view?** (PSG, p. 87)

EXPLAIN: Point out that in outfitting David, Saul tried to prepare him for battle as he would. Note that in rejecting Saul's trappings, David demonstrated practical wisdom and deep faith in God. Emphasize that he knew he did not need to dress like Goliath or Saul to win the battle as long as God was on his side.

RECAP: Highlight David's "battle plan" for defeating the giant.

> *David left Saul's presence with his shepherd's staff in hand. He walked down to the wadi and chose five smooth stones. David's approach mirrored that of his time with his sheep (1 Sam. 17:37). To fight off wild animals as a shepherd, David used a staff for close confrontations and slingstones to ward off coming prey. Both items David took into battle were not man-made devices but fashioned by God. With the sling, stones, and staff in hand, David approached the Philistine. . . . David considered this battle to be one fought for God's honor and in God's name (1 Sam. 17:45).* (PSG, pp. 86-87)

DISCUSS: **What "weapons" do believers have today as they fight for God's honor?** (PSG, p. 87)

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Sticks and Stones

Gather a large stick from a tree, along with a palm-sized rock. As you discuss the weapons that David chose for battling Goliath, point out that they were not man-made but God-made. Note that humans have the ability to devise tools and equipment, but David was confident the natural world offered all he needed to defend himself. Say: *More important, David trusted in the power of God*. Note that 2 Corinthians 10:4 says our weapons are not fleshly, but from God. Emphasize our ability to use what God provides to honor His name.

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God's Victory (1 Sam. 17:41-47)

41 The Philistine came closer and closer to David, with the shield-bearer in front of him. 42 When the Philistine looked and saw David, he despised him because he was just a youth, healthy and handsome. 43 He said to David, "Am I a dog that you come against me with sticks?" Then he cursed David by his gods. 44 "Come here," the Philistine called to David, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts!" 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."

(v. 41) David approached Goliath and his ***shield-bearer***. Two types of shields were used during this period—a small round shield and a longer rectangular shield. Goliath probably was protected by the longer body shield. Again, Goliath's size and armaments stood in vivid contrast to David's stature and lack of weapons.

(vv. 42-44) Goliath took David's presence as an insult. In his mind, victory over David would do little to enhance his reputation as a champion. So, Goliath ***despised him***. The narrator's description of David as ***healthy and handsome*** reflects back to 1 Samuel 16:12 and refers to one who has spent a great deal of time outdoors.

Goliath expressed his disdain with a taunt about David's staff: ***Am I a dog that you come against me with sticks?*** To Goliath, the shepherd's staff was more appropriate for beating a *dog* than for confronting a mighty warrior.

Goliath also invoked a curse in the name of ***his gods***. These *gods* likely included Dagon, the leading deity of the Philistines. In 1 Samuel 5:2-12, the Philistines saw firsthand the result of an encounter between the Lord and this false god—an encounter that didn't end well for Dagon.

Goliath's curse continued with an epithet typical in ancient Near Eastern cultures. He vowed to feed David to ***the birds of the sky and the wild beasts***. By cursing David, Goliath put himself under the curse of Abraham's God (Gen. 12:3). Based on Goliath's blasphemous taunts, he actually was challenging the Lord rather than David.

(v. 45) David's confidence in God remained unshakable. While he could see the weaponry of Goliath, he also knew that ***a sword, spear, and javelin*** could never prevent God from winning the victory. So, David came against Goliath ***in the name of the LORD of Armies***. For David, God's faithful deliverance of Israel in battle after battle played out. He knew beyond a doubt that God would defend His honor against anyone who ***defied him***.

(v. 46) Goliath didn't realize he was outnumbered! It would be ***the LORD*** who would ***hand*** Goliath to David. The shepherd returned Goliath's taunts in verse 44 by affirming God would help him ***remove your head*** and would feed the ***corpses of the Philistine camp to the birds of the sky and the wild creatures of the earth***.

Even more important than a military victory, ***all the world will know that Israel has a God*** who rescues His people. The contrast between the supposed gods of the Philistines and the Lord God of Israel would be undeniable.

(v. 47) David's taunt continues in verse 47. Not only would the whole world understand the power of God, but ***this whole assembly*** also would acknowledge that God saves. David meant both the Philistine armies (who denied God) and the armies of Israel (who failed to trust God). Just like the Philistines, the Israelites needed a demonstration of the power and faithfulness of God.

David expressed a philosophy that would guide him in all his future military campaigns: ***the battle is the LORD's***. He knew that it was not his puny sling or staff that would lead Israel to victory. It would be the unparalleled power of Israel's God.

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APPLICATION POINT: **Be zealous for God's honor and trust His strategy so that He will get the glory.**

READ: **Invite a volunteer to read 1 Samuel 17:41-47** as the group reflects on the contrast between Goliath's taunts and David's rebuttal to those taunts.

DISCUSS: Lead the group in a brief discussion about why David felt compelled to defend God's honor when so many others in Israel's camp merely succumbed to fear.

ASK: **What does it mean to say, "the battle is the LORD's"?** (PSG, p. 89)

RECAP: Summarize this content from pages 88-89 of the PSG to provide more insight into David's words.

> "David acknowledged that Goliath's abilities to do battle were significant. However, David's confidence did not rest in his abilities but in the 'name of the LORD of Armies, the God of the ranks of Israel.' 'The LORD of Armies' refers to God's supreme power and command of heaven's armies. David referenced this description as a way to honor the Lord's name, but also to remind Israel of God's faithfulness to deliver them in the past. . . . David boldly declared Goliath's fate (v. 46). David would not defeat the Philistine for the glory of Israel. This event would serve as a major statement of God's purpose for this world—that all the world will know that Israel has a God."

ASK: **How does pursuing God's honor shape how you live your life daily?** (PSG, p. 89)

SAY: *David was not on a personal conquest. He wanted God to be glorified through conquering the giant who dared to shake his fist at God.*

Group Activity Option

Bible Skill

Essential to understanding the history of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament is an understanding of the Old Testament concept of war. Read the article about "Holy War" in a Bible dictionary. ***How does what you learn about holy wars compare to modern-day warfare?***

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CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from Apply the Text on page 90 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *God's people can be confident that He is greater than their enemies.*
- *Believers need to know that the battle to defend God's honor cannot be fought by worldly methods.*
- *Be zealous for God's honor and trust His strategy so that He will get the glory.*

REFLECT: Encourage adults to consider silently how they could apply these principles to their lives each day. Urge them to spend time talking with God about that in the days to come.

DISCUSS: Direct the group to read the first set of questions on page 90 of the PSG and to share some times they have needed God to fight for them. Encourage them to look for ways they can stand in the gap with others who need that support—and how they can find support when they need to stand up for God.

ASK: **What can we do to be ready for the next giant we may face?**

PRAY: Close the session in prayer, asking God to help each adult to be sensitive and discerning about situations when they should feel compelled to defend God's honor and to trust in Him. Pray that they have boldness to take a stand, knowing that the battle is the Lord's and He will make Himself known.

AFTER THE SESSION

Send the group a text or email during the week. Challenge them to read and reflect on the second set of questions on page 90 of the PSG. Affirm that standing for God can be hard, but remind them that the battle is the Lord's. Encourage them to think through how they can know when to stand still and when to stand and fight. Let them know that you are praying for God's wisdom on behalf of each person.

LEADER BLOG



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