

## **David and Goliath**

Picture this if you will-

A young Israelite shepherd boy, small in stature, armed with a few stones, a leather pouch, and a sling.....

A giant of a man, 6' 9" – a Philistine - his body covered by an elaborate metal tunic. His arms and legs down to his knees also covered. Bronze shin guards covering his legs and metal plates over his feet. A heavy metal helmet on his head. He carried a javelin, a sword and a spear. A threatening and terrifying image for sure!

The Philistines were originally a sea-faring people from Crete. They had moved to Palestine and settled along the coast. In the second half of the 11 th Century BC, they began to move inland.

The Israelites on the other hand were clustered in the mountains, under the leadership of King Saul.

The Philistines were enemies of the Israelites. It was their goal to split King Saul's kingdom in two.

King Saul got word that the Philistines were on their way to wage war. He gathered his people and helped them to prepare for battle.

The Philistines set up camp on the southern ridge, the Israelites on the north. Between them a ravine. Neither dared to make the first move. Finally the Philistines had waited long enough. Instead of a full on battle, they sent their giant warrior down into the valley to take on the fiercest warrior from the Israelite army.

In the Israelite camp, no one moved. Who would dare even consider taking on this giant?

A young shepherd boy had come down from Bethlehem to bring food to his brothers. To everyone's amazement, he stepped forward and volunteered to take this giant on! King Saul protested. The young boy persisted. He maintained that as a shepherd he had taken on fiercer

predators than this huge man....lions, and bears who would come after his sheep. Reluctantly King Saul relented. David ran down into the valley to face his huge opponent.

Goliath could not believe his eyes. Was this the best they could do?

“Come to me so that I may feed your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field,” he roared.

And thus began, history’s most famous battle!

Well we all know how that battle ends. The giant has been felled. His heavy armour, his sword, shield, and spear, crashing to the ground. The young shepherd boy - armed only with his sling shot and pouch of stones.

What do you think this is about?

What do you think God is trying to tell us through this Scripture?

What has it got to do with your life?

What has it got to do with mine?

Malcolm Gladwell wrote a book entitled **David and Goliath – underdogs, misfits, and the art of battling giants**. The first section of his book is called, **The Advantages of Disadvantages, and the Disadvantages of Advantages**. Think about that title for a moment.

David and Goliath. The Advantages of Disadvantages. Victory of the underdog. Unexpected Victories. Against All Odds.

I want you to think of examples either from your own life, or stories you have heard, where the mouse defeats the lion, the weak defeats the strong, the unexpected victories in life, the advantages of disadvantages.

And I want you to think of what this might have to do with your faith, your spiritual journey, your life as a disciple, a child of God.

Political scientist Ivan Arreguin-Toft determined that whenever there is a David/Goliath circumstance, David is victorious 1/3 of the time. The giant wins 2/3 of the time. Toft then asked the question differently. What happens when the underdog uses unconventional ways to seek victory or success? The number jumps from 1/3 to more than ½. For example, the population of the US is 10 times that of Canada. If the two countries went to war, and Canada chose to fight unconventionally, history would suggest that Canada would likely win.

Remember Lawrence of Arabia?

Near the end of the First World War, T.E. Lawrence led the Arab revolt against the Turkish army occupying Arabia. The British were helping the Arabs in their uprising. Their goal was to destroy the long railroad the Turks had built funning from Damascus deep into the Herjaz Desert.

The Turks had a formidable modern army. They were a force to be reckoned with! Lawrence, by contrast commanded an unruly band of Bedouin nomads. They were not skilled troops - untrained rabbles, most of whom have never fired a rifle. These tribesmen were anything but disciplined. However, they had great knowledge of the desert, endurance, speed, knowledge of the country, and courage. Lawrence's army fought in unconventional ways, and against all odds. They were victorious. David and Goliath.

The world of medicine, sports, the arts, politics are full of surprising success stories where small, seemingly insignificant Davids defeat the Goliaths.

*"The clacks company was a big bully, sacking people, racking up the charges, demanding lots of money for bad service. The Post Office was the underdog, and an underdog can always find somewhere soft to bite."*

From the movies - Rocky, The Mighty Ducks, from Theatre – Les Miserables. And what about the Superbowl!!!

Sometimes we don't ever learn or understand how in the world Davids come to be victorious over Goliaths. But often, as Toft says, it is by using unconventional means.

You are likely familiar with the actor and comedian Steve Martin. He started out as many have, as a struggling artist. He played small clubs. He grovelled for work. He was about to give up. But then one night he put on a pair of rabbit ears, and then an arrow that looked like it was going through his head, and he got noticed and wildly popular. He found an unconventional way to become wildly successful.

Elevator music didn't always exist. Riding elevators was not always comfortable for people. In the early days, many people were too afraid and anxious to try them. The higher the elevators went, the shakier they got. The Otis people decided to add music to the ride. It did not stop the sway, but it was soothing, and took the minds of the riders off their fear. An unconventional solution to a problem.

Do you remember when our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters used to eat fish on Fridays? I always thought it was for religious reasons. So did they. The Italian fishing industry was in trouble. They were not selling enough of their catch. They tried all of the standard marketing strategies. Nothing worked. It was a desperate time for Italian fishermen and their families. They went to the Pope to plead their case. The authorities in the Roman Catholic Church came up with an unconventional solution to a conventional, common business problem. The Pope declared that for spiritual reasons, all good Catholics must refrain from eating meat on Fridays – fish only! The livelihood of Italian fishermen was saved!

David and Goliath. Unconventional solutions to conventional challenges.

Do you remember a time when all your friends at school and all your friends on your hockey team, and all your neighbours went to church on Sunday mornings? We all had play clothes, school clothes, and church clothes. It doesn't seem that long ago. Now it is somewhat of a surprise to find out that someone we meet goes to church.

Mainline churches are on the decline. The number of people attending is going down. Churches are closing at an alarming rate. Very few churches are being built. In the last 2 years, within Canada 2 new churches were built and one of them was an amalgamation of 4 existing congregations. It is a terrifying and very discouraging time for loyal church members who are

forced to make plans to close their church, to sell their building, to bring an end to a long and vibrant history. Churches are often up against way too much to survive.

Goliath comes in many disguises. The erosion of Sunday as the Sabbath. It is almost indistinguishable from any other day of the week. Sunday shopping, sports, and the secularization of our culture to name a few. We have yet to figure out the wisdom of David or the strategy of Lawrence's Bedouin nomads. There is a way. We just need to find it. I am confident that a solution will come and it will come in an unconventional way.

All that is on a corporate level. There are also Goliath's in our personal lives. For some, Goliath comes in the form of addiction, for others mental or physical illness, for some a rash of bad decisions. Can you identify a Goliath in your life? Are you strategizing to determine how you can be victorious over that giant?

When it comes to the success of the unconventional, there is no greater example than our Saviour Jesus Christ. He was anything but conventional:

- a prophetic announcement that he would be born
- an incredible conception and birth story
- an unconventional upbringing for one who would be King
- an unusual way to call unusual associates
- a profound, exceptional devotion to those who society ignored, abused, and pushed aside
- an inexplicable charisma that drew crushing crowds made up of rich and poor, religious and non-religious, educated and uneducated, urban and rural
- overcoming evil with good, force with peace, death with life

There is not anyone more David and Goliath than Jesus.

Can this, in some way, in some circumstance in your life, apply to something that you are going through, or have gone through, or perhaps will go through in the future?

Jesus was, to say the least unconventional.

Jesus relied heavily on the gifts God gave him.

Jesus trusted in the Lord. Jesus was a man of enormous faith.

Might we grow in our faith.

Amen