



DAVID

THE SHEPHERD KING
— and the —
SHAPE OF THE MESSIAH

Part 2

The Unexpected Victory

inspire
CHRISTIAN
FORMATION

The point of this study

The goal of every Inspire study is to draw closer to Jesus Christ. In this series, we will explore the life of David, the shepherd king, and consider how his story helped shape Israel's hope for the Messiah and the early Church's understanding of Jesus as that Messiah.

This study draws on four ancient lenses of interpretation: the literary, the metaphorical (which we will call the theological), the epic (which we will call the kingdom of God), and the ethical. Each lens helps us engage more deeply with the passages we read, leading us ever closer to Jesus Christ, the living Word of God to whom the Scriptures bear witness. If you would like to explore these lenses further, you can find more in the Inspire video series [How to Read the Bible \(Part 2\)](#).

The check-in & opening prayer

As we begin this study, let's take a moment to check in with ourselves and to ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate our heart. You can do this through personal journaling or by sharing with the group.



I wonder what was a highlight of your week.

**I wonder where you may have needed
prayer or support this week.**

I wonder where you noticed God at work this week.

I wonder what you are bringing to this study.
(questions, concerns, distractions, hopes, fears, learnings...).

I wonder what you hope to receive from God through this study.

Holy God,
**open our eyes that we may behold you;
open our lips that we may proclaim your praise;
open our ears that we may listen for your Word;
and open our hearts that we may be transformed,
to become like Jesus, the Son of David,
the Son of God, our friend and helper.**

Amen.

Context (read and reflect)

Reading the Scripture through the **Literary Lens**.

1 Samuel 17 continues the tension introduced in the previous chapter. Saul is still king, but God has already chosen David. The Spirit has come upon David, while Saul's leadership is increasingly marked by fear and instability. Into this unsettled moment comes a new threat: the Philistine army. Israel finds itself once again facing an enemy that seems stronger, larger, and more powerful.

The story unfolds as a standoff. Each day, the Philistine champion Goliath comes forward to challenge Israel. He is described in overwhelming detail — his size, his armour, his weapons. Everything about him reinforces fear. The narrative invites us to see what Israel sees: a problem too big to overcome. Saul and his army respond as we might expect — they are *"dismayed and greatly afraid"* (1 Samuel 17:11). The king who was chosen for his stature now stands powerless before a greater strength.

I wonder what shapes the way we see the challenges before us.



David enters the story from a very different place. He is not part of the army. He arrives as a shepherd, sent by his father to bring food to his brothers. While others see a giant, David sees something else entirely. He interprets the situation through memory — through what God has already done in his life. His confidence is not rooted in his own strength, but in God's faithfulness: *"The Lord who saved me...will save me"* (1 Samuel 17:37).

David refuses Saul's armour and instead goes out with what he knows — a sling, stones, and trust in God. The battle is not framed as David versus Goliath, but as a question of where true power lies. As David declares, *"the Lord does not save by sword and spear...the battle is the Lord's"* (1 Samuel 17:47).

I wonder how this story reshapes our understanding of strength, power, and faith.



The Story (mark and note)

Reading the Scripture through the **Literary Lens**. As you read, circle, underline, and make notes on the passage, notice the characters, the setting, the verbs, the allusions to other parts of Scripture, the metaphors, and anything else that draws your attention. Throughout this study, you will notice that certain words or themes are highlighted. These are simply some of the things that stand out to me as I read. You may notice different details, patterns, or questions – and that is part of the beauty of reading Scripture together. Mark the text with what you notice, what surprises you, and what you sense the Spirit drawing your attention toward.

1 Samuel 17:1-11, 32-50

Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. Saul and the Israelites gathered and encamped in the valley of Elah and formed ranks against the Philistines. The Philistines stood on the mountain on the one side, and Israel stood on the mountain on the other side, with a valley between them. And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was four cubits and a span. He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail; the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. He had greaves of bronze on his legs and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron, and his shield-bearer went before him.

He stood and shouted to the ranks of Israel, "Why have you come out to draw up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not servants of Saul? Choose a man for yourselves, and let him come down to me. If he is able to fight with me and kill me, then we will be your servants, but if I prevail against him and kill him, then you shall be our servants and serve us." And the Philistine said, "Today I defy the ranks of Israel! Give me a man, that we may fight together." When Saul and all Israel heard these words of the Philistine, they were dismayed and greatly afraid.

Why do our spiritual ancestors put so many stories within the context of a battle?

Compare and contrast Goliath with David

Goliath	David
sees weakness	sees God
comes with weapons	comes in God's name
defies Israel and God	stands up for Israel and God
trusts strength	trusts God

Name all the ways God
is named in this story
living God
the Lord

...

David said to Saul, "Let no one's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Saul said to David, "You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him, for you are just a boy, and he has been a warrior from his youth." But David said to Saul, "Your servant used to keep sheep for his father, and whenever a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went after it and struck it down, rescuing the lamb from its mouth, and if it turned against me, I would catch it by the jaw, strike it down, and kill it. Your servant has killed both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, since he has defied the armies of the living God." David said, "The Lord, who saved me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will save me from the hand of this Philistine." So Saul said to David, "Go, and may the Lord be with you!"

Saul clothed David with his armor; he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. David strapped Saul's sword over the armor, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, "I cannot walk with these, for I am not used to them." So David removed them. Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the wadi and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine.

notice the shepherd
theme? Where else
does it come up?

Write down all the
verbs that interest you

prevail

disdain

curse

...

What words are
repeated?

How does the story
move toward a
"surprise" or
"unexpected" ending?

The Philistine came on and drew near to David, with his shield-bearer in front of him. When the Philistine looked and saw David, he disdained him, for he was only a youth, ruddy and handsome in appearance. The Philistine said to David, "Am I a dog, that you come to me with sticks?" And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. The Philistine said to David, "Come to me, and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the field." But David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This very day the Lord will **deliver** you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head, and I will give the dead bodies of the Philistine army this very day to the birds of the air and to the wild animals of the earth, so that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel and that all this assembly may know that the Lord does not **save** by sword and spear, for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand."

When the Philistine drew nearer to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, striking down the Philistine and killing him; there was no sword in David's hand.

The unexpected victory

Reading the Scripture through the *Theological Lens*.

Before we turn to the Scripture, let's reflect on the theme of **fear and faith**.

In the story of David and Goliath, we see a contrast that runs through all of Scripture. The armies of Israel see the giant and are dismayed; their vision is shaped by what is visible and threatening. Fear narrows their imagination, fixing their attention on the size of the problem rather than the presence of God. David, however, sees the same reality differently. He remembers what God has done: "*The Lord who **saved** me from the lion and the bear **will save** me*" (1 Samuel 17:37). His faith is not denial of danger, but trust in God's faithfulness.

Fear asks, "What if I am not enough?" Faith asks, "What if God is faithful?" David steps forward not because he is stronger, but because he knows who stands with him. As he declares, "*The battle is the Lord's*" (1 Samuel 17:47), the focus shifts from human ability to divine action. In this way, David begins to reveal the shape of the Messiah—one who trusts completely in God rather than in strength or power.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus speaks into this same tension. Again and again, he meets people in their fear and says, "*Do not be afraid*," calling them to trust in God's presence. He calms storms, heals the sick, and restores the broken — not simply as acts of power, but as invitations to faith. In Jesus, we see not only one who trusts God completely, but one who draws others into that same trust.

Early Christian writers saw in this story a pattern fulfilled in Christ. Augustine of Hippo reflects that David goes out unarmoured, trusting not in weapons but in God — a sign of the humility through which God overcomes the powers of the world. In Christ, this pattern is made complete: victory comes not through domination, but through trust, obedience, and self-giving love—even to the point of the cross, where what appears to be defeat becomes the very means of God's victory.

I wonder where we may be focused only on the "giants" in our lives, and where God might be inviting us to remember—and trust — again.



Sharing

*Reading the Scripture through the **Kingdom of God Lens**.*

I wonder what this story reveals about the way God's kingdom comes – not through power or strength, but in ways we do not expect.

I wonder how Jesus shows us that God's victory comes through trust, humility, and self-giving love – even when it looks like defeat.

*Reading the Scripture through the **Ethical Lens**.*

I wonder what small step of trust God might be inviting us to take this week.

I wonder what it might look like to face the “giants” in our lives not with strength, but with faith in God's presence.

I wonder where God may be at work in ways we do not expect – even where things seem lost.

You may close in prayer.



The Parish of St. Mark – *Ocean Park*