



**Session 11**  
**Fall 2015**  
**Middler**

# David trusts God

**1 SAMUEL 17**

## prepare

### PRAYER

*Great God, it is often easy for me to be paralyzed by anxiety and doubt. Give me glimpses of your strength and power to sustain me through all that I fear. Amen.*

### PURPOSE STATEMENT

To turn away from fear and trust God

### STORY SUMMARY

The Israelite and Philistine armies had gathered for battle. Goliath, the Philistine champion, taunted the Israelites to send someone to fight him. The loser's side would become servants of the winners. All the Israelite soldiers were scared. David, in from the fields on an errand, volunteered to face Goliath. King Saul was surprised, but gave David his permission. Confident in God's protection, David used his slingshot and a stone to defeat Goliath.



### teaching tips for middler

The story of David and Goliath will be familiar to many middlers. Some children in your group may be ready for a more complicated understanding of the story and the violence it contains, something you can explore during Peace notes. However, the focus of the session is on David's trust in God. Middlers may experience quite a bit of fear, perhaps because of world events, their friends' struggles, or a rough situation in their own home. Encourage children by expressing your own faith in God.

For today's Spiritual practice, you will need news articles for children to look over. Decide which Explore activities you will do, and check Supplies and To do throughout the session to see what needs to be prepared.

**A shepherd finds his voice**

Today's text is the third story in a series of stories in 1 Samuel. The earlier stories reported David's anointing in Bethlehem (1 Samuel 16:1-13) and his initial meeting with Saul (1 Samuel 16:14-23) and service to the king, primarily because of his musical ability.

In the first two stories, David is the silent recipient of anointing and quietly (except for the music) joins the king's staff. But in 1 Samuel 17, David finds his voice, engaging in lively dialogue with his brother, with Israelite soldiers, with King Saul, and, finally, with the Philistine giant. He asks questions (verse 26), he gives reassurance (verse 32), and, most importantly, he gives eloquent witness to his faith in God (verses 36-37, 46-47).

**Which army will be victorious?**

This very familiar tale is often called the story of David and Goliath, but the name Goliath only appears twice in the Hebrew text. Rather, the giant is referred to twenty-seven times as "the Philistine." Translations sometimes obscure this by inserting Goliath's name more often in an effort to enhance the dramatic flow of the story. The emphasis on David and "the Philistine" reminds us that this is a contest between the two representative champions of opposing sides and the focus is on which army will be victorious.

David is initially not part of the military confrontation at all. He only arrives at the battlefield because his father sends him on the errand of delivering grain, bread, and cheese to his older brothers and their commander at the front (verses 12-18). When he arrives, he hears about the challenge that the Philistine giant has made: each side will chose a champion and that contest will decide the battle.

**Faith and courage**

As the narrative unfolds, David appears as a person of clear-eyed courage and faith in contrast to the Israelite army, under Saul's leadership, which is frozen with fear.



Saul observes that David is a youth and unable to fight against a Philistine who has been a warrior for many years (verse 33). But there is another unspoken contrast: Saul was anointed king to "save [the people] from the hand of their enemies" (1 Samuel 10:1). Now it is David who volunteers to protect Saul and his army by going to fight the Philistine (verse 32). David understands the contest as a theological one—the Philistines are challenging the armies "of the living God" (verses 26, 36). In the first of two powerful testimonies in this story, David speaks about his faith in God as Savior (verses 34-37). Drawing on his personal experiences as a shepherd tending off wild animals who attack the sheep, David testifies that God will deliver him from the hand of the Philistine champion. It is God who has power to save. Saul prays that God will be with him (verse 37), but when Saul seeks to dress David in his own heavy armor, we might wonder if his earlier prayer for God's presence was any more than wishful thinking. David rejects Saul's efforts to arm him; his confidence is grounded in the faith that God is in control of the battle and will bring deliverance.

David goes into the contest with the simple weapons of a shepherd—stones and a sling. Goliath approaches, presumably with the armor he is described as wearing at the beginning of the story (verses 5-7). He ridicules David and curses him by his gods. David gives a second testimony, calling on the Lord to deliver him and further declaring that this deliverance will be a witness to "the whole world" that there is a God in Israel (verse 47). While many of the details of this story do not highlight a pacifist point of view, it is possible to see the groundwork for developing such a perspective in some aspects of the story. David rejects the weaponry of both Saul and Goliath in his courageous stand and insists at the moment of confrontation that "the Lord saves not with sword and spear" (verse 47).

# gather

## supplies

- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- *Year Two Songbooks* (optional)
- CD player
- Recent news articles

## poster pack

- Bible memory poster (Psalm 25)

## to do

- Practice clapping with the memory verse so you can lead the group.
- Cut out newspaper articles or print some from online. Or, gather children's magazines or church periodicals.

## media connections

- *David and the Trash-Talkin' Giant* by Joel Anderson (Middlers may enjoy the creative use of household objects in the pictures.)
- YouTube search for *Dave vs the Bully*
- YouTube search for "The Bible: Jim Wallis comments on David and Goliath"
- Internet image search for "ancient sling"

## BUILD COMMUNITY

Welcome the children and invite them to briefly share anything exciting they did in the past week.

As a group, come up with a "dare" for each person. Each child can decide whether they want to take the dare or not. (For example, say, "I dare you to do ten push-ups" or "I dare you to loudly sing the chorus of your favorite song"). The children can challenge each other, but censor their ideas as necessary!

Tell the group that today's story is about someone who accepted a serious dare, which had consequences for whole nations of people.

## WORSHIP TOGETHER

Play "I Lift My Eyes Up" (track 10; *Year Two Songbook*, page 17) and have the group listen or sing along. Lyrics are also at the back of *Glow*.

Pray together, thanking God for being your help and salvation. Ask for God's help as you learn more about trusting God.

## SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Introduce your group to the practice of "praying the news." Provide some articles you have clipped from a newspaper or printed from a website. Or, have the children look through children's magazines or the news section of a church periodical. (Regular newspapers will likely be too distracting and potentially disturbing.)

Have the children each choose something to pray about from an article. Their prayers could ask for God's help in a situation or thank God for something good in the world. Gather in a circle and open a prayer time. Leave space for children to pray out loud or silently for their items. Close the prayer by asking for God to work for good in all of the situations mentioned.

### teaching tip

Talk through some of the articles for children who are not strong readers.

### Bible memory

Recite the Bible memory passage together, clapping on each word (or syllable). Try this a second time clapping on every other word. Children could also come up with their own clapping rhythms and lead the rest of the group.

**Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long.**

—Psalm 25:4–5

**SHARE THE STORY**

Tell the children that they might already know today's story. Encourage them to listen for something they had not remembered or a new question they have as they hear it today. Show the children the map on page 89 of *Shine On*. On the map in the book, point out where the action in this story took place—about two-thirds of the way from Jerusalem to Gath. Point to Bethlehem, David's hometown, which is just to the south of Jerusalem. Have the children find 1 Samuel 17 in their Bibles. Ask them what they remember about last week's story. They can look back at the beginning of 1 Samuel 16 to refresh their memories. Tell or read the story from page 88 in *Shine On*.

**WONDER AND REFLECT**

Present the following statements in a thoughtful and inviting tone of voice.

- Imagine staying on a mountainside and listening to Goliath shout his challenge for weeks and weeks.
- I wonder if the soldiers were relieved or afraid when David volunteered to fight Goliath.
- I wonder what helped David believe that God was mightier than a giant.

Add the "God was mightier than a giant" rock to your Remembrance rocks display (or point it out on the poster). Invite further reflection using the statements below.

- I wonder what you are afraid of.
- I wonder what helps you trust God when you're scared.

**PEACE NOTES**

Point out that Goliath was like a bully. Not everything about today's story is a good example of how to deal with a bully in today's world, but David did use the element of surprise. Talk together about surprising and peaceful ways to stand up to a bully. Suggest ideas like talking about the situation, telling an adult, doing something goofy to distract the bully, praying, and gathering others to stand with the person getting picked on. Invite the children to get in comfortable positions to listen to a story. Read "John and the train car bullies" on page 94 of this guide. You may want to end this time by having the children repeat the prayer from the story: "God, calm my fear. Show me the right thing to do." Encourage the children can use a prayer like this whenever they are in a scary situation.

**David trusts God**

**1 Samuel 17**



**supplies**

- Bibles
- *Shine On: A Story Bible*
- "John and the train car bullies" story (from Additional resources)

**poster pack**

- Remembrance rocks poster ("God was mightier than a giant" rock)

**to do**

- Became familiar with today's story in *Shine On*.
- Read through the story on page 94 so that you can easily tell it to the group.

# explore

## MOVE

David did not cower in fear from Goliath like everyone else did. Play “Bold David,” a game where the children do the opposite of what the leader says. For example, if the leader says, “Touch your right ear,” players touch their left ears. Or if the leader says, “Take two steps forward,” players take two steps backward. The leader watches for players who follow the instruction rather than being “Bold Davids.” Those players must drop out; the last player left is the winner.

Talk about how easy or difficult it was to do the opposite action. Say that it may be difficult to trust in God when others are fearful, but it gets easier with practice and with God’s help.

**For smaller groups:** Give instructions in a rapid series. See how long the children can keep doing the opposite.

## RETELL

Assign children to be the anchor, David, and Eliab in the “Bible action news report” on page 33 of *Glow*. You can be the reporter. David and Eliab should answer according to the events of today’s story; help them along by adjusting your questions as needed. Multiple people can play each role so that everyone is involved. If possible, provide the anchor and reporter with real or pretend microphones.

### supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- Microphones (optional)

## GLOW

Children can read about “Goliath animals” on page 34 of *Glow* and do the “Turnaround puzzle” on page 35. (*Solution:* “When times get scary I will turn away from fear and trust God.”) Talk together about the questions.

### supplies

- *Glow* magazines
- Pencils

## CONNECT

Like David, many people in the Bible were in fearful situations. Explore the passages listed on page 35 of *Glow* with the children. For each passage, read the introduction sentence and have a volunteer look it up and read it to the group.

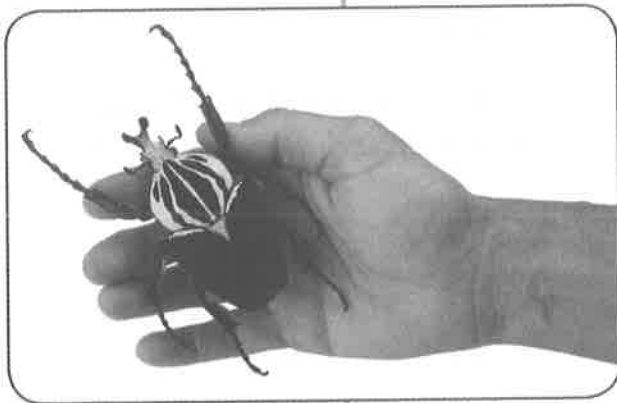
Invite the children to think about fears they have. Play “Dios de la esperanza” (May the God of Hope), track 5 on the Shine CD.

### supplies

- Bibles
- *Glow* magazines
- *Shine Songbook and CD*
- CD player

## other ideas

- Write messages of love and kindness on large rubber bands and shoot them across the room.
- Play “Memory” using the game cards from pages 92–93 of this guide.
- Cut the back pockets out of old jeans. Fill them with craft sticks labeled with things children can have in their “pockets” when facing fearful situations.



### PRAY

Invite the children into a time of prayer. Start with a short time of

silence.

Then pray:

Thank you, God, for being present with us today. We ask for you to help us when we face things that seem scary or impossible. We want to trust in you. Amen.



### leader's closing prayer

God, you know what causes me to tremble. I know that you are greater than anything else. Help me to trust you—and when I don't, hold me in your mercy. Amen.

### SEND

Tell the group that Psalm 27, another psalm associated with David, says:

**The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?**

Invite the children to repeat these

words with you several times.

Then say:

**Walk in confidence and courage this week, knowing that God is your light and your salvation.**

*In preparation for a time of group prayer, a colleague said, "Silence doesn't bother me; I thought it was a great encouragement for teaching children about silent, meditative prayer.*  
—Beth Jewett  
Kingwood, Texas

### Looking ahead

One Explore option for next week includes making mosaics. Bring one or more materials, such as beans, seeds, buttons, torn bits of magazines or tissue paper, or squares of colored paper. Another option requires two placettings.