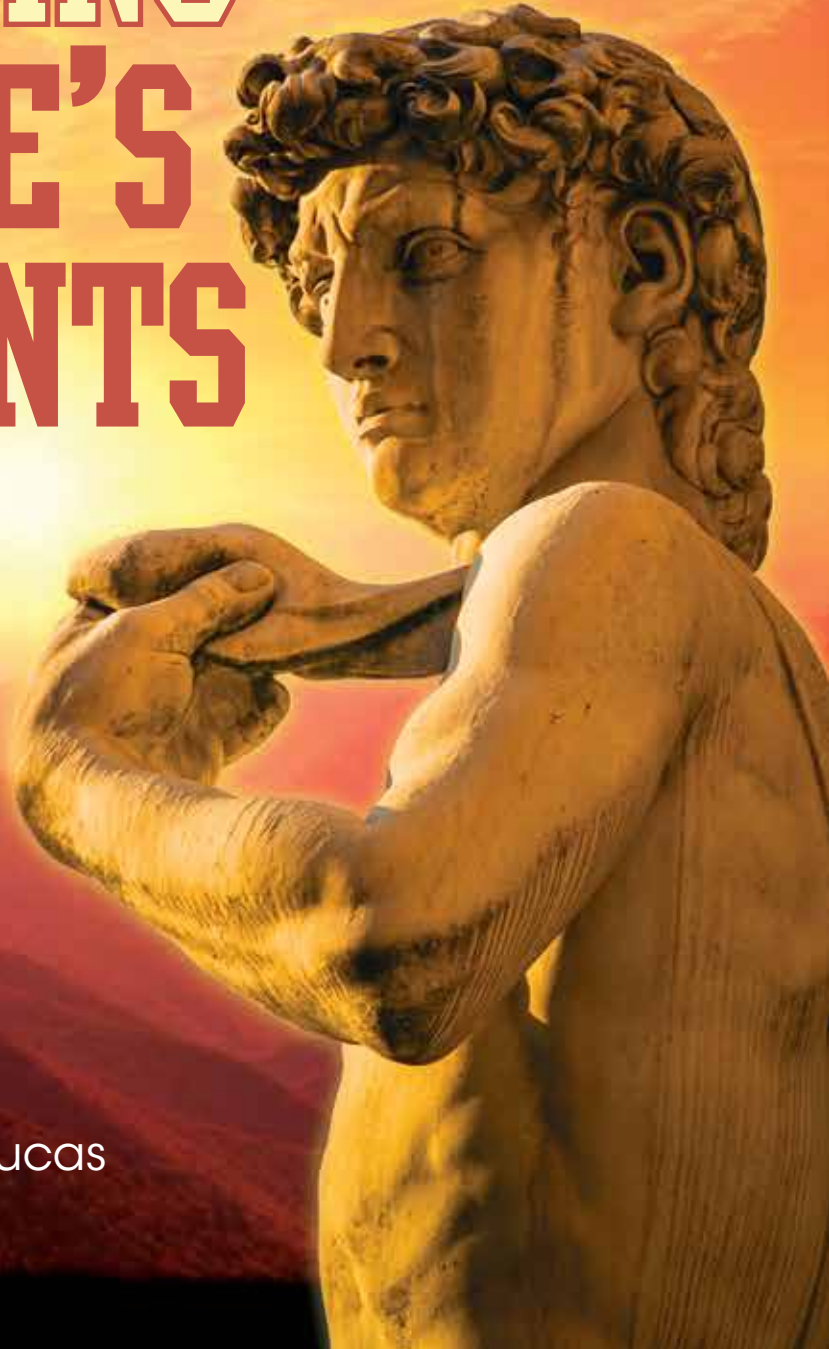


A Study of the Life of David

FACING LIFE'S GIANTS



By Jay Lucas

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PREFACE

LIFE CAN BE DIFFICULT. Many people agree with this statement the moment they hear it. They need only consider experiences they or their loved ones have had with cancer and other illnesses, addictions, financial difficulties, broken relationships, guilt, wounds from the past, stress, fear, disappointment, and painful personal loss to have ample reason to agree that life can be difficult. But is it possible that embedded within the very experiences and circumstances that make life difficult can be found opportunities for great blessings if you just know where to look?

Welcome to *Facing Life's Giants: A Study of the Life of David*. The true-life story of David is on prominent display in the Bible. David knew how it felt to confront giants every day. There is much to learn from this remarkable man, and you might discover you have much in common with him.

The giants you face in life never have to win. Ever. And the giants in your past that have already defeated you? Even the story of your past failures and defeats can be rewritten from a new and wonderful perspective.

LESSON 1

MEET DAVID

DO YOU RECOGNIZE the name Louis Zamperini? In 2014 American moviegoers became familiar with Louis Zamperini because a portion of his life story was told in the film *Unbroken*. The movie was based on a biography that had been a *New York Times* #1 best seller. From the time Louis was born in 1917, he had to overcome giants. He took the energy of a violent childhood and focused on becoming a world-class distance runner. He competed in the 1936 Berlin Olympics as a teenager and, to this day, is still the youngest American to ever qualify for the Olympic 5,000-meter race.

When World War II began, Louis enlisted in the Army Air Corps and served on a B-24 bomber in the war against Japan. On May 27, 1943, while on a search and rescue mission, Louis's plane crashed into the Pacific Ocean, killing eight of the eleven crew members. Louis and the other two survivors got into a small life raft and drifted on the ocean with little food or water. After thirty-three days, one of the other men died. Finally, after forty-seven days, the life raft landed on an island. Unfortunately, it was controlled by the Japanese army, and Louis became a prisoner of war. For two years Louis endured torture and mistreatment at the hands of a guard who enjoyed tormenting him. For Louis Zamperini, life had consisted of facing one giant after another.

1. What is the hardest obstacle you have overcome?
2. What obstacle or challenge has defeated or deeply wounded you?

Like Louis Zamperini's life, David's life was filled with challenges. The first information we have about David is found in the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel.

The Bible consists of the Old and New Testaments. The Old Testament covers human history from the beginning of creation until approximately 400 BC. The New Testament was written in the decades immediately following the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. David lived about a thousand years before Jesus.

3. Have you ever studied the story of David in the Bible? If so, what do you know about him?

When David was still in his youth, the nation in which he lived, Israel, was facing difficult times. The king of Israel, Saul, had repeatedly shown himself to be unfit to rule over a nation that had a special and unique relationship with God. Because of Saul's sinfulness, God had determined to replace him and give the throne to someone else. But to whom would He give it?

In a constitutional republic like the United States, the transfer of power from one president to another is relatively peaceful. In the days of Saul, the nations surrounding Israel were usually ruled by kings and rulers who used violence to gain power and then to keep it. Assassinations were common, even among family members. King Saul followed the examples of the other kings of his day. He was willing to kill anyone who opposed him.

King Saul Is Disqualified

We meet David for the first time in 1 Samuel 16. By this time Samuel, a prophet, was advanced in years. He had faithfully served God as Israel's judge, or leader, before Saul became the nation's first king. Samuel loved Israel and had hoped Saul would be successful as his replacement. Sadly, Saul was unwilling to follow Samuel's example and constantly rejected his godly counsel. Finally God chose to replace Saul, and He sent Samuel to meet the man He had chosen to become Israel's next king.

4. Read 1 Samuel 13:13 and 14. God gave the prophet Samuel a message to give to King Saul. What was that message?
5. How did Samuel describe the man God had chosen as the next king of Israel?
6. Please read 1 Samuel 16:1 and 2. Among whose sons was Israel's next king?
7. Jesse was from Bethlehem. Do you know what famous person was born in Bethlehem one thousand years later?
8. According to verse 2, what did Samuel fear would be Saul's reaction?

God Chooses the Next King

9. Please read 1 Samuel 16:3–10. How many of Jesse’s sons did Samuel meet?

God made it clear to Samuel that Israel’s next king was not to be found among these seven men. It is interesting to see that in verse 6 the son named Eliab was so impressive in physical appearance that it was as though he had “king” written all over him. People today often become famous and popular for no better reason than their physical appearance. But as God reminded Samuel, “The LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

10. In 1 Samuel 16:11, what information do we learn about David?

The Overlooked Son

In ancient Jewish families, the youngest son was considered the least influential member of the family. David was probably a teenager when the Bible’s account of him begins. His job tending the family sheep was important in the sense that the family needed the sheep to receive good care, but shepherding was a job of low social standing.

Jesse presented his first seven sons to Samuel. The Bible seems to indicate that David, the eighth son and the youngest, had not even crossed Jesse’s mind. This was probably the normal thing in Jesse’s home.

11. Have you ever been overlooked by others or pushed to the side because people did not notice you or because they did not think you were qualified or capable of doing a certain thing?

This would not be the only time young David was underestimated by others. As we will see, David’s confidence in God kept him from quitting when others doubted him. What matters most is what God thinks about us.

The Faithful Shepherd

David was actually becoming quite an impressive young man. As he watched the sheep,

he thought about God and wrote songs of praise to Him while he accompanied himself on his harp. Many of David's songs of praise are recorded in the Bible in the book of Psalms.

12. Read 1 Samuel 17:34 and 35, where David describes incidents from his life as a shepherd. As David trusted in God, what characteristic did he develop?

13. Read Psalm 18:1-3. Later in life, David would write this psalm expressing his thoughts about God. What was David's attitude toward God?

14. Read Psalm 19:1. When David looked up at the stars, what did he think?

15. Read Psalm 19:7-11. Saul had disregarded and disobeyed God's commands. What were David's thoughts on the commands of God?

David wanted to please God by the things he said and even the things he thought about, so he asked God to be his strength to help him do so and to be his redeemer to forgive him when he failed. He wrote, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14).

Samuel Anoints David

16. Read 1 Samuel 16:11-13. After seeing Jesse's seven oldest sons, what question did Samuel ask?

17. What was Jesse's reply?

When David was brought before Samuel, God revealed to him that David would be Israel's next king. Samuel anointed David with oil. In ancient Israel, anointing with oil in this manner identified someone as having been appointed by God to His special service. When Samuel anointed David, it was done privately, in the presence of Jesse's family.

This anointing was the first step in David's journey to the throne of Israel, but becoming king was still several years off in the future.

Overcoming Giants Requires Trusting God and Relying on Him

David's obscurity as the youngest of eight sons and holding the lonely and sometimes dangerous job of a shepherd was an obstacle (a giant!) that he could never have overcome by his own efforts. The greatest victories in David's life came during those times when he was trusting God and relying upon Him. Conversely, David's worst moments of failure would come when he took his eyes off of God and did not avail himself of the help that God offers to anyone who trusts in Him.

David is not unique in having to face giants. Every human being has them. But David walked through life with something that not everyone has; he had a personal relationship with God. Even before David fully reached manhood, he had learned to trust God and seek Him by faith. Because of pride, people sometimes rely on their own strength to fight life's battles. Sometimes people actually resent God because they blame Him for the giants they encounter in life.

18. What giants are you facing right now?

19. Do you believe God can help you?

20. The following is a list of giants people often face. Check the ones that have had an impact on your life.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> cancer or other diseases | <input type="checkbox"/> loneliness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> unemployment | <input type="checkbox"/> death of a loved one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> broken marriage | <input type="checkbox"/> bullying |
| <input type="checkbox"/> depression | <input type="checkbox"/> betrayal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> guilt | <input type="checkbox"/> financial debt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> addiction | <input type="checkbox"/> worry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> sexual or emotional abuse | <input type="checkbox"/> fear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> unfulfilled goals and hopes | <input type="checkbox"/> rejection |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shyness | <input type="checkbox"/> insecurity |

David Moves On

Because Samuel had anointed David in a private ceremony, King Saul did not initially realize that one day David would replace him. The remaining verses in 1 Samuel 16 explain how David was called (you might say he was drafted) into service in the king's court. David's service to Saul was sincere, skillful, trustworthy, and loyal. David made a positive impression upon Saul. Sadly, the day would come when Saul's admiration for David would turn into jealousy and hatred, and Saul would seek to kill David. But before any of that would happen, David was destined to face one of the biggest giants imaginable. His name was Goliath, and there was no way of defeating him. Or was there?

Memorize: "I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears" (Psalm 34:4, written by David).

Next Lesson: His Name's Goliath!

To learn what the Bible teaches about the way to Heaven, turn to "The Gospel" on page 43.