

Even though you may have heard me tell this story before, I think it’s worth another telling. Three rough-looking fellows on motorcycles pull up to a highway cafe. Inside, they found only a waitress, the cook, and one truck driver, a little guy, quietly eating his lunch. The motorcyclists were angry because a truck had cut them off several miles back. They decided to take out their revenge on the innocent man having lunch. They grabbed his food, threw it on the floor and called him bad names. The truck driver quietly got up, paid for his food, and walked out.

Unhappy that they didn’t succeed in provoking the little man into a fistfight, one motorcyclist said to the waitress, “He sure wasn’t much of a man, was he?” The waitress replied, “I guess not.” Then, looking out the window, she added, “I guess he’s not much of a truck driver either. Before pulling out of the parking lot, he ran over three motorcycles.”

We all love stories where the little guy gets the best of the big guy. For most of our lives we feel small in comparison to the government, large corporations and systems which seem to dominate us. For example; we feel there is little we can do to change the rising gas prices. The older we get, the harder it is for us to stay healthy. Sometimes we wake up, wondering what big problems will challenge us on any given day.

A friend of mine told me he has a new approach to rising gas prices. When he goes to the grocery store or to do shopping with huge parking lots, he doesn’t drive around in circles looking for a spot close to the building. Instead, he pulls into the very first space he sees, thereby conserving gas. Although we may feel totally overwhelmed by giant problems there are still things we can do, when we are willing to make changes.

The story of David and Goliath is a story about a little person who faces a giant. Goliath was said to be 9 feet, 9 inches tall. He was a great warrior, heavily armed and dangerous. He was a leader of the Philistines, an oppressive group who destroyed the coastal towns of Israel and gradually moved inward, taking over everything in their path. On the other hand, David is a mere shepherd. His only weapon was a sling shot. And all the ammunition he had was five small stones. Interesting then, that in the end he had four stones too many. The Lord had something to do with that. With one small stone David knocks the giant to the ground and kills Goliath. Then Israel was free of the evil giant.

The story is a classic. The underdog destroys an enemy who was must larger than he was. He was stronger, heavily armed and mean spirited. But, in the end, he is destroyed by David, who was small, weaker and had virtually no armor. Because David prevailed the nation of Israel had new hope. Their faith in God was restored, all because little David got rid of the Philistine giant, Goliath.

Have you ever been overwhelmed? Have you had an experience when life seemed so complicated you didn’t know where to start? Life certainly has its obstacles and some of them are so huge we feel helpless. And there are times when we are simply not up to the task. The story of David and Goliath provides a model for us when it comes to facing the “giants” in our lives.

First, David used a sling shot and one small stone to slay Goliath. He used a simple, crude weapon to bring down the heavily armored giant. Even though he took five stones with him, one shot to the forehead was all he needed—five minus four.

One time in Queens, New York, a woman was screaming out of the window of her apartment on the eighth floor for help. She was trapped in her bathroom. The inside knob had fallen off and her two year-old child had closed the door from the outside. Her other two children were in the kitchen, alone, where supper was cooking on the stove. The woman kept trying to break down the bathroom door, but to no avail. Meanwhile, a young man was visiting a friend in the neighborhood and he heard her pleas for help. He waved at her to get her attention and said he was coming up to help. A short time later the woman heard the same man's voice on the other side of the bathroom door. "Listen closely," he said. "Put your fingers in the hole where the knob should be, pull it up, lift the door slightly, then quickly pull it open." The woman followed the stranger's instructions and within a few moments the door was open.

Once freed from her temporary prison, she ran and checked on the children. After she had comforted them, she turned to the young man and asked in amazement, "How could you possibly have known how to get into my apartment, and how did you know how to open the bathroom door?" He replied, with a smile, "I was born here and I lived here for fifteen years. I know how to get in the front door without a key and I learned how to open the bathroom door because the knob was always falling off when we lived there." (From *Small Miracles*, Haberstam and Leventhal, Adams Media Corporation, Holbrook, MA)

We never know when the smallest of skills might save another persons' life. We don't have to be supermen and superwomen to come to the aid of others or make a difference in their lives. We need only to use the skills we have acquired along the way, and of course, use our heads.

Secondly, David rejected Saul's offer of wearing his armor. It was much too heavy and weighted him down. He chose to take on the giant with only his slingshot. In other words, David had to be himself. Saul's armor was of no use to him. David's skill was in being a shepherd who could sling rocks with his slingshot.

Keith Wagner writes: When Hugh Downs retired his last job was the television program, 20/20, with ABC. His career included time on the Tonight Show with Jack Paar and he also hosted the game show, Concentration. When Downs began his career he was only eighteen years old. He was working with WLOK Radio in Lima, Ohio. WLOK was just a 100-watt, small-town radio station, but Downs was determined to make it to the big time. He focused on speaking into the microphone with "pear-shaped tones, desperate to find a cool, sophisticated persona. But all his attempts to be that voice failed. Finally, his program director took him aside and said, "Forget your voice, just remember who you are, a nice fellow from a small town in Ohio." That was just what Hugh Downs needed to launch his successful television career. Giant ambitions are fulfilled when we are who we are. Just as David didn't need Saul's armor and Hugh Downs didn't need some other voice, we don't need to be anyone other than who God intended us to be.

Third, David was a man of faith. He trusted in God. He said to King Saul, “*The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine*” (v. 37). And David said to the Philistine, “*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*” (v. 45). David truly believed that God was with him and that he would prevail over the much larger man, Goliath.

Max Anders, in his book titled *GOD*, points out that in the 1940 version of *The Mark of Zorro*, there is a remarkable “chase” scene in which Zorro is fleeing in the dead of night from a band of Spanish army officers. Racing at breakneck speed through woods, over creeks, along narrow paths, Zorro is finally cornered on a bridge suspended about twenty feet over a river. In one of the most remarkable stunts Anders had ever seen in a movie, Zorro turns his horse toward the railing on the bridge, which is about four and a half feet high, and spurs him. The horse jumps over the railing, into the river below, with the rider still on him. It swims downstream in a hail of bullets from the bridge, and once again, Zorro makes a stunning escape.

Anders questioned, “How in the world did that stunt rider get that horse to jump over that railing into the black abyss below?” The secret is that the rider must never ask the horse to do anything that hurts it. The rider first gets the horse to do little stunts that seem dangerous, but the horse does not get hurt. So the trainer graduates to major stunts. After years of training, the horse learns to trust the rider, because nothing traumatizing has ever happened to him in the past. As a result, he will do almost anything the rider asks of him in the future. (From *GOD*, by Max Anders. Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995)

David trusted enough in God to face the giant, Goliath. We too can overcome the giants in our lives by trusting that God will give us the strength and courage we need to move forward. All the giants of life can be overcome when we take small, individual steps.

Some time ago I visited a woman in intensive care. Her condition was critical. She was connected to all kinds of life support machines, receiving medication and treatment. There was little I could do except to visit her and pray with her. Perhaps that was only a little thing, but it was something. It was something (after 35 years of doing it) that I know how to do.

Ryan Kelly, the pastor who wrote the *1st-2nd Samuel* study guide that we are following in our *Sermon Chat* time after the service, says, “While David’s famous battle with the Philistine giant is what we might remember the most from this [story], it is described only briefly. Three speeches given by David provide the interpretive key...” (p. 35). Ryan Kelly is exactly right.

So let me close with the closing words of David’s final speech before he defeats the Philistine giant. David says: “*All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give all of you into our hands.*”

The battle is the Lord’s. Whatever giant we are fighting, we never have to face it alone.

The battle is the Lord's. Amen.