

## David and Goliath

1 Samuel chapter 17 tells the story of David and Goliath, the boy who beat the giant with no sword or shield, but a smooth pebble and his shepherd's sling. The phrase 'David and Goliath' has taken on a more popular meaning, symbolising an underdog situation, a contest where a smaller, weaker opponent faces a much bigger, stronger opponent.

*What can we learn from Goliath?*

How did the boy from Bethlehem beat a strong, seemingly invincible warrior? In this chapter the Bible tells how God uses David to overcome terror, arrogance and bullying. Today, we may not be faced with the physical threats that Goliath made to the Israelites, but we will come across threats in life and can learn what not to do from Goliath.

*There are bullies today – how do we respond to them?*

*Do we respond in the same way that David did?*

*If not, why not?*

*In this character sketch, we learn more about Goliath and reflect on his personality and actions. We think about underdog situations we may face and learn the difference it makes to have God on our side.*

Lord God,

Help us to reflect on the things we have said that are boastful or bullying,

Help us to see each other as you would wish us to.

Amen

## The celebrity of his time?

Goliath was a Philistine from Gath. He had been a champion warrior since his youth. Goliath was well known not just to his own people, but also to King Saul and the Israelites. He was famous, a celebrity of his time. As we know, celebrities do not always behave well. Perhaps *infamous* is a more appropriate word for him!

In 1 Samuel chapter 17, we learn about Goliath's looks he is described as a giant, over three metres tall. We read about the bronze helmet on his head and his coat of a scaled armour weighing as much as an average person. Goliath may have been well prepared for battle and the champion of the Philistines, but he was not prepared for the power of God.

Goliath was an intimidating figure with his spear, armour and a shield bearer walking in front of him wherever he went. For forty days he boasted, taunted and bullied the opposition, 'Come and have a go, if you think you're hard enough'. Goliath must have been an imposing figure.

Lord God,

Help us think about being boastful and what this says about us.

Help us to avoid boasting about ourselves.

Instead, help us look for the good in others.

Amen

At this point in the story does Goliath remind you of anyone?

Is it ever alright to boast about things we do, say or how we look?

How do you think Goliath felt at this stage?

## Words have meaning

Goliath was not afraid of anyone or anything. He laughed in the face of David standing before him, seeing him as feeble and weak, Goliath said things that today we would take as being hurtful. From Samuel's writing, we read that Goliath was defiant and projected fear to those he came across.

Goliath said to David, *'Do you think I am a dog, that you come at me with a stick? Come here. I'll feed your body to the birds of the air and the wild animals!'* You can hear Goliath laughing to his supporters as he says these hurtful words of mockery.

There is a twist in the ending. David's response says it all, *'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied'*.

Lord God,

We give you thanks for the words we say and hear.

Help us to choose the right words to say.

Help us to know when something we've said may be hurtful.

Help us to say sorry.

Amen.

How would you feel if you were confronted by Goliath?  
What would you have said in reply?

Why do you think that the writer of the story compares God to the weapons of the Philistines?

Is this an effective way of emphasising the strength of faith?  
Would this be a good way to demonstrate faith in God today?

Reflect on a time when you may have said something hurtful.

## 'Pride comes before a fall'

If you're too conceited or self-important, something will happen to make you look foolish. This is what the expression 'pride comes before a fall' means. We can certainly apply this to Goliath! Ultimately, we know how this ends for Goliath, *'the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground'*, forty days of threats and boasting about his strength resulted in one huge fall.

Read 1 Samuel 17, verses 45 to 51. This passage recounts the defeat of Goliath.

*'David triumphed over Goliath with a sling and a stone; without a sword in his hand he struck down the Philistine and killed him.'* David's pride was in his love and trust of God. David's defeat of Goliath was incredible, defying the odds, we learn that David's faith was ultimately victorious, *'in the name of the Lord Almighty'*.

Lord God,

Give me the courage to face my fears.

Help me not to be too boastful and proud.

Help me to look for you in all I do.

Amen.

Can you imagine standing before Goliath as David did?

How would you have felt?

What example do you think that David gives to us?

Is there a message in this story?