

Holy Weak

One of my favorite things about the Bible is that supernatural quality it has where no matter how many times you read a passage you can always find something new and relevant. This is a reality and if you're not reading your Bible daily—or as close to daily as possible—you're really missing out on the wisdom and power of our God.

I know that to some of you, the Bible may seem hard to understand—and it can be. I would encourage you to read and understand what you can. If something confuses you ask someone in the church. That's one way we build real community; real family.

And we'll see that today in a very familiar passage of scripture: the story of David and Goliath. But we're not going to talk about what you probably think we're talking about: the whole overcoming sin and conquering tough odds stuff. Don't get me wrong, that's definitely an amazing aspect of this story...but as with the entire Bible, God has multiple, deep, powerful meanings crammed into every story in the Bible.

And while overcoming odds and such is great, I want to focus on something a little different. Namely, what does it take to be holy? When we hear the word holy what do we think of? (Go into crowd to field answers?)

Usually we think of rules, or righteous living or being especially pious or sinless. But that is not how the Hebrew language defines holy. The word in Hebrew is *qadosh* and means literally, "set apart for a special purpose."

So I'll let you in on a little secret: that means that

YOU
ARE
HOLY

YOU have a purpose, a reason, something that God has in store for you specifically and nobody else! You are Holy....probably. See in order to actually be holy you have to actually be set apart for that purpose. Which means that if you're not setting yourself apart for that purpose...you're sort of missing the point.

And while I could go on all day about how you should volunteer, love others and do your duty as a Christian...I'm wondering how many Christians are more than willing to fulfill their purpose but think that they're 100% unqualified to do so.

I wonder how many of you feel like a square peg in a round hole; a huge, industrial size bolt at a job where what's really needed is a hammer and nail; you feel like the wrong tool for the job.

Or maybe you feel like duct tape: a temporary fix until the *real* fix comes along. People like to think that insecurity is an issue only adolescents struggle with, but I find that when it comes to doing ministry and being all that God has called us to be, us adults struggle just as much.

We think, "I can barely manage my own relationship with God, how in the world could I lead anyone else there?"

Welcome to the family of God. Where the flawed lead the flawed...but we're all holy; set apart for a purpose. Yes even you!

Am I speaking to your hearts today? Does anyone else feel this deep down?

So today's sermon will be just a hint different than you might be used to—I know, I know "Wait today's sermon? You're still in the introduction?" Welcome to church by Pete.

We're going to just read through the story, pausing to notice some of the truths, and I just might leave you with as many questions as answers. But I think that's a good thing. Brian McLaren once said, "True learning does not come by hearing or teaching, it comes by thinking."

So let's see if I can get you thinking, talking...and learning.

We'll start with some background info...The Israelite army is fighting a group called the Philistines. And the Philistines have this champion named Goliath. He's over 9 feet tall and all man. And he's taunting the Hebrew army.

1 Samuel 17

⁸ Goliath stood and shouted a taunt across to the Israelites. "Why are you all coming out to fight?" he called. "I am the Philistine champion, but you are only the servants of Saul. Choose one man to come down here and fight me!" ⁹ If he kills me, then we will be your

slaves. But if I kill him, you will be our slaves! ¹⁰ I defy the armies of Israel today! Send me a man who will fight me!" ¹¹ When Saul and the Israelites heard this, they were terrified and deeply shaken.

So David comes to the army's front lines to bring his brothers some food. And while he's there, he hears Goliath taunting the army and starts to question why nobody will fight this guy. King Saul hears about this and sends for David.

³² "Don't worry about this Philistine," David told Saul. "I'll go fight him!"

³³ "Don't be ridiculous!" Saul replied. "There's no way you can fight this Philistine and possibly win! You're only a boy, and he's been a man of war since his youth."

³⁴ But David persisted. "I have been taking care of my father's sheep and goats," he said. "When a lion or a bear comes to steal a lamb from the flock, ³⁵ I go after it with a club and rescue the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death. ³⁶ I have done this to both lions and bears, and I'll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God! ³⁷ The Lord who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!"

Bold words! But here we see the first glimpses of why God chose this 8th son of Jesse to be the next king of Israel. While an entire army of seasoned warriors cower in fear of Goliath, David is ready to go.

He did what was right, not what everyone else was doing

He looked on the circumstances and saw that nobody was willing to fight this guy—that nobody trusted God—and like a young, idealistic (some would insert "naive") child, he decided he would fix the problem.

We kind of chuckle at that but I remember someone once saying that in order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven you had to be like a child. I forget who that was...but I think he was sort of important

I don't want to hammer away at this point too much, but I want to touch on it because I feel that maybe some of us are not setting ourselves apart because we're standing around looking at other people doing the same thing.

We figure if most of the Christians we know are afraid of Goliath, we'd be stupid to challenge him. But we all know how David's story ends.

Look, at the end of the day, if God has set you apart for a purpose—made you holy—then fulfilling that purpose will happen. God doesn't let us down.

Let's continue on with the story

1 Sam 17: 37b-40

Saul finally consented. "All right, go ahead," he said. "And may the Lord be with you!"

³⁸ Then Saul gave David his own armor—a bronze helmet and a coat of mail. ³⁹ David put it on, strapped the sword over it, and took a step or two to see what it was like, for he had never worn such things before.

"I can't go in these," he protested to Saul. "I'm not used to them." So David took them off again. ⁴⁰ He picked up five smooth stones from a stream and put them into his shepherd's bag. Then, armed only with his shepherd's staff and sling, he started across the valley to fight the Philistine.

He chose the weapons that fit him (unlike the armor that didn't)

David used the weapons he knew—he focused on his own strengths and not what everyone said he should use

Saul's armor would have done more harm than good, despite being the superior choice for a fight, it wasn't the superior choice for David's purpose

Some of you look at the weapons you have and just assume you have no place doing the work of the Lord but you're just...plain...wrong!

Do you really think God would set you aside for a purpose and then equip you with the wrong skills to finish it? David could have put on armor and a sword and charged Goliath headlong, but what happens to young teenage boys who try to stand toe to toe with seasoned, 9 foot tall men of war?

David knew! And he wisely said, "I can't win with those weapons; it's not who I am."

Ministry takes all sorts of people with all sorts of skills and talents. God has set you apart for a purpose and you are uniquely qualified to do it. But if you spend your entire life believing the lie that you can't do it because you don't fit into the king's armor, you'll miss how effective you can be with your sling.

And the world, the devil, Christians will all tell you that you can't do it. Saul was already skeptical of David, and look at this:

⁴¹ Goliath walked out toward David with his shield bearer ahead of him, ⁴² sneering in contempt at this ruddy-faced boy. ⁴³ "Am I a dog," he roared at David, "that you come at me with a stick?" And he cursed David by the names of his gods. ⁴⁴ "Come over here, and I'll give your flesh to the birds and wild animals!" Goliath yelled.

That message today might be, "You think you can do the work of God—actually minister to someone—with your pathetic math skills? Give me a break."

And yet I have students in youth group who stay long after we're done to get help on their math homework every week.

"What do you have to offer? You're just a housewife and a mother...booooring."

I know kids who would kill to know what it feels like to have a mom who really, really loves them, and I don't have the right sling to kill that giant...but you might...let's finish our story:

⁴⁵ David replied to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear, and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of Heaven's Armies—the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ Today the Lord will conquer you, and I will kill you and cut off your head. And then I will give the dead bodies of your men to the birds and wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel! ⁴⁷ And everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people, but not with sword and spear. This is the Lord's battle, and he will give you to us!"

So David did the right thing when nobody else would, he used the tools God gave him rather than try to be someone else and the last thing he does is recognize who was responsible for this fight: God

He trusted God to be strong in his weakness

When push came to shove, David knew that God had his back. Kermit showed us that amazing verse in 2 Cor 12 last week where God said "My power works best in weakness." David understood this. He knew God would come through where he could not.

We might call it naïve; God calls it faith.

See, God isn't in the business of letting us run around and do tasks for him. He's given us a purpose, not because we're cheap labor, but because he wants to join us in this work. And just like a good team always covers each other's weaknesses, God wants to walk alongside us and do the same.

And if we trust him to do that, we'll suddenly find that being holy has very little to do with being mistake free or being like every other Christian or taking on some enormous task all on our own. But it has everything to do with doing what we're designed for; using the tools God gave us when he created us for this purpose and working alongside him.

Put yourself into David's shoes and tell me if this sounds familiar in your life:

32 "Don't worry about this Philistine," David told Saul. "I'll go fight him!"

33 "Don't be ridiculous!" Saul replied. "There's no way you can fight this Philistine and possibly win! You're only a boy, and he's been a man of war since his youth."

34 But David persisted. "I have been taking care of my father's sheep and goats," he said. "When a lion or a bear comes to steal a lamb from the flock, 35 I go after it with a club and rescue the lamb from its mouth. If the animal turns on me, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death. 36 I have done this to both lions and bears, and I'll do it to this pagan Philistine, too, for he has defied the armies of the living God! 37 The Lord who rescued me from the claws of the lion and the bear will rescue me from this Philistine!"

Not ringing any bells? Try this:

"I can do ministry and show people the love of God"

"Don't be ridiculous. You're no pastor. You haven't studied in Seminary...you don't even understand everything about your own relationship with God"

How do you respond? Do you nod your head and skulk off to be a Christian in name only? Do you act like the Israelite army and hide because everyone around you is hiding—never mind that the very name of your God is being insulted by your inaction?

This was the army of the living God in the story of David and Goliath and look at them; cowards one and all. These weren't warriors; they were clucking hens in shiny armor.

Is that you? Do you have shiny Christian armor and a cool Methodist sword but live life terrified to tackle the giants of sin, addiction, hatred and loneliness that those around you struggle with?

Or are you going to be David? Are you going to say,

"I have been taking care of my family and doing my job well. When a problem comes along in my life, I go after it with a club and rescue my life from its mouth. If the problem gets worse, I catch it by the jaw and club it to death."

Some of you have had to have that sort of resolve in many, many tough times in your life...regardless of what you think you DO have it in you.

"I have done this to those in the world who said I couldn't make it or wasn't good enough, and I'll do it to that deceiver Satan, too, for he has defied a child of the living God! The Lord who rescued me from the claws of sin and evil will rescue me from this as well!"

I'm going to end with a quote I read from a guy named Mark Yaconelli:

"There are 10,000 forms of holiness. Just as God creates 10,000 forms of beauty, there are 10,000 ways to hold and shine God's love and compassion. Holy people aren't those who've imported some kind of saintly personality; holy people have somehow embraced who they are.

They're truly themselves; they're the people God created them to be. The presence of God doesn't remove—but rather shines through—their personalities, their wounds, their unique quirks and idiosyncrasies."

You are holy. You have a purpose...and it's God given. And nobody can steal that purpose away; nobody can rob you of your holiness...except you.

May you find your holiness in God. May your purpose become crystal clear. And may the unique things in your heart shine like the light of the creator who put them there.

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