

David vs. Goliath: “Perception Problem” - 1 Samuel 17

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If there is one story that is well known to believers and unbelievers alike, it would be the story of David and Goliath. The story of David and Goliath has become the stereotypical expression for events with matchups that include a likely winner and a likely loser. Even if someone doesn't know the story completely they know what commentators mean when they describe an event as a matchup between David and

Goliath. What can a believer learn from

such a familiar narrative in the Bible? In this short blog, I would like to unpack how this familiar story can be applied and diagrammed for those facing what appears to them as insurmountable challenges in life.

Setting the Stage

Old Testament narratives are designed to instruct, encourage and instill hope. The Apostle Paul says, “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope (Romans 15:4). Therefore, this story, along with many other O.T. narratives are intended to be historical records which instill hope in God.ⁱ The characters in the story play an important role in leading the reader to this outcome. As Fee and Stuart point out, “God is the hero of all biblical narratives.”ⁱⁱ Samuel sovereignly records this because it was an opportunity for God's people to remember that they must hope in God. Remember, the story serves a similar purpose for us.

***WE MUST PUT OUR HOPE IN THE TRUE GOD.
THE ONE WHO IS WITH US, EVEN WHEN WE THINK ALL IS LOST.***

Saul and Israel's Fear

The narrative begins in the valley of Elah. The Israelites on one side and the Philistines on the other (1 Samuel 17:3). Both armies ready themselves for battle. Then comes a man from the Philistines named Goliath. His size, his strength, his armor, and his words struck fear into the hearts of the Israelite army (1 Samuel 17:11,32). Saul was now advanced in years and would

certainly not be able to represent God's people. Someone would have to fight this Giant. The one who would be able to kill this giant would find riches, honor, and marriage to the King's daughter.

It is interesting to note what fear can do to those who lose hope. As soon as they took their eyes off trusting in God and put them on this Giant their hearts melted with fear. Fear and worry can

easily melt the heart of anyone who believes that their God is too small to care for a problem so big. Take notice in the story that you don't hear a call to fast and pray to the Lord. Saul isn't found seeking direction from God. Instead, Saul decided to seek to resolve the challenge by seeking a warrior from Israel brave enough to fight this giant. Fear and worry often lead us to try solving the problems we face in our way. Before we become too self-righteous, thinking we would never respond in such a way, perhaps we should ask ourselves a question:

1. Do you and I always turn immediately to the Lord when our problems seem too much to bear?
2. Have you found yourself consumed with trying to figure out how you will solve the problem you are facing but then after trying it your own way recognize that you must trust in the Lord for the help?

Israel was in a real predicament. Lives were at stake. The problem before them was so great that they struggled looking to the Lord. They needed to trust in the God of Israel who brought them out of the land of Egypt and helped them in the conquest of the promise land.

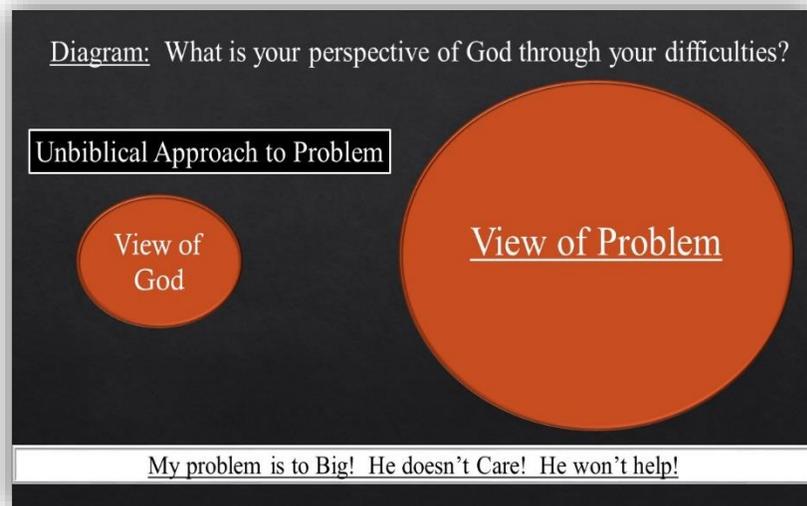
ISN'T IT INTERESTING HOW WE TEND TO FORGET WHAT GOD HAS DONE IN THE PAST DURING A PROBLEM!

GOD IN HIS LOVING MERCY SHOWS KINDNESS BY HELPING LIFT OUR SPIRITS IN UNEXPECTED WAYS.

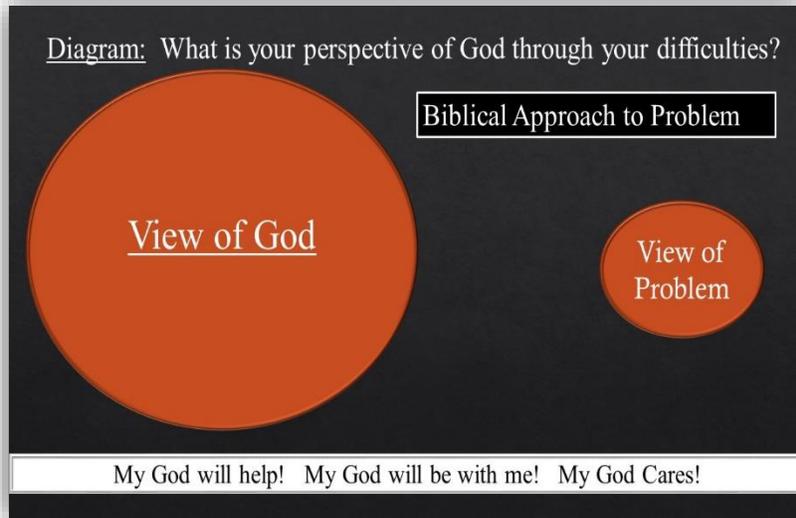
Israel's gracious God is about to lift his people's spirit by an unexpected shepherd boy.

David's Faith

David, who was obviously not old enough to go to war continued to tend the sheep back home (1 Samuel 17:20). His father asked David to take provisions to his brothers who had went to



war. Shortly after David arrived Goliath came out and continued to taunt Israel. David also saw his size, his strength, his armor, and heard his words, but they did not lead him to fear as it had done with Saul and the Israelites. David responds by saying, “Who is this Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God.” His response spread through the camp until it fell on the ears of King Saul. As David stands before Saul he says, “Let no man’s heart fail because of him. Your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.” What incredible faith in the living God! What a different perspective of the problem.



When David saw this problem, he viewed it through the eyes of faith. Oh, that we could be like David when we face challenges. If believers desire to respond like this, we too must look at our problems with eyes of faith. God allows trials in our lives to strengthen our faith not destroy it (James 1:2-3). Unfortunately, the only thing that Saul could see was David’s outer

appearance. This young man

had the faith in God that King Saul should have expressed. An unexpected shepherd boy, with extraordinary faith. He shares with Saul how God had protected in the past and that he will protect him against this Philistine. David says, “The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine” (1 Samuel 17:37).

Looking through the eyes of faith helped him maintain his hope in the Lord while others hearts were full of fear. The faith of David ought to remind us that...

THE SAME GOD WHO HAS TAKEN CARE OF US IN THE PAST WILL TAKE CARE OF US IN THE PRESENT AND INTO THE FUTURE.

Saul tries to talk David out of fighting this giant, but he could not change his mind. Even if there are others around who are discouraging us, our faith can strengthen our perspective. As David walked out onto the battle that day to a taunting giant cursing his God, his faith gave him strength. He said, “The Lord will deliver you into my hand.” David’s God was bigger than this giant. Goliath was just a small problem that David’s God could handle. His desire was that “all would know that there is a God in Israel (1 Samuel 17:46). David acted because that is what people of faith do.

*PEOPLE OF FAITH DON'T HAVE TO LIVE IN FEAR AND WORRY.
THEY MUST PUT THEIR HOPE IN THE LORD AND ACT IN FAITH LIKE DAVID.*

What Can We Learn!

Our problems often reveal our personal perception of God and reveal the kind of faith that is in our hearts. It is important to remember that our trials do have a purpose in our lives. These moments are opportunities to trust in the living God. Like David, most of us could recount ways God has cared and protected us in the past. Remembering and reflecting on these moments should fuel our faith and keep us from shrinking back in fear. The story of David and Goliath also ought to remind us of God's care for his people. We ought to be amazed with God's care and protection of his people even while they were not trusting in him. We have a God filled with mercy and grace who cares deeply and loves us even when we don't deserve it. The Lord protects David from Goliath, restores hope in the living God to His people, and sustains the one who's line the King of Kings would come.

*REMEMBER, YOUR PERCEPTION OF GOD MATTERS WHEN YOU FACE
CHALLENGES.*

*OUR GOD IS SO BIG, HIS LOVE IS GREAT, AND HIS STEADFAST LOVE WILL
REMAIN FOREVER.*

Reflection:

1. How do your trials reveal your personal perception of God?
2. How has God demonstrated his care for you in the past and present?
3. What thoughts consume your mind when you are facing a trial?
4. What is the difference between someone who trusts and someone who fears? How does this impact your testimony of the living God?
5. How does the story of David and Goliath encourage you to hope in God?
6. Look up Hebrews 13:5-6, 1 Peter 5:7, Isaiah 43:1-3, and Job 23:8-10 and reflect on God's gracious promises.

Note: *The complete PowerPoint Teaching Diagram can be found in the BC-Alliance Online Resource Center.*

ⁱ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 869.

ⁱⁱ Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 106.