

**Joke:** During his sermon on Jesus's teaching that we should love our enemies, Pastor John asked the congregation to raise their hands if they had enemies. Everyone did so except for Mrs. Watson in the front row, who had just turned 95.

"Mrs. Watson," the pastor asked, "how could you possibly live for 95 years and have no enemies?"

"That's easy," she replied, "I just outlived all of them"

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## Five Smooth Stones

### Week 1: The Challenger Goliath

Let's open in prayer this morning.

**Prayer:** *"Father help us to recognize when things like fear, doubt, and condemnation are creeping into our minds. Give us the courage we need to trust in you no matter what the circumstances around us appear to be. Open our ears to hear and our hearts to receive what you have for us today. In Jesus name."*

Good morning, church! We are kicking off a brand new series, based on a story in Scripture that I'm sure you all know.

You know there are some of characters in Scripture that if you hear their name your like I know that dude. Peter, Paul, Solomon, Jesus, and the list can go on and on. Then there are others that if I were to mention them you would be like who.

How many of you have heard of Jethro. No not Jethro Bodine from Beverly Hillbillies. Jethro Moses' father-in-law. You find him in Exodus 18.

How about Og, heard of him? Anyway he was king of Bashan the verse that tells us the most about him is in Deuteronomy 3 and it tells us that he was all that was left of the remnant of giants.

Just so you know I'm not going to be talking about them.

However. . .

Talk about when you were in Sunday school as a child and first heard the story of David and Goliath.

It's a story about an unlikely hero named David, defeating a mighty giant and enemy named Goliath.

And what I want us to discover is that there is so much more to be learned from this story than the simple statement that says, "God is bigger than my giants."

While that statement is no doubt true, there is so much more many of us may have passed over in this story so, let's unpack it over the next few weeks and see what more we can learn.

As we kick off the series, I want to share today some things about this larger than life challenger, Goliath.

We find him in 1 Samuel 17. And over the next few weeks, we are going to essentially cover the entire chapter. But for today we are going to start reading in verse 1.

1 Samuel 17:1–11 (NIV): Now the Philistines gathered their forces for war and assembled at Sokoh in Judah. They pitched camp at Ephes Dammim, between Sokoh and Azekah. 2 Saul and the Israelites assembled and camped in the Valley of Elah and drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines. 3 The Philistines occupied one hill and the Israelites another, with the valley between them.

4 A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. His height was six cubits and a span. 5 He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armor of bronze weighing five thousand shekels; 6 on his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back. 7 His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him. 8 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. 9 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." 10 Then the Philistine said, "This day I defy the armies of Israel! Give me a man and let us fight each other." 11 On hearing the Philistine's words, Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified.

Let's pause for a moment and just picture this man Goliath.

The Bible says he was six cubits and a span. That's 9 feet 9 inches tall.

I had the opportunity to meet a guy that played semi-pro basketball once that was around seven feet tall.

Think about this Michael Jordan is 6' 6". Larry Bird is 6' 9". And Shaquille O'Neal is 7' 1". By the way Shaq wears a size 23 shoe. So add another 2' 8" and you've got Goliath.

His armor weighed five thousand shekels. That's just over 125lbs. And the iron tip of his spear alone weighed 15lbs.

It's pretty easy to see why the Israelite army would have been intimidated, because they were confronted with a very dominant-looking enemy.

Today, I want to see what we can learn from Goliath about our present enemy.

The Bible says this in 1 Peter. . .

1 Peter 5:8 (NIV): Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

The evil one is “prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour”

And interestingly enough, our present day enemy sounds a lot like the Israelites enemy for long ago.

We must be aware of what our challenger looks and sounds like if we are going to be successful in our opposing and fighting.

What’s also interesting to me is it’s the male lion who makes the noise, but it’s the lioness that most often gets the food. The roar only puts the victim into a state of fear and paralyzes them so that they become easy prey.

The enemy of our soul makes awful loud roars, but he doesn’t need to be the king of your jungle.

Let me get back to our story and share a few things the enemy will do to try and get us off the path that God has placed us upon.

The first thing we see from Goliath is...

## **The Enemy Will Question**

Notice what Goliath asked the Israelites in verse 8?

1 Samuel 17:8 (NIV): Goliath stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why do you come out and line up for battle?"

*"Why are you all coming out to fight?"*

I think in that statement there is one thing that stands out from all the rest in these words from Goliath that we need to recognize in relation to our own battles with the enemy: and that is doubt.

Doubt is an tactic used by the enemy often.

Have you ever struggled with doubt?

I don't think there is a person here or listening online that has never struggled with doubt. I would love to tell you as your pastor I've got that one licked but the truth is there are times that I have had that struggle with doubt.

The reality is, we all have this natural tendency to doubt from time to time. And the devil, is the king of doubts. He is constantly planting doubt in our minds that leads us to question God. Even all the way back in Genesis, the first book of the Bible, it was how he operated.

Genesis 3:1 (NIV): Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

Here, the devil asks a simple question that causes doubt to slip into the minds of Adam and Eve.

He is in the business of distracting folks like you and me from the truth. So, we need to be aware of the questions we may be confronted with.

In the case of Goliath, can't you just see the Israelite heads dropping after this question? "He's right, we are wasting our time. We can't defeat him. We can't fight against him."

But, do you want to hear something wild? I think the Israelites would be completely accurate in their assumptions. They are right! They can't defeat Goliath, not on their own.

But there is good news, there will soon be a warrior who rolls up to the scene and doesn't try to fight his enemy with his own strength.

We can't miss that.

Some of us have allowed discouragement and doubt to slip in because we have the wrong perspective on our battle. The Bible makes it clear we were never meant to fight the enemy on our own. In fact, if we try to do it all on our own, chances are we will fail.

2 Chronicles 20:17 (NIV): You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the Lord will give you, Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.' "

When we receive questions from the evil one, we need to know how to respond. Not with fear, but in faith.

Like the book of Joshua tells us. . .

Joshua 1:9 (NIV): Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."

And interestingly enough, right after Goliath asks this question to the Israelite army, he makes a profound statement. He says, *“I am the Philistine champion, but you are only the servants of Saul.”*

I remember the story when the Israelites were sent out to spy out the land and they came back with the news that it was as good as they were told it would be. . .

Numbers 13:26–33 (NIV): They came back to Moses and Aaron and the whole Israelite community at Kadesh in the Desert of Paran. There they reported to them and to the whole assembly and showed them the fruit of the land. 27 They gave Moses this account: “We went into the land to which you sent us, and it does flow with milk and honey! Here is its fruit. 28 But the people who live there are powerful, and the cities are fortified and very large. We even saw descendants of Anak there. 29 The Amalekites live in the Negev; the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites live in the hill country; and the Canaanites live near the sea and along the Jordan.” 30 Then Caleb silenced the people before Moses and said, “We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it.” 31 But the men who had gone up with him said, “We can’t attack those people; they are stronger than we are.” 32 And they spread among the Israelites a bad report about the land they had explored. They said, “The land we explored devours those living in it. All the people we saw there are of great size. 33 We saw the Nephilim there (the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim). We seemed like grasshoppers in our own eyes, and we looked the same to them.”

Listen the enemy will make you see things, hear things that if your not ready will make you think you can’t do what God has called you to do because you look to small or unimportant.

But God says you are more than a conqueror and He will finish what He started.

Which brings me to the second thing. . .

## **The Enemy will Condemn**

The word “but” is extremely important in the Bible. Every time we see it, we can assume it is in between two different and often opposing statements.

Let me ask you this how many times has your but got in the way of what God wanted?

So, in verse 8 Goliath is seeking to elevate himself above the rest of the Israelite army.

And if we were to write on a piece of paper on one side the attributes of Goliath, and on the other side the attributes of the Israelite army it would be clear, at least on paper, Goliath has the advantage.

So, he speaks with this tone of condemnation. He’s extremely confident going into this.

But, there’s an important statement we can’t miss here, it shows a key tactic of the evil one that he uses in our lives as well. Goliath, when speaking about the Israelites, says, “*you are only the servants of Saul.*”

A few minutes ago, we spoke about doubt. But I want us to talk about trust. When we remove everything else, who do we trust? Who do we serve? Who do we look to?

Look around and you can see just how much division is in our world.



In fact, I would argue it is one of the most prominent tactics of the devil among God's people. He will do whatever it takes to associate you with anyone but God. Some of us have associated ourselves with our denominational affiliation more so than our identity with Christ. Others of us are more inclined to look to a political leader than God Himself for our hope. And when we do, it creates further division.

The difference between the Israelite army and David, as we will see next week, is perspective on the situation. In our own lives, what kind of perspective do we have when we receive questions?

When we hear a voice of condemnation, do we automatically just believe it to be true? If we claim to follow Jesus, that means we serve a risen Savior, One who is all-powerful.

It's important for us to remember that when we sense a false identity being thrown our way by the voice of condemnation.

By the way. . .

Romans 8:1 (NIV): Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,

Romans 8:1 (TPT): So now the case is closed. There remains no accusing voice of condemnation against those who are joined in life-union with Jesus, the Anointed One.

Oh and this is free. It's when those butts become two different and opposing statements.

There is a big difference from conviction and condemnation.

Conviction points at the action and says that's wrong, but condemnation points at the person and says their wrong.

Conviction causes us to see truth and walk the right path.  
Condemnation causes us to feel shame, guilt, regret, and fear.

The Holy Spirit will convict us to change our behavior, but will never condemn us in the process.

So, this dialogue between Goliath and the Israelite army comes to a temporary close in verse 11. The Bible says, *“when Saul and the Israelites heard this, they were terrified and deeply shaken.”*

The last thing I want to share today about the evil one is an overall tactic to. . .and this is point three

## **The Enemy will Strike Fear**

We already talked about how the devil wants to distract people like you and me from God. He will do whatever it takes to make that happen. One of his tactics, in using things like questions, doubts, and condemning words, is to strike fear.

Some are believing lies. Listening to the wrong voices. And fear will cause you to spiral out of control in other areas of life as well.

Fear will often keep us from stepping out in faith.

It was fear that had the spy's saying we look like grasshoppers.

Matthew 14:24–28 (NIV): and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. 25 Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. 26 When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. “It’s a ghost,” they said, and cried out in fear. 27 But Jesus immediately said to them: “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.” 28 “Lord, if it’s you,” Peter replied, “tell me to come to you on the water.”

I think all of us are familiar with this story as well. Peter taking an action step of faith. There are four crucial words spoken by Jesus, to Peter prior to him taking his step: “Do not be afraid.”

Peter seemed to have the confidence he needed because of the voice he chose to listen to and trust. That’s the question we must be confronted with today: which voice are we listening to in order to trust?

The word of God shows us consistently what God’s voice actually sounds like. That’s why it is so important to spend time reading and studying it.

Scripture tells us, my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. If you don’t know what God spoke or is speaking it is easy for the enemy to get you to doubt, fear, and question.

John 10:27 (NIV): My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.

We must be aware of how to deal with the enemy. We can’t rely on our own strength or the power we think we have on our own.

The enemy will be consistently defeated by our reliance on God’s strength! On His power and not our own.

James 4:7–8 (NIV): Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you.

James 4:7–8 (TPT): So then, surrender to God. Stand up to the devil and resist him and he will turn and run away from you. 8 Move your heart closer and closer to God, and he will come even closer to you.

So, this week how I want to challenge you to think about areas in your life where you are relying on your own strength and resolve. Think through some areas where you know you need to ask for help, but you haven't yet.

Try to recognize the voice of doubt, condemnation, and fear. And remember, this is not the voice of God in your life.

Spend time reading the Scriptures? May I suggest reading Ephesians chapter 1 and as you do highlight or write down all the ways God blesses you in and through Christ.

You were never meant to fight this battle alone. And if God be for us who can stand against us.

Let's pray together.

This week we learned a bit about Goliath, next week we will learn about David.