

Bite Size Bible Study

David & Goliath #95

By Pastor Lee

The more I learn about the concept of Honor/Shame, the more I find that we in the Western Cultures sometimes attribute honor for the wrong reasons. Case in point is the honor David receives for defeating Goliath.

Honor comes from at least two sources – Ascribed Honor (given without one doing anything for it) and Achieved Honor (earned honor). God, through Samuel, anointed David to be King of Israel. That is ascribed honor; he didn't do anything to deserve that honor. {It's just like our salvation through Jesus; we don't do anything to deserve that honor.} But honor can be different in different cultures. What one culture considers honor another may not, and vice versa.

It is easy for us to misread this story for two reasons. First, it is easy to fit the Goliath story into our modern Western value system, where we honor the little individual who takes on the big system. Secondly, we often misread this story because we can forget (or even not know) an important part of the backstory. When the people ask Samuel to select a king for them, they say, *"Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles"* (1 Sam 8:20). Saul fails to act like a king, while David demonstrates exactly that behavior. David achieves the honor of being their king – but why?

When we read these stories in the Bible it is often what is not said (what the writer expects us to already know) that makes the difference in whether we gain a full understanding or just a surface understanding of the story.

In this story we are expected to immediately notice that it is Saul's job to go fight Goliath. He is the king, and the king is to fight their battles for them. Goliath has great armor. Saul does too. Saul is supposed to be confident that Israel's God will fight for him. Saul isn't that confident.

This is the difference between Saul and David. David is the hero not because he's great with a sling. David is commended because he is confident that God will fight for him, *"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"* (1 Sam 17:37). We often admire (honor) David for the wrong value. We honor him because he is a good shot with the sling, but Scripture honors him for trusting God. That's the value that counts.

Ancients knew that armies used slingers and an individual slinger was much less of a threat against an equipped soldier. An opposing soldier facing an individual slinger was able to defend himself quite easily against the slinger. When the slinger starts to wind up, the soldier would duck behind his shield. Once the slinger was out of stones, he was defenseless. There was one minor risk, which any soldier would know. A slinger could begin a windup, and then when the soldier ducked behind his shield, the slinger could try to run up and get close enough to stab the soldier with a sword around the shield. All of this background in ancient warfare we are expected to know.

Knowing this, we see that David has little to no real chance of winning. David can sling five stones hard against Goliath's shield, but then David will be defenseless.

Another thing we misinterpret is that Saul wants David to wear his tunic and armor. Why? Is it out of concern for David, or is that Saul wants the Israelites to think he going out to fight Goliath, as he is supposed to?

We are told specifically where Goliath is hit. Goliath probably ducked behind his shield and when he didn't hear a stone strike the shield he took a quick look over the top of the shield to make sure David wasn't running up. In the split second it took to peek, the stone arrived at precisely the right place to hit Goliath in the forehead. David would have needed to launch the stone before Goliath started his quick peek. It wasn't a one-in-a-million shot. It wasn't a lucky break. It was a miracle.

David's God fought for him, while Goliath's god did not. David was right to confidently trust in God. Are we are supposed to say, "David killed Goliath", or "God killed Goliath." Whatever conclusions we take from this story, the most important one is that we are to honor David not for being a great slinger but for trusting God. He is the kind of person who will make a good king.

It is a beautiful example of God's constant message. God assures Abram, *"Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield"* (Gen 15:1). God tells Isaac, *"Do not be afraid, for I am with you"* (Gen 26:24). He tells Jacob, *"I am with you"* (Gen 28:15). What does Jesus tell us? Face Goliath if you are a good shot? No. *"And surely I am with you always"* (Mt 28:20).

**Honor David, but do it for the right value:
for believing that God would be with him, as he promised.**

Cornerstone Community Church

PO Box 654 Lemon Grove, CA 91945-0654 – www.cornerstonecommunityonline.org