

Slay That Giant

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[0 : 00] Well, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. As always, you can check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or you can go to the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

And our heart is simply to get into the Word of God, but most of all, let that Word get into our hearts and transform us more and more into the image of Jesus.

Now, if you're a regular listener, you're probably like, why does this voice sound kind of weird right now? I've just a little bit lost my voice and a little bit gunked up right now. So if I have an occasional coughing fit during the broadcast, please forgive me for that.

But I am excited to jump into God's Word with you today. And you know what? I love a good underdog story. Some of you remember Rulon Gardner from the 2000 Athens Olympics.

This is where the American came in with, honestly, little expectations. But somehow he found himself in the gold medal match against one of the most dominant wrestlers of all time, Alexander Karolin.

[1 : 08] The Russian champion hadn't been beaten in international competition for 15 years. Hadn't even conceded a point for a decade. Three consecutive gold medals, seven straight world titles, And Rulon Gardner, who never even won the NCAA championship, Took him down to win the gold medal.

No one saw that one coming. Or what about this one? The 2007 Michigan Wolverine football team that started the season ranked number five With hopes of winning the Big Ten and playing for a national championship.

And as the big boys often do to kick off the season, They paid a small school called Appalachian State \$400,000 To come into the big house and take a beating.

And yet, the beating never happened. And at the end of the game, up two, Appalachian State blocks a field goal to secure the win. And that's why they play the game.

And then I can't help but think of a boxer back in the 1920s and 30s Named James J. Braddock. He started off with a promising career, but he hit a rough spot.

[2 : 23] He lost some fights. His ranking plummeted. And as the Great Depression hit, he had to fight hurt just to pay bills. And he ended up getting his boxing license revoked Because of such poor performances in the ring.

Living in poverty, accepting government assistance, And working on the docks just to keep his family off the streets, One day his former trainer came to him to offer him a fight.

One of the top five heavyweight boxers in the world Needed an opponent on a few days' notice.

And James Braddock was the only one crazy enough to take it. With a record of 47, 25, and 7, Not exactly a record a top-tier boxer would have.

He was expected to get knocked out in the early rounds By this young, up-and-coming, impressive fighter. But guess what? He shocked the world.

And he knocked out Corn Griffin. So they gave him another fight. And he beat that guy too. And he just kept winning until finally in 1935, He went up against the world champion Max Baer As the 10-to-1 underdog.

[3 : 35] A man who'd actually killed two people in the ring. But once again, he did the impossible. And he won by decision. It was a true David versus Goliath moment.

Now let me ask you this. Why do we use that phrase, David versus Goliath, Anytime there's an underdog? Well, it's because David was the ultimate underdog, right?

More than James Braddock or Rulon Gardner. More so than Appalachian State. David was the ultimate example By which we measure all other underdogs. So let's talk about this very familiar

story today.

Last week we began this new series on David's life Talking about this very humble beginnings that David had. See, he belonged to a good family from Bethlehem.

But let's just be honest, around 1000 BC, There wasn't a whole lot special about this little town That time had forgotten. It was nestled in the foothills some six miles south of Jerusalem.

[4 : 36] It sat about 2000 feet above the Mediterranean. And there wasn't much to draw you to this place If you weren't from there. And when Samuel the prophet came wandering into town, The people were scared that they had done something wrong.

They thought they were coming under God's judgment. Instead, Samuel had been sent for a reason. God told him that he would show him from the house of Jesse Who would be the next king over Israel.

So here comes Jesse's sons, One after another, impressive looking young men, As tall as a king. And one after another, God says, No, he's not the one.

Until finally they send for the runt of the litter named David. And as this dirty young man in his early teen years comes in, He's been tending the sheep.

He looks nothing like a traditional king. Treated more like a servant than a son. God says, That's my guy. And here's why the Lord called the most unlikely of characters.

[5 : 40] 1 Samuel 16, 7. But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not consider his appearance or his height, For I have rejected him. Talking about David's oldest brother.

The Lord does not look at the things that people look at. People look at the outward appearance, But the Lord looks at the heart. And we learn that David was a man after God's own heart.

But here's the part that honestly seems a little odd about this story. Here was this big visit from Samuel. David's told someday he'll be king over Israel. But it's like the next thing we know, Everything goes back to how it was before, like it never happened.

David's back out in the field tending the sheep. His three oldest brothers are out in battle against the dreaded Philistines. And since there was no app or even phone to use to tell David's father how the battle was going, Since there was no way for his brothers to communicate very well, Jesse one day sends David with plenty of food to check on his brothers, And then to report back what's going on. So David gets packed up early in the morning, Heads out, And when he gets there, He sees both armies camped out on a hill with this big valley in between.

[6 : 55] David makes his way to his brothers. He starts talking with them. When suddenly out steps from the bad guys, Their champion, Goliath, Standing over nine feet tall.

Can you imagine that? But not just that. Muscles bulging, Over 125 pounds of armor, Looking like a Mack truck, He begins to taunt Israel.

He taunts their king, Their God. He calls for the toughest soldier Israel has to meet him in the middle for a fight to the death. And whoever wins this one-on-one battle would claim victory for their people.

So the rest of the losing army would then surrender and become the winner's subjects. But not one soldier from Israel would step forward to the challenge.

In fact, we know that they were so scared, They would run away in fear. But this wasn't his first time to challenge the armies of the living God. For 40 days, Twice a day, He had been coming forward and taunting God's people.

[8 : 01] And you would think, You would surely think that King Saul, One of the closest men to Goliath's size, Would have stepped forward to show his faith in Almighty God.

To say nobody comes at God's chosen people and gets away with it. But instead, what does Saul do? He wimps out. He offers a big reward to anybody who will defeat this giant.

Not only will he make them rich, But he'll give them his own daughter in marriage. He'll even exempt the warrior's family from taxes. Man, the reward was big. Instant celebrity.

But in the eyes of all these soldiers, The risk wasn't worth it. There was no way anybody was going to challenge the great warrior Goliath. At least until David arrives.

So here comes this kid. And this is speculation, But we're close. He's probably between 15 and 17 years old. No intention of getting involved in the battle Until he hears the giant's threats.

[9 : 05] And to his amazement, He looks around, And he sees no one willing to stand up for the living God. Here are these trained soldiers.

They're proven in battle. And no one's willing to throw down with Goliath. So David, knowing his God's track record, He starts to ask some questions. And before long, There he is, Standing before King Saul, Saying, Okay, I'll fight this Philistine.

Now, Put yourself in Saul's shoes for a second as king. The only person coming forward to fight the great champion is a kid. He's not even a soldier yet.

And he cannot feel good about this. Yet there's no other choice. I guess it would be him if it's not the kid. So out of desperation, He puts his own armor on David. And he tries to send him out.

David couldn't move in the stuff. It was so big on him. So he takes it off. He walks down to the stream, Grabs five smooth stones, Puts them in his pouch, Grabs his slingshot, And he starts right for Goliath.

[10:11] And as Goliath sees this teenager start to come toward him, He can't help but just laugh. I mean, Here's this scrawny boy, No armor, No sword, Has the audacity to come at the great Goliath.

Now let me read to you the clash of words between David and Goliath here in 1 Samuel 17, starting in verse 43. He said to David, Am I a dog that you come at me with sticks?

And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. Come here, He said, I'll give your flesh to the birds and the wild animals. But 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.

This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, And I will strike you down and cut off your head.

This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, And the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.

So to put it like I would have 20 years ago when I was in college, Man, it was on like Donkey Kong, okay? Or today you might simply say, They're just about to throw down.

[11:27] So here David and Goliath are, Drawing closer and closer. David pulls out his slingshot, Gives it a few swings, And then he lets that stone fly.

And I can just picture this Israelite army, As it's flying through the air, And then it hits Goliath, And one of the only spots that's not covered by armor, Right between his eyes, And down goes the great champion Goliath.

And to put it kind of kid friendly, David finishes him off, And there, my friends, Is the true meaning of an underdog story.

Now, if you're anything like me, I love to hear these stories told. I love to talk about them. But it does no good if it doesn't mean something right now in your life and mine.

Because the reality is, You may not be staring at a literal nine foot tall giant, But you and I both have giants in our lives that we just can't seem to slay. Giants that control our every thought, That hold us back from authentically being a person after God's own heart.

[12:36] So let's do this. Let's talk about what it was that David possessed that allowed him to slay the giant. And first, giant slayers have an unforgettable memory.

Excuse me. Giant slayers have an unforgettable memory. Now, how many of you have ever heard of the early church father named Polycarp?

This man was actually a disciple of the Apostle John when he was really young. But in the year 155 A.D., This 86-year-old Bishop of Smyrna, One of the most respected leaders in the early church, Was being hunted down for his faith.

See, they'd already put many Christians to death in the Colosseum for not denying Christ. And now they were looking for the well-known pastor, Polycarp. Because of this, he was moved to a home outside the city to kind of hide out.

But eventually his whereabouts were discovered. So they came for him and they found him resting peacefully upstairs. Right away he got up and he insisted that he make them a meal where they sat down to eat.

[13:50] And then after they were done, he asked if he could pray. And for two hours, he prayed in such a way that they were amazed. They pleaded with him.

Because, I mean, these are just the soldiers. They pleaded with him to simply profess Caesar as Lord and be set free. But he refused. He was brought before the pro-council.

Where they too demanded that he curse Christ and swear an oath to Caesar. And I love Polycarp's part. Let me say it again.

Polycarp's words. He simply said, 86 years I have served Jesus. And he never did me any wrong. How can I blaspheme my king who saved me?

And that day he gave his life for Christ. Because he had an unforgettable memory of the amazing grace of the Lord. And he knew that his death was simply a chauffeur ride into the presence of Jesus.

[14:47] And honestly, that was one big difference between David and every other soldier there for Israel that day. David not only knew his God and all that he had accomplished from creation to Adam and Eve to Noah to Abraham to Joseph to Moses to Joshua and beyond.

But David even told Saul exactly why he wasn't afraid of Goliath. Look at me here at 1 Samuel 17 again. And let's start in verse 34. But David said to Saul, Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep.

When a lion or a bear has come and carried off a sheep from the flock, I went after it, struck it, and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it, and killed it. Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear. This uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them because he has defied the armies of the living God. The Lord who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine.

So here's what David's saying. This show is not about me. The only reason I've agreed to fight this monster in the first place is not because I've heard all the stories of what God has done, but I've also seen it in my own life.

[16:03] And I love this quote by the late Lois Evans where she talked about all that God had done in her life. And she said, So when it comes to those giants that you and I have in our lives, those addictions, those struggles, those fears, those anxieties, those heartaches, those whatever it is that hold us back and keep us from living for God, the first thing we have to do is take a deep breath and think back upon your life and all that God has done.

Remember every other time in your life where you didn't think you could make it through this thing, this tragedy, this struggle, this family drama, this whatever it was.

Consider how God has been faithful to you every single step of the way and you made it. See, David knew his God's track record.

He knew what he had done. And the thing I love most about David is that he always gave God the credit. I'll be honest with you guys. If I killed a bear or a lion with my bare hands, man, I'd be strutting around pretty good in this place, okay?

But David knew that his God was in control and he was working through him. See, slaying that giant begins with an unforgettable memory of all that your God has done and all that he is doing in your life.

[17:42] Understanding that he's good. Remembering that he has you in the palm of his hands and then standing on his promises in the word. Now here's the second thing I want you to see.

Giant slayers have an unwavering trust. So let's pick back up here in 1 Samuel 17, starting in verse 45.

We're going to read a few verses that we read earlier, but maybe cover a couple that we haven't read yet. So here David is. He's standing toe-to-toe with Goliath.

And verse 45 says, Now, I don't know if you do this, but when I read the Bible, I like to put myself in the shoes of that Bible character.

And there's no question, we all can talk a big game. We've all done it. We can think that we would have done and said the same things about Goliath, you know.

[19:10] But I'm just telling you, out of that crowd, only one person in that army had the faith and trust in God to put their life on the line. And he wasn't even really in the army.

David was the only one who took it beyond remembering what God had done in his life as he stepped out in obedience. And the reason he did was because he knew that this was the Lord's battle.

He was simply the instrument. He was simply the vehicle that the Lord used to show that Goliath was nothing compared to the unsurpassing greatness of his God.

David was simply faithful. You know, the late senator from Oregon, Mark Hatfield, he wrote about when he spent some time with Mother Teresa in Calcutta, India.

And on that visit, he got to go with her to what they called the House of the Dying. This was a home where sick children were cared for in their last days and where the poor would line up by the

hundreds to receive medical attention.

[20 : 13] Hatfield was watching Mother Teresa and her companions care for those who had been left by others to die and was so overwhelmed by all the suffering these workers saw every day that he finally said to Mother Teresa, he said, How can you bear this load without being crushed by it?

And that's when she replied, Senator, I'm not called to be successful. I'm simply called to be faithful. And, you know, when it comes to our giants that you and I face every day, those nagging sins that we can't seem to resist, we have to come to this point where we realize that we can't beat them on our own.

Satan's too powerful. He's too tricky for me to defeat in my own strength. But the great news is it's not my battle to fight. The battle belongs to the Lord.

So we come to the table with this unwavering trust in God's power, his promises, his providence.

And then we let that trust cause us to step out in obedience and allow him to fight that battle.

And what a joy it is to know that our giants can come tumbling down as well. Alcoholism, gossip, depression, fear, lust, materialism.

[21 : 31] And you can fill in your own blanks. See, this is God's battle. He is good. And he's simply calling us to step out of our comfort zones to trust him.

And when we do, just like David, we're going to see those giants start to fall. I want to end this message by telling you a story of my friend, Jaron Jackson.

He's the pastor at Clarksburg Christian Church. Has been for roughly 45 years, give or take a couple. Together with his wife, Carol, they led so many people to the Lord and even made lifelong disciples who are now going out and changing the world.

Jaron is dearly loved in our community, and rightfully so. And I, in particular, am grateful for their influence over my wife, who grew up in that church. As many of you know, a few years back, Carol was driving on some unfamiliar country roads and found herself surrounded by flooded roadways. And sadly, she lost her life as it swept her away. Our community was absolutely devastated. And no one would have blamed Jaron after such a devastating loss if he would have just stepped away.

[22 : 43] I think he was somewhat close to retirement age. But you know what? He didn't do that. He's still going strong at the church, loving and leading his flock.

Bethany and I just had the privilege to serve a week at Mahoning Valley camp with him. And all week, he loved on the faculty and the kids. He modeled Christ-like servanthood.

He taught us God's Word. And he showed us what it means to have an unforgettable memory of all the Lord has done in your life, while also showing that unwavering trust when life just doesn't make sense.

So I just got one last thing to say to you today. Child of God, in the power of Christ, won't you just go and slay that giant? Pray with me.

Heavenly Father, we just give you all praise and glory that you are due. Thank you for just this story of David and Goliath, this story of how God took this runt of the litter, this teenage boy, and used him to slay probably the greatest warrior in the world.

[23 : 55] And so, Father, we just pray as we think about our own lives and those giants that we have and those things that we struggle with, will you give us your strength, your power to trust you to take down those giants?

Father, you are big enough to slay any giant that tries to take over our hearts because you want all of us. And so we just give you permission to have your way in us, to move in our hearts, and to draw us closer and closer to Jesus.

Thank you for your word that you've spoken into our hearts today. We pray in Jesus' precious name. Amen. I want to share this invitation with you today.

I don't know where you're at in your walk with Christ. Maybe you don't have a walk with Christ.

Maybe you have some faith questions that you want to ask. Hey, you can reach out to us.

We would be glad to come alongside you just like others have done for us. So our number here at First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana, is 812-663-8488.

[25 : 04] Once again, my name is Ray Sweet. I'm the lead pastor here at the church. Or you can go ahead and email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com.

But hey, we would love to be here for you if you do have a need. So God bless you, and we hope you have a great week.