

## Prayers

### Opening prayer

Dear Lord and Father, I have searched and I have found You there in the midst of Your creation, for You were waiting to be found. Forgive me for straying from the pathways of the soul and failing to look for You where You could be found, and thank You for staying faithful to me when I wandered. Lead me on to discover more about You, more about my faith, and more about Your glorious work in heaven and on earth. AMEN.

### Prayer Suggestions

General theme of the week: PREJUDICE

**1. For yourself**

*Praise God for His salvation and for the work He has done in your life, to love you without prejudice and give you the hope of eternal life*

**2. For your friends and family**

*Praise God that He is able to overcome the problems people have with each other, and He can help us overcome the many prejudices that beset families*

**3. For the church and its work**

*Thank God for the work He does through His people the church to overcome prejudice in the world. Pray that this work will go on and never stop*

**4. For your neighbourhood, your country and the world (News)**

*Thank God for the progress that has been achieved throughout the world in overcoming prejudicial attitudes towards the races. Pray that wherever this is done it will continue and not stop*

### Meditation

Lord God Almighty:

If we are troubled,

lead us into the peace of Your presence;

If our minds are confused,

bring us knowledge and understanding;

If our hearts are broken,

comfort us with Your unsurpassed love;

If our strength is failing,

touch us with Your loving help and healing;

If our feelings are bruised,

pour on us the balm of Your comfort and Word;

If our pathway ahead is puzzling,

guide us with the calm and steady hand of Your Spirit;

For in You, and in Your peace,

we are eternally blessed and forever saved.

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## Bible Study

### Bible passage – 1 Samuel 17:19-37

<sup>20</sup> Early in the morning David left the flock with a shepherd, loaded up and set out, as Jesse had directed. He reached the camp as the army was going out to its battle positions, shouting the war cry.

<sup>21</sup> Israel and the Philistines were drawing up their lines facing each other. <sup>22</sup> David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers. <sup>23</sup> As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. <sup>24</sup> When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear.

<sup>25</sup> Now the Israelites had been saying,

‘Do you see how this man keeps coming out? He comes out to defy Israel. The king will give great wealth to the man who kills him. He will also give him his daughter in marriage and will exempt his father’s family from taxes in Israel.’

<sup>26</sup> David asked the men standing near him,

‘What will be done for the man who kills this Philistine and removes this disgrace from Israel? Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?’

<sup>27</sup> They repeated to him what they had been saying and told him,

‘This is what will be done for the man who kills him.’

<sup>28</sup> When Eliab, David’s oldest brother, heard him speaking with the men, he burned with anger at him and asked,

‘Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.’

<sup>29</sup> David said,

‘Now what have I done? Can’t I even speak?’

<sup>30</sup> He then turned away to someone else and brought up the same matter, and the men answered him as before. <sup>31</sup> What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

<sup>32</sup> David said to Saul,

‘Let no-one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him.’

<sup>33</sup> Saul replied

‘You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth.’

<sup>34</sup> But David said to Saul,

‘Your servant has been keeping his father’s sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, <sup>35</sup> 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. <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>37</sup> The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.’

Saul said to David,

‘Go, and the LORD be with you.’

## Review

***This long narrative within the story of David and Goliath is typical of an epic saga, and perhaps suitable for a Hollywood movie! It reveals David's motives for fighting Goliath and being obedient to God***

Some of the great stories of the Old Testament are very long, and today's reading requires of us a certain amount of patience. Nevertheless, we need to remember that the Old Testament contains a number of long and substantial stories, like that of David, and each of them tells an epic spiritual tale. Today, such stories might be part of a substantial television series, or a film, but we should not dismiss the story of David as mere theatre. It contains considerable spiritual truth, and this is why it appears in the annals of the Jewish people.

God had called David to be King of Israel, and had sent the prophet Samuel to anoint him (16:1-13), but the young David would have to walk a long and arduous path if he was ever to see the promise of his anointing come true. Moreover, David was not going to be launched from boyhood directly onto the throne of Israel. God planned that he would learn about the realities of life by working his way up from the bottom of society to the top, and it would take many years.

To begin with, 1 Samuel paints a picture of David as a teenage boy, the least of his family, tending his father's sheep (16:11). However, because of David's precocious talent, he had been hired as a musician at the court of Saul (16:14-23), but it seems that he was too young to be called up for war. So when the Philistines attacked Israel, Jesse's eldest sons took their place in the battle line, but the young David was left scurrying to and fro between his home and the army camp, taking messages and food from his father Jesse to his brothers in the battle line.

If we were watching this in a movie, we would be drawn into the inherent tension of the story, in expectation of the coming battle. In scene after scene, the young David is seen gradually being drawn into the battle scenario first because of his inquisitive nature (17:21-28), but secondly because of his belief in his own abilities to confront the enemy! Everyone of course knows the end of the story, and knows that one day, David will slay the great enemy of Israel, Goliath, the champion of Philistia!

We know what will happen, so we can chuckle at Goliath's threats and at Israel's inability to do nothing except succumb to the fear of battle. God's people need someone who can cut through the rampant fear in the ranks, and the tension in the story mounts as David's brothers fail to see what we can see, which is that David is the only one who has no fear and therefore the only one who can slay the monster!

Then, just as we despair that anyone will take notice of the young man David because he is kept on the edge of things, something wonderful happens. God works through the ancient equivalent of 'Chinese whispers' to bring David to King Saul's attention, though as yet (in verse 31), we do not know what David has actually said to make himself the subject of gossip in the ranks of Israel! How wonderfully God uses things beyond our control, such as gossip and the telling of tales, and then turns them around to His advantage and ours!

The last scene in our drama today is the tense yet charming dialogue between David and Saul, in which Saul quizzes David, and the young man persuades the King that he can defeat Goliath. We who hear this dialogue know the complexity of the plot at this stage, and the contrasts are intriguing. King Saul was the first king of all Israel, at the height of his earthly powers, but David was the youngest son of the country gentlemen with no status and no place in the army. Then, from an earthly point of view, this is a meeting between King and Pretender, but from a heavenly point of view it is between a failed leader and the Lord's anointed! Last, but not least, we know that King Saul and his army can never win the coming battle, for God is in the process of intervening in human history not merely to allow David to kill Goliath, but to show that He is the protector of His people. God will use his servant David to kill Goliath and do His will on earth, just as He has used His servants throughout history to do the same.

The highlight of this dialogue is surely David's insistence that for all the glamour of Goliath's armour, a dedicated shepherd who has confidence in himself and his proven skills, can win the day (17:34-37). There is irony in the very last verse of our reading, for when King Saul says to David, 'go, and the Lord be with you', we know that Saul does not believe David and has resigned himself to defeat. David, however, has taken the first step on his route to victory, and the ramifications of this will be huge, both Israel and for succeeding generations. David's descendant, Jesus, would one day face all evil, and defeat humanity's spiritual 'Goliath' in the battle for eternal life.

It is not fashionable for people to preach upon the story of David and Goliath, or teach this story to Sunday school children. This is perhaps understandable, but we should not let the sensibilities of the day blind us to the real spiritual truths that can be gained by studying this and every other story of Scripture that seems rather difficult in our day.

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## Discipleship

### Questions for groups

1. Do you find it difficult when the Old Testament describes battles and war? Why does the Old Testament describe so many battles, and what purpose does this serve?
2. Discuss the character of David as found within this passage. What is revealed to us about David? Why is he the Lord's anointed?
3. Why is David able to persuade Saul that he can kill Goliath? What Jesus as he give in verses 34 to 37? Does any of this have any spiritual meaning for us today?

### Discipleship challenges

- *As you look back over your life, are there any parallels between the story we have read today and your personal experience? What spiritual battle do you face today, and what or who are the 'Goliath's' you face? Who then is David, and how can you use His help?*
- *Pray that the church of God will have the wisdom to recognise and value the inspiration that can come from young talent in its midst. Pray for wisdom of those who have to make spiritual judgements about people's lives.*

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## Final Prayer

We thank You, Lord Jesus, for the help You give us in the course of our lives. Sometimes we understand what you have done, and sometimes we do not, but they are nevertheless very grateful. May we always be ready to receive Your wisdom and Your guidance, and always willing to do your will. Thank you for Your help is Lord Jesus, AMEN

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