



Session 11
Fall 2015
Junior Youth

David trusts God

1 SAMUEL 17

prepare

PRAYER

God, when fear threatens to paralyze me, help me to breathe deeply, think clearly, and trust that you are with me. 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 junior youth

The story of David and Goliath is one that even secular youth know—it has become a catchphrase for any confrontation where an underdog claims a shocking victory. Help your group encounter this story more thoughtfully, seeing it not as a “good guy defeats bad guy” story but as an account of a seemingly powerless person who faces a powerful bully head-on. David does not run in fear but recognizes that he has resources he can use and a powerful God at his side to stand strong in a tough situation. This is a message youth need to hear.

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 choose 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 fending 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
- Bible memory stones (from Additional resources)
- Five stones
- Current newspapers
- Scissors
- Thumbtacks

poster pack

- Bible memory poster (Psalm 25)

to do

- Find five stones.
- Copy and cut out the Bible memory stones from page 93.
- Gather current newspapers or news magazines.
- Clear the bulletin board of the “pray the news” postings from the last session to make room for new ones.

media connections

- YouTube search for “Malcolm Gladwell talk, David and Goliath” (first five minutes)
- “Voice of Truth” song by Casting Crowns, from CD of the same title
- Search for “VeggieTales, Dave vs. Goliath Full Version”
- Emily Dickinson poem, “I Took My Power in My Hand”
- Internet search for “modern David and Goliath stories”

BUILD COMMUNITY

Have the group stand or sit in a circle with five stones in the middle. Invite youth, one at a time, to take a stone and hold it while they share about a time they faced a big challenge. Maybe they needed a certain grade on a test, or wanted to make a team. Maybe they were auditioning for something, or their family was moving. How did they face that challenge? Share that in today’s story a youth faces a huge challenge with only five stones—and an unshakable trust in God—to help him.

WORSHIP TOGETHER

Sing “God’s Light Shines,” track 8 (page 14 of the *Year Two Songbook*). Lyrics are also found at the back of *L.E.D.* Then invite youth to imagine God’s light surrounding them in places where things feel hopeless or scary, as you play the song quietly another time.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE

Invite your group to pray the news together, as they have been doing the past few sessions. Have youth find an articles or photos about frightening situations. This can include war, violence, cruelty, poverty, or uncertainty—invite them to read with an open mind about things that cause fear. Have them think quietly about how to pray for the needs they see. What might God want to change for these people, and how? Prayerfully post the articles on the prayer bulletin board begun in session 9.

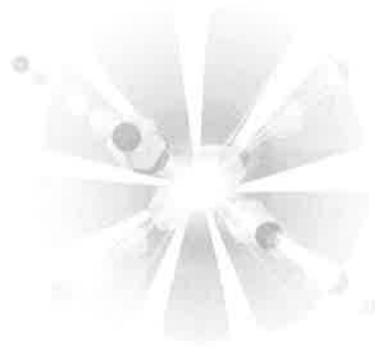
Bible memory

With the Bible memory poster hidden, give the group the Bible memory stones copied and cut from page 93. Let the group work together to put the stones in order. For a larger group, divide in two and give each group a set of stones. Read the verses aloud, checking their work with the Bible memory poster.

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

teaching tip

Media connections can add creativity and relevance to your session. They can enlarge your understanding of the Bible text and prepare you to offer additional experiences to youth.



SHARE THE STORY

Introduce the story by explaining that Saul was still ruling as king, but he faced many problems. He was troubled and unable to rest. David came to him and played his harp, helping to relieve Saul's distress. But Saul had an even bigger problem: his land was being terrorized by the Philistines, led by a warrior named Goliath.

Have youth open their Bibles to 1 Samuel 17. Ask one person to read verses 3-7, and another verses 8-11.

Explain that David's oldest brothers had been fighting with Saul's army for forty days, in a standoff with Goliath, when David was sent to check on them and bring them food. Have one person read 1 Samuel 17:23-26 and another read verses 27-30.

For 1 Samuel 17:31-51, choose three people to read the parts of Saul, David, and Goliath ("the Philistine"). You will read as narrator.

WONDER AND REFLECT

Reflect on the story together, pondering the following questions. Leave space for silent reflection questions from the youth.

- I wonder what Goliath's voice sounded like. Are there "giants" in our lives? Are they as scary and powerful as we think they are?
- I wonder if trusting God took away all of David's fear.
- What does fear feel like? What does trust look like?
- Who in this story is most like you?

PEACE NOTES

People often praise David for the way he defeated Goliath with bravery and trust in God, but could there have been another way to resolve the conflict? After this confrontation, the war with the Philistines didn't end; it kept getting worse for years! How might this story have been different? Have two youth read the dialogue from the Peacemaking story on page 94, about a "David and Goliath" situation in Colombia. Introduce the readers as Andres and Natalia. After the reading, talk about why the peacemakers' actions helped to make the situation a little easier.

David trusts God
1 Samuel 17

supplies

- Bibles
- Peacemaking story (from Additional resources)

to do

- Make two copies of the Peacemaking story on page 94.

explore

CREATE

Have youth calculate Goliath's approximate height using the information in "A little illumination" on page 26 of *L.E.D.* Then have them work together to create a human silhouette that size on a roll of mural paper. Inside the silhouette, they can illustrate things that frighten people. Hand out markers for youth to write nonviolent ways to face those fears.

supplies

- Bibles
- *L.E.D.* magazines
- Measuring tape
- Mural paper
- Markers

MOVE

Play a variation of freeze tag called "Fear tag." Find an open space and appoint one youth to be "Fear." Give this person a nametag that says "Fear" and a ball to hide somewhere in the space. After hiding the ball, "Fear" tries to tag other players. Anyone tagged must freeze where they are. Other players try to find the hidden ball and throw it to the frozen ones to "thaw" them. When everyone is frozen, a new "Fear" hides the ball, and the game keeps on going. After the game, talk about how fear can paralyze us and keep us from moving. What can help "thaw" us, as the ball did in today's game?

supplies

- "Fear" nametag
- Small ball

RETELL

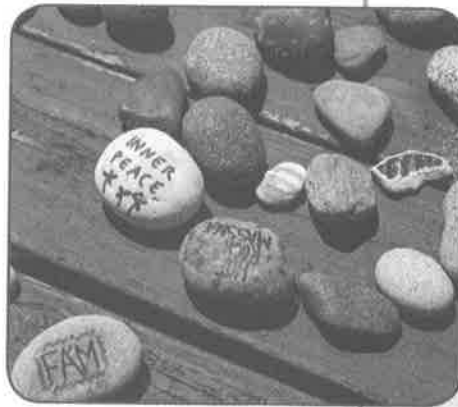
David probably carried a sling with him wherever he went. Have youth put in a pile anything they have brought with them today—whatever is in their pockets or purses. Have them retell the story, substituting the names of their ordinary items for those mentioned in the Bible. For example: "With only some gum and three coins, David faced the giant. Even though Goliath had a new iPhone, David defeated him with just a penny." See how many creative substitutions they can make. Note that David used the resources he had to face Goliath.

supplies

- Bibles
- Purse or pocket full of ordinary objects

teaching tip

Be sure you have a purse or pocket full of some ordinary objects to get the pile started.



L.E.D.

Have youth read the "David and Goliath" stories on page 26 in *L.E.D.* and decide which one reminds them most of today's story. Then have them write about a time they saw a sports team pull off an upset, beating a highly favored team.

supplies

- *L.E.D.* magazines

other ideas

- Take turns reading the "down" statements from the Moses, Gideon, and Saul Charades cards in the poster pack. What weaknesses made them unlikely heroes for God to choose?
- Retell the story from the perspective of Goliath. Why did he behave and talk the way he did? Might he actually need our sympathy in some way?

PRAY

Hand each youth a stone now. Encourage them to carry it this week as a reminder that God is with them in their fears. As a closing prayer, sing "I Lift My Eyes Up," track 10 (page 17 of the *Year Two Songbook*). Lyrics are at the back of L.E.D.

SEND

Send the youth with these words from Deuteronomy 31:6:

Go, being strong and bold, not full of fear or dread, because it is the Lord your God who goes with you.



Leader's closing prayer

What challenges are you facing in the days ahead? What fears are you wrestling with? Know that God is with you, guiding you into courage and peace. God, you are the light that leads me. Keep me close to that light, drawing strength and hope from you. Amen.

- Shine Songbook and CD
- Year Two Songbooks (optional)
- CD player
- Stones (one per person)

supplies

Allow space for youth to ask the questions they think they aren't allowed to ask, and get comfortable with awkward silence. It may take a few tries for youth to get up enough courage to actually ask the question they've always wanted to ask. —Jennifer K. Scarr
Ponoma, California