



## Do I Have What It Takes?

There are some moments and feelings in life that I will never forget. I'll never forget what it felt like to **graduate from high school** after thirteen years of work. I'll never forget the way I felt before and after I **purposed** to my wife a little over fourteen years ago. I'll never forget my **wedding day**. I will never forget the first time **I held my children in my arms**. I'll never forget what it felt like to be asked to join the team of **pastors** at our church or to preach my first message at this church. I'll never forget the feeling of **enrolling in school** to start my college degree ten years after finishing high school. I will never forget what it felt like to take my family to Chicago for my **college graduation** and for my kids to see me walk. I'll never forget deciding just a few months ago that I would take the next step and start the journey of completing a **master's degree**. These memories are etched into my mind. There are some moments and feelings that I will never forget.

Can you relate? Can you think of moments in your life that you will never forget?

These milestones and moments are significant markers in my life. They carry with them great memories. At the same time, when I reflect on these moments in my life, I can also remember the questions and the feelings of doubt that I faced. Each exciting moment was followed by a haunting question: **"Do I have what it takes?"**

Do I have what it takes to be a man? To start out on my own? To find my place in this world? To develop a marketable skill and use that skill to make a living? To take on the responsibility of manhood and adulthood in my life?

Do I have what it takes to be a husband? To provide for my wife? To love her unconditionally? To understand her? To lay aside my preferences to honor and cherish her? To remain faithful no matter what?

Do I have what it takes to be a father? To be responsible for these little children? To be the kind of dad they need? To not mess this up?

Do I have what it takes to be a pastor? To preach and be true to God's Word? To guide others spiritually and not mislead them? To stick it out when it gets hard? To be vulnerable, transparent, and authentic with those I am trying to lead?

Do I have what it takes to continue to be an adult, a husband, a father, a pastor, and to pick back up the mantle of a student? Can I really fulfill all these responsibilities and go to school full time? Can we afford it both financially and in our schedules?

Do I have what it takes?

This question is very human. It is a question we all face. All of us, at multiple points in our lives, must ask and answer the question, "Do I have what it takes?"

This question is as old as human history, and it is the exact question that both of our main characters in today's Bible story were forced to face.

Today's story is a story that will be familiar to those of you who have familiarity with famous stories in the Bible. Let's open our Bibles to **1 Samuel 17** to the story of David and Goliath.

Before we jump into this story, I would like to give us some important context so that we can really understand what this story is all about. When most people hear this story, they are under the impression that the two main characters in this story are David and Goliath. However, when we read this story in its full context in the Scriptures, it is very clear that the story is not really about David and Goliath, but rather about **David and King Saul**. Let me explain.

God had appointed Saul to be the first king of Israel. Do you remember the story? At first, Saul was not looking to be the first king of Israel. In fact, Saul was hiding in the baggage. From the beginning of Saul's story we get the idea that Saul was not sure he had what it would take to be the king. However, by divine providence, Saul became the first king of Israel. The Bible describes Saul as a tall and handsome man. He was a head taller than all the Israelites around him. Saul was a man who looked the part of a king.

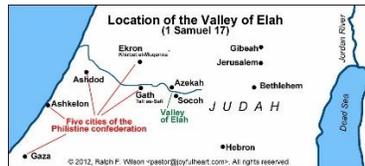
As God's anointed, Saul began to perform the duties and responsibilities of king. However, Saul was plagued by insecurity and pride. It became common for Saul to be concerned by what other people thought about him and to make decisions based on the fear of man rather than the fear of God. In fact, there were times that Saul chose to outright disobey God in order to please others. Eventually, this led to God using the prophet Samuel to strip Saul of God's anointing as king. Saul still occupied the role as king in Israel, but God's anointing had left Saul and was to be given to another.

Through Samuel, God placed His anointing on a lowly shepherd boy named David. David did not fit the image of "king" like Saul did. David was too young, too small, and too insignificant for most to even consider him as a candidate. But God told Samuel that man judges the outward appearance, but the Lord weighs the heart. God saw something in David's heart that made him fit to be the next king of Israel.

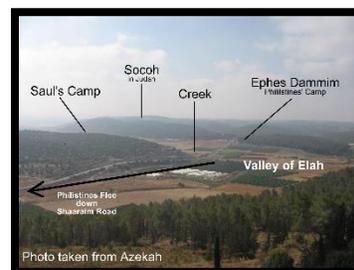
From 1 Samuel 15 until 2 Samuel 8, the storyteller is making one big point: Why David is fit to be king and Saul is not. For this reason, today's story in 1 Samuel 17 is not really about David and Goliath, it is about David and King Saul. Both these men are faced with a difficult test: Goliath. When faced with this test, both men were forced to ask and answer the

question, “Do I have what it takes?” The way these two men respond to this challenge helps reveal what they believed about God and about themselves. With this background in mind, let’s jump into our story in 1 Samuel 17.

The story begins by setting the scene. The Philistines were the nation of Israel’s biggest rivals at this point in history. Philistine invaders had set up camp inside the borders of the Promised Land. Israel was not invading; they were being invaded. The Philistine army was sitting on King Saul’s porch. Here is a map that will help us understand where this battle took place.



The Bible says that this battle took place in the Valley of Elah. The Philistines were invading the Promised Land, so Saul and his army went out to meet them. Saul’s army drew up their battle line to meet the Philistines on one side of the valley, and the Philistine army drew up their battle line on the others side. Here is a picture to help us get this scene in our minds.



Once the armies had established their camps, the storyteller introduces the warrior giant called Goliath. Saul was tall, but this man was a giant and a seasoned warrior. Everything the storyteller says about this man called Goliath of Gath is intended to help the reader understand his advantage on the battlefield: from his height, to his bronze helmet, to his coat of armor, to his javelin, to his shield bearer. Many details are provided in the text and they all serve one primary purpose: challenging this man appeared to be a death sentence.

Based on this description, anyone with any knowledge of present-day warfare would have considered this man to be invisible on the battlefield.

Dressed in full array, Goliath presented himself on the battlefield. He stood on his side of the valley and shouted at the ranks of Israel. He said, "Why do you come out and line up for battle? Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of Saul? Choose a man and have him come down to me. If he is able to fight and kill me, we will become your subjects; but if I overcome him and kill him, you will become our subjects and serve us" (1 Samuel 17:8-9). We need to understand that this type of champion warfare was not uncommon in Saul's day. Rather than deploy entire armies of men to combat, warriors would often be called upon to settle the battle in a one-on-one contest. The terms of the contest were that the losers would surrender the battlefield to the winners. That type of contest was exactly what Goliath was challenging Saul and his army to in this story. In this story, Saul was the most likely choice to meet Goliath on the battlefield. He was bigger than his other men and, as the king, he would have had more access to training in combat and experience in combat than anyone else. Goliath's challenge was open to anyone; but make no mistake, his challenge was directly at King Saul.

After presenting his challenge, Goliath said out loud, "I defy the armies of Israel!" When Saul saw Goliath and heard his challenge, Saul hid himself in fear. Following the example of their leader, the rest of the Israelites also hid themselves in fear.

We need to pause and understand the significance of the point that the storyteller is making in this story. Saul looked the part of king, Saul had the appearance of a king, but Saul also had a tendency to make judgements and determinations based on the outward appearances. When Saul saw Goliath, he was faced with the question: "Do I have what it takes?" Saul's answer to that question was, "I do not. He is bigger than I am. If I go out, he will defeat me." So, Saul hid in fear. Goliath continued to come forward and make his challenge and speak his defiance against Israel every morning and evening for forty days.

Our story in 1 Samuel 17 takes a quick jump to a new scene with David and his father back at home. David was not at the battlefield because he was too young to join Saul's army as a warrior. So, while David's three older brothers were off at war, David was left at home to tend the sheep. On this day, David's father, Jesse, came to David and instructed David to visit his brothers on the battlefield. David was to take food to his brothers and to three commanders of his brother's unit. Jesse also instructed David to check in with his brothers to make sure they were doing alright and to bring back some sort of assurance from them.

Early the next morning David left the flock in someone else's care and went to the battlefield like his father told him to do. David arrived at the battlefield at the time when the armies were lining up to face each other. David left his supplies with the keeper and ran to the battle lines and found his brothers. As they were talking, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and began to shout his usual defiance, and the Israelite soldiers ran in fear. However, this time, the Bible says that David heard him.

The Israelite soldiers had been talking amongst themselves. They had been saying that Saul had promised that whoever kills Goliath would receive great wealth from the king, would be given his daughter in marriage, and will exempt his family from taxes in Israel. Clearly, Saul didn't believe he had what it took to face Goliath. Saul was taking whatever measures he could to rid himself of this conflict while remaining in his tent!

After hearing Goliath, David had a different perspective on the challenge. He began to ask, "What did you say would 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!"

The soldiers repeated and told him what Saul said.

Clearly, David had a different perspective than Saul or the other soldiers! David was not afraid after hearing Goliath's taunts. David was emboldened.

It wasn't long after David learned of this challenge and was emboldened that his faith and resolve was tested. His eldest brother, Eliab, heard what David was saying to the men. When he heard it, Eliab began to burn with anger. He asked, "Why have you come down here? Where are your sheep, shepherd boy! I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle!" What a judgement! David's heart was being questioned by his oldest brother. It isn't easy to face that kind of criticism from a respectable member of your family. Once again, David was faced with the question, "Do I have what it takes?"

So, how did David respond to this discouragement? David's confidence was not shaken in the slightest. In typical "little-brother" fashion, David said, "What? Am I not allowed to talk anymore?" He then turned away to someone else and kept talking about the challenge. David continued to speak, and his words stirred up the camp. No one had been talking like David in the entire forty days that Goliath had been speaking his challenge and defiance! In fact, David's speech stirred up the camp so much that his words reached the ears of King Saul. After what David said was reported to Saul, Saul summoned David.

When he reached King Saul, David faced yet another opportunity for discouragement. David told Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him!" In response, Saul told David that he couldn't be the one to fight Goliath. He was too young and had too little experience as a warrior.

Once again, David was faced with the question, "Do I have what it takes?" It isn't easy to be challenged by a leader in a respectable position. So, how did David respond to King Saul's discouraging words?

David understood that Saul was concerned because he did not have enough experience. So, David told him about his experience as a shepherd boy watching his father's sheep. David explained that, sometimes, a bear or a lion would come to take one of the sheep. David told Saul that when that happened, he would go after the bear or lion to rescue the sheep. When

the wild animal turned on David, David would grab it by its hair, strike it, and kill it. Then, David began to reveal where his source of confidence was coming from. David said, "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."

There you have it! So, David was faced with the same question as Saul: "Do I have what it takes?" Saul looked at the giant warrior and answered, "No. I do not have what it takes." But David looked at God and said, "Yes. Because of God I have what it takes to do God's will." It is interesting to me that the name "Goliath" in the Hebrew means "to uncover or reveal." God certainly used Goliath to uncover and reveal the heart of David and the heart of Saul. The storyteller is building his case and showing us why David was fit to be king and Saul was not. David was fit to be king because when he asked the question, "Do I have what it takes," David looked to God for the answer, not to himself.

On the other hand, Saul's eyes continued to stay on the giant. Saul agreed to let David go to battle, and he tried to get David to wear his armor to the fight. David tried the gear on. It was big and bulky. David was not familiar with it. So, David refused to wear the armor. Instead, David opted for an armor he was more familiar with: God's protection and his shepherd boy's sling. David boldly went to the river, picked up five smooth stones for his sling, and went out to face the giant on the battlefield.

When David arrived on the battlefield, he faced yet another discouragement. When Goliath saw who Saul sent out to accept his challenge, Goliath was indignant! What an insult! The Bible says that when Goliath saw David, he despised him. Goliath shouted, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" Then Goliath cursed David by his gods and said, "Come here, and I'll give your flesh to the birds!"

Once again, David was faced with the question, "Do I have what it takes?" He was facing down a warrior who, by all reasonable standards of warfare, would clearly win this fight. David had every opportunity to become discouraged and to retreat. How did David respond?

Once again, David looked past the giant and looked to God. He responded, "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'll 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. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands."

What a statement! Clearly, unlike Saul, David did not place his confidence in what he could see. He looked past his limited vision and saw God through eyes of faith. David was confident because he knew that it wasn't up to him. He didn't need to "have what it takes" to defeat Goliath. He needed to trust the purposes and plan of the One who does have what

it takes! David believed God would provide everything he needed to accomplish the task God had set before him.

Upon David's words, Goliath moved closer to attack him. David ran quickly to meet him. Reaching into his bag, David took out one stone. He slung it around and released the stone from his sling. The stone flew through the air with great velocity and struck the giant right on the forehead, crushing his skull. Goliath fell.

After Goliath had fallen, David ran over and stood over him. Pause. Do you notice something, or someone who is missing? Goliath's shield bearer! Where did he go? When I picture this scene of the battlefield in my mind, I see Goliath on the ground, David standing over him, a shield lying in the grass, and the back of the shield bearer in the distance as he retreats back to his line.

The Bible makes it a point to help us remember, once again, that David did not have a sword. David had to use Goliath's sword to finish the contest and cut off the giant's head. Why is this significant? Because it reminds us that David's confidence was not in his own abilities or in what he could see. That is what made David fit to be king and why Saul had lost favor with God. Saul looked to what he could see and trusted himself. David looked with eyes of faith at what he could not see and trusted in God.

David found victory in the face of great adversity. Not because of his stature, his abilities, or his own strength. When David was faced with the question, "Do I have what it takes," he didn't answer based on what he could see in himself or in Goliath. David answered the question by looking to God. David believed that God would deliver him and be faithful to His promises to him. David believed that he could bet on God's Word 100% and that God would come through for him.

Do you share David's faith? Do you believe that God will come through for you if you place your confidence in Him and align yourself with His mission and purpose for your life? No matter how great the challenge?

Young people, God will come through for you. As you face adulthood and uncertainty in your future, God will come through for you if you will put your confidence in Him and align yourself with His mission and purpose for your life. He will give you everything you need to accomplish His plan for your life. Without God, we don't have what it takes. When we look to God we have what it takes to do what He is calling us to do.

Parents, God will come through for you. As you face the difficult task of parenting your children through various seasons of life, God will come through for you if you will put your confidence in Him and align yourself with His mission and purpose. He will give you everything you need to accomplish the task He has placed in front of you. On your own, you don't have what it takes. When you align your life with God and place your confidence in Him, you have what it takes to do His will.

Students, employees, and business owners, you have what it takes when you place your confidence in God and seek to do His will. Your job and your studies are not about you, they are about Him and His glory. When you face your challenges and giants and you respond by placing your confidence in God and aligning yourself with His purpose and mission for your life, He will come through for you.

Seniors and retired friends, you have what it takes when you place your confidence in God and seek to do His will. He will sustain you and give you the strength and energy you need to do His will and to make an impact on future generations. You can be confident that, even as your life and health changes, your life carries great significance. If you will look past what you see and look to God, He will give you all that you need to finish the race well.

Most importantly, church family, you have what it takes to be the witnesses God has called you to be. In this story, David shouted back to Goliath and promised that the whole world would know that there is a God in Israel. Church, just as David was God's royal ambassador on that battlefield, each one of us has been called by God to join Him in His mission to proclaim His glory to the world and to make disciples of Jesus together. On our own, we do not have what it takes. This mission is bigger than any of us. But when we look past what we can see and we look to God together, we will see that we have what it takes. Not by our own might. Not through our own abilities. Not with our own efforts. But because of the faithfulness of God. He has given us His Holy Spirit to empower us to be His witnesses.

### **Acts 1:8**

**You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.**

Like Saul and David, God has presented each one of us with challenges, with giants. The way we respond will be determined by what we see. When we look at life challenges and see our own inabilities and the giants in front of us our faith will fail. Even if God is with us, we will not believe we have what it takes to move forward. But when we look past our own abilities and our challenges and fix our eyes on God, we will be emboldened and empowered to move forward with courage because we believe that, in Christ, we have what it takes to do anything that God wants us to do.

Our story from 1 Samuel 17 ends in an interesting way. There is a quick flashback. After the battle, the storyteller jumps back to the scene where David is going out to face Goliath. Saul is standing on his battle line with his commander. Saul asks his commander, "Who's son is that?" The commander doesn't know. After the battle, David comes up to Saul with Goliath's head in his hand. Saul asks, "Whose son are you?" David answers, "I am the son of Jesse, the Bethlehemite."

Through this flashback, the storyteller brings our attention back to his main point. This story wasn't really about David and Goliath. This story was about Saul and David. Can you imagine being Saul in that moment? He had every opportunity to face his challenge with the same heart, confidence, boldness, and promises as David. Yet Saul sat cowardly in his tent,

hiding from the battle and subsequently missing out on being an active participant in carrying out God's purposes.

Consider David and Saul. Consider how they responded to their giant. Consider the way they responded to the question, "Do I have what it takes?" Now look at your own life. What great challenge or difficulty are you facing right now? What circumstances are causing you to ask the question, "Do I have what it takes?" As a single person? In your marriage? As a parent? In your work? As a disciple-maker? How have you felt inadequate or insecure about your part in the role and work God has called you to?

Take just a moment to write it down now. Then, later on in your time with the Lord, pray and ask Him what it would look like for you to respond to this situation like David responded to his. Ask a few trusted friends to pray with you. Then resolve to move forward in courage. Trust God with your life and with the outcome. If what you are doing is His will, He will provide everything you need to do it. Like David, make sure you understand God's will and then act confidently. If your confidence is in God and you are aligning your life to His purposes, then you have what it takes. Let's pray.