

## How to Defeat Your Goliaths

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Rich Nathan  
March 30 & 31, 2019  
The Story Continues  
1 Samuel 17

One of constant feel-good themes of Hollywood movies are stories of scrappy underdogs who unexpectedly win a championship. I think of movies like *Hoosiers*

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Gene Hackman photo

Gene Hackman plays the coach of a rural small town Indiana basketball team who ends up winning the Indiana State Basketball Championship against a big city rival.

I think of *Rudy*

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Rudy photo

Rudy is a story of an undersized kid who gets to play football for the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame.

Of course, the all-time classic is *Rocky*.

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Rocky photo

Sylvester Stallone is a down and out Philadelphia prize fighter who gets a shot at the heavyweight championship of the world.

One of my favorite underdog upset stories was one I just read two weeks ago. A little eight-year old boy named Tanitoluwa Adewumi.

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Photo

He's known as Tani. At a time when the news is focused on wealthy families buying access to elite universities for their kids – either illegally through bribes or legally through huge donations – Tani won the New York state chess championship for his age group.

What's so amazing about that? Well, for one thing, Tani just got to the United States a year ago. His family are Nigerian Christians who fled to America after fearing attacks from Boko Haram terrorists in northern Nigeria. His parents each worked two jobs – but because they came to the United States with absolutely nothing, Tani and his family, until recently, lived in a homeless shelter in New York City.

One more thing – Tani was just introduced to chess at his New York City public school where a part-time chess teacher taught Tani's class how to play. Now, one year later, Tani beat wealthy private school kids who have private chess tutors for the New York state championship. He's been playing exactly one year and he won the state championship.

But wait, there's more to the story. There was a GoFundMe page set up following this story in the *New York Times*. The goal was to raise \$50,000 for this Nigerian family. A week, they'd already raised \$198,000. Now, most people in New York would say \$198,000 is not enough for a family in New York City to live on. You know what Tani's parents did with the money? They set up a foundation so they could bless others with their blessing.

They wrote,

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"To whom much is given, much is required. We needed a home. God gave us one. Our needs for legal assistance, for job, living have all been met. So we take our blessing and we give them back to God and to the world."

They set up a foundation in their son's name. We're not going to keep all this money for ourselves even though we've been homeless. We're going to give it to others who are in need.

Today, we're going to look at the greatest feel good underdog victory story of all time – the story of David and Goliath. The message is titled, "How to Defeat your Goliaths." Let's pray.

A few weeks ago, I announced that Vineyard Columbus is engaged in a giving campaign during this Lenten season titled "The Story Continues".

Now, if you have not been to one of our Vision Gatherings, we still have another week of meetings.

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Vision Gatherings

At the Vision Gatherings, you can hear much more about the campaign and how you can be involved. If you are a regular attender or member of Vineyard Columbus, will you please go to one of the meetings this week?

Small group leaders, take your group out. Encourage everyone in your group to go. And don't miss Palm Sunday.

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Palm Sunday/Celebration Sunday

That's when we're going to be collecting our three-year pledge commitment cards. Listen, don't plan a vacation for Palm Sunday. If you're going to have a baby, wait until Monday! The baby wants to stay where it is anyway. Don't plan on staying home because you've had a hard week. Palm Sunday weekend, you want to come out. We are going to have a blowout celebration! These are services that you will not want to miss. Mark Palm Sunday weekend on your calendar (April 13 and 14).

As I said, I want to read to you the ultimate feel good underdog victory story of all time. The story of David and Goliath.

Slide 1 Samuel 17:1-11, 16

Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Sokoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Sokoh and Azekah. <sup>2</sup> Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. <sup>3</sup> The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.

<sup>4</sup> A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. <sup>5</sup> He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; <sup>6</sup> on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. <sup>7</sup> His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him.

<sup>8</sup> Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. <sup>9</sup> If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us." <sup>10</sup> Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." <sup>11</sup> On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

<sup>16</sup> For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

When we read this story, the first question that I'd like to ask you is

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What is your Goliath?

Goliath in this story is a massive opponent. Depending on the ancient manuscript we rely upon, his height varies. The New Living Translation says in verse 4:

Slide 1 Samuel 17:4 NLT

<sup>4</sup> Then Goliath, a Philistine champion from Gath, came out of the Philistine ranks to face the forces of Israel. He was over nine feet tall!

The Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as other ancient manuscripts, list Goliath as 6' 9" – about the same height as LeBron James.

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LeBron photo

However you measure Goliath, he's a really big guy. The author spends quite a bit of time portraying his weapons, his shield and spear. When you lay out all the weapons, depending on the weight of the ancient shekel that was used, it appears he was carrying over 100 pounds of gear. Basically, he was an ancient Rambo. Today, he would have rows of bullets across his chest. He would carry several automatic weapons. He'd have a huge knife between his teeth. Slung over his back, he'd be carrying a grenade launcher.

Goliath is a symbol of the biggest adversary you will ever face in your life. Let me ask you a question: what's the greatest challenge you have ever faced. What's the biggest adversary, the greatest amount of adversity, you've ever faced in your life? When did you face your Goliath?

For some of you, it may have been abuse as a child or as an adult. Others of you, it may be of abandonment of a loved one. Addiction. A spouse's adultery. Alcoholism. Arguments in the home. What is the adversary you have ever faced? When did you have to stare down Goliath? Or maybe you're staring down Goliath right now. Is it depression? Debt? Disease? Disability? Dismissal from a job? Dementia? Death of a loved one?

Have you ever been up against a really formidable opponent? I think about wives in our congregation who have faced divorce actions against husbands who are way better financed than they are. They have very few resources. Their ex has all the power, all of the money. They are suing for custody of the children.

If you have faced a Goliath in a law suit or criminal action, divorce action. Maybe at your job – you’ve been threatened by a person who controlled your job security. Maybe your work place is Goliath. You know, there is no escape from Goliath. Life in this fallen, broken world always presents us with problems that are bigger than our persons. Bills that are bigger than our bank accounts. Worries that are greater than our wisdom.

The fundamental issue for Christian believers is this: how will we respond to our Goliaths?

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What is your response to Goliath?

It is clear from the Bible that Goliath is a symbol, not only of overwhelming challenges that we all face in life. Goliath is also a symbol of God’s testing.

Look with me at verse 16:

Slide 1 Samuel 17:16

<sup>16</sup> For forty days the Philistine came forward every morning and evening and took his stand.

For 40 days and nights, Goliath challenges the people of Israel, taunting them and mocking Israel’s God, Yahweh. The number 40 is highly symbolic in the Bible. It is very often the period of time in which an individual or group of people are tested. Tests and trials in the Bible are often measured in periods of 40.

- The rain in Noah’s time lasted 40 days and 40 nights
- Moses spent 40 years in Egypt, 40 years in the desert, and 40 years in wilderness wanderings
- In the time of the Judges, the Israelites were subjected to the Philistines for 40 years
- Jonah warns Nineveh to repent for 40 days
- Jesus was tempted for 40 days in the wilderness by the devil

I think it’s interesting that the season of Lent is 40 days. Vineyard Columbus is now being tested by the Lord during this giving campaign. How will each of us respond to the challenge to give sacrificially? Our church is undergoing a 40 day test during this season. A test that applies to each of us.

Whenever you face a big problem, a big challenge, an adversary that is too big for you to overcome in your own strength, your first thought ought to be this is a test! How will I respond as a believer? In fear or in faith? Let me just pause here and ask you: when you face a huge challenge – and the big challenge you’re facing right now in your life,

maybe in your marriage or your work or your finances or your health or one of your kids or your parents, your love life – friend, have you said to yourself “this is a test from the Lord. I’m being tested right now. How will I respond? In fear or in faith?”

One of the great connecting themes for the Big Story of the Bible is God’s continuing testing of his people. How will you respond? In fear or in faith? The Israelites responded to their Goliath in fear.

Slide 1 Samuel 17:11

<sup>11</sup> On hearing the Philistine’s words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

There are multiple issues that causes fear these days. 24/7 news jolts us from one crisis to another – planes that fall out of the sky on takeoff, another outbreak of Ebola in Africa, claims of crises at the southern border, government corruption, climate change.

Sociologists say that while our issues are not necessarily greater than those our ancestors faced, we have one major disability these days. Because of the breakdown of community, many of us face our Goliaths alone. Problems in the past tended to bring communities together. My grandparents and parents feared, but they feared together. They were able to rely on each other. Many people today feel alone and that makes things so much worse.

As one Comedy Central comedian put it:

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There’s no longer a red America or a blue America. There’s just a scared America.

I praise God for churches like Vineyard Columbus. We don’t have to face our Goliaths alone. We could run towards each other and experience support from one another. That’s the beauty of the Christian church. When Goliath comes, we don’t have to deal with him by ourselves. That’s why we want to multiply church campuses across our city so that when thousands of people across our city face their Goliaths they don’t have to be afraid alone.

Goliaths are a test. How are you going to respond? In fear or in faith?

During the building campaign to build this present sanctuary here at Cooper, I did what I’m asking you to do during this campaign. I prayed. I asked the Lord, “What do you want me to give?”

Marlene and I had received a very large inheritance from my grandfather. My grandfather was one of those immigrant success stories. He started with a push cart on

the Lower East Side of Manhattan selling meat. He eventually had a huge wholesale meat business. He had accounts with some of the great nightclubs of New York – the Copacabana, the Latin Quarter. Anyway, when he died, he left his grandkids each a substantial inheritance. During the building campaign, I prayed and said, “Lord, what do you want me to give?” I felt like the Lord said, “I want you to give the entire inheritance. Give it all.” So, I thought, “OK. I’ll do that.”

But over the next few weeks, my faith wavered. Fear began to take over. I thought, “You know what, I can still be really generous and give most of the inheritance. It’s still a lot of money.” I was wrestling internally over this. I felt like the Lord said, “Did I not tell you to give it all?” I thought, “My peace with God is worth way more than some money. At the end of the day, I want to feel like I’ve been obedient to God.” So, Marlene and I gave it all. I never really thought about it again until I had to prepare this message. Let me encourage you to not shrink back in fear, but to move forward in faith.

Regarding your pledge, faith is simply obeying without compromise what God tells you to do.

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How do you grow in faith?

You say, “I don’t want to always shrink back in fear. I want to grow in faith! How can I use this current text to grow? To become a stronger person? A deeper Christian? More confident in my relationship with God? More secure? How do you grow in faith? It has to do with where you put your eyes.

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Look at God

Slide 1 Samuel 17:26

<sup>26</sup>David asked the men standing near him, “What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?”

How did people in the big story of the Bible press through their fear barriers? They discovered that God is bigger and more powerful than any enemy or any opponent that they were facing. When you stand next to a redwood tree you are not intimidated by the dogwood tree. When you stand next to the Grand Canyon, you’re not impressed by the size of the pool your neighbor is putting in. As people in the Bible stood next to God, people in the Bible encountered God, they weren’t intimidated any longer by the Goliaths in their lives. Moses was able to face Pharaoh because he first met God at the burning bush. Hosea was able to confront the King of Israel because he first met the

King of Kings in the Temple of the Living God. And David was able to confront Goliath, because he had witnessed the power of the Living God.

Robert Murray McCheyne, the great Scottish pastor once said, “For every one look at your sins, take ten looks at Christ.”

If you don’t want to be intimidated, look at God. Study God more than you study the problem. What should you look at regarding God?

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Look at God’s activity in the past

Here’s what we read in 1 Samuel 17:

Slide 1 Samuel 17:34-37

<sup>34</sup> But David said to Saul, “Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, <sup>35</sup> I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. <sup>36</sup> Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God. <sup>37</sup> 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 the LORD be with you.”

Goliath forced David to remember. While everyone else ran in fear, David remembered. He remembered how God had given him strength to wrestle a lion and strong arm a bear. Can God do the same thing with a giant? Remembering God’s past faithfulness causes us to grow in faith.

Slide 1 Chronicles 16:12

<sup>12</sup> Remember the wonders he has done,  
his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced,

Brothers and sisters, list God’s successes. Record his world-shattering records. Hasn’t God walked you through deep waters in the past? Has not God proven to be faithful? Have you not seen God’s provision? How many meals has he fed you with over the years? How many nights have you had the opportunity to sleep in a warm house rather than cold and out on the street? How many sins has the Lord forgiven in your life? We’ve seen so many miracles in the history of this church. Let me just share one with you.

This is from a woman named Melinda.

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My husband and I had one little boy, but in the process of having him we had also had 3 miscarriages. I feared having any more because I didn't want to kill any more babies. We had decided if we wanted another child we would just adopt one. At this time I was on the prayer ministry team and was up front one Sunday praying for a woman's shoulder. After I completed my prayer for her she turned to me and said "I need to pray for you about miscarriages." I was struck. I did not know this woman, the church is very large, she could not possibly know our circumstances. Of course I accepted the prayer and moved on. 2 weeks later I was up praying for another woman's neck. She turned to me when prayer was finished and said "I need to pray that God will open your womb." Who says that?!?!?! I did not know this woman she did not know my circumstances and what amazing obedience she must have had to say that to anyone! I am sure it was scary for her. I was floored. I knew God was healing my body. We tried for a second baby and had Will 9 months later and then baby Owen very quickly after that. No more miscarriages. I was healed.

God is with us always! How do you grow in faith?

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- Look back at God's activity in the past

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Look at God's activity in the present

Here's what we read:

Slide 1 Samuel 17:40

<sup>40</sup>Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.

What are those five smooth stones that are sufficient for any Goliath we will ever face? I think of the words of Jesus, "I am with you always."

Are you facing an operation? I am with you always, says the Lord.

Are you going to court? I am with you always, says the Lord.

Are you struggling in your marriage? I am with you always, says the Lord.

Are you wrestling with your singleness? Your aloneness? I am with you always.

Are you thinking about what to write on your three year pledge card? What you should give. I am with you always, says the Lord.

We are never away from the presence of God. Through the season of Lent, over the last few weeks, every night I have been reading Psalm 139. I've read it over 20 times. Here's why I can go to sleep in peace:

Slide Psalm 139:7-10

<sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your Spirit?  
Where can I flee from your presence?  
<sup>8</sup> If I go up to the heavens, you are there;  
if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.  
<sup>9</sup> If I rise on the wings of the dawn,  
if I settle on the far side of the sea,  
<sup>10</sup> even there your hand will guide me,  
your right hand will hold me fast.

How do you grow in faith?

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- Look back at God's activity in the past
- Look at God's activity in the present

Slide

Look at God's activity in the future

It is apparent that David is motivated in part to confront Goliath because of the prospect of reward.

Slide 1 Samuel 17:25-27

<sup>25</sup> Now the Israelites had been saying, "Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his family from taxes in Israel."

<sup>26</sup> David asked the men standing near him, "What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"

<sup>27</sup> They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him, "This is what will be done for the man who kills him."

The Bible continually tells us stories about heroes and heroines who were able to overcome their fears and do God's will because of a conviction that there was something more important in life than their own immediate comfort or security.

Brothers and sisters, is there anything that you would want to happen to yourself or your family or this community or this world that would be worth sacrificing money for? What if, through Vineyard Columbus, your kids or your grandkids came to know Jesus Christ? Would that be worth a sacrifice of money? What if because a campus was placed in a neighborhood where we presently are not, two teenagers decided not to commit suicide because they found Jesus Christ? They found hope. Would that be worth a sacrifice of money? What if because there was a campus in a neighborhood in Columbus some young people decided to not join a gang? Or not use drugs? Or not go to prison? But instead, they decided to serve the Lord and be good dads and good moms and raise kids for Jesus. Would that be worth a sacrifice of money?

What if over the next 10 years, just like the last 10 years, our Value Life ministry continued and we saw another 5,000 women who faced unintended pregnancies decide not to abort their children? Would 5,000 live babies be worth the sacrifice of money?

Is there anything that you'd love to see happen in your life, in your family's life, in our community's life, in the world, that would cause you to stretch in faith as you fill out your pledge card and choose to give?

How do you grow in faith? Don't look at yourself. Don't look at Goliath. Look at the Lord – in the past, in the present, in the future – look at the Lord. Let's pray.

## How to Defeat Your Goliaths

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Rich Nathan  
March 30 & 31, 2019  
The Story Continues  
1 Samuel 17

- I. What is your Goliath?
- II. What is your response to Goliath?
- III. How do you grow in faith?
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    - i. Look at God's activity in the past
    - ii. Look at God's activity in the present
    - iii. Look at God's activity in the future