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Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 1 2/20/17 3:16 PM

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Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 3 2/20/17 3:16 PM

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 4 2/20/17 3:16 PM

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Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 5 2/20/17 3:16 PM

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Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 6 2/20/17 3:16 PM

Goliath *Must* Fall

Winning the Battle Against Your Giants

Louie Giglio

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Contents

Overture: Your Giant *Is* Going Down

1. Bigger Than Your Giant 1
2. Dead but Still Deadly 27
3. Fear Must Fall 51
4. Rejection Must Fall 78
5. Comfort Must Fall 107

Interlude: Your Giant *Is* Dead

6. Anger Must Fall 139
7. Addiction Must Fall 168
8. A Table in the Presence 194
9. Fuel for the Fight 226

Acknowledgments 244
Notes 245
About the Author 247

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 9 2/20/17 3:16 PM

OVERTURE

Your Giant *Is* Going Down

The king ducked his head, shuffled outside his tent, and stared at the far hill that lay just outside his war camp. His breakfast settled in an uneasy stomach. All over the valley, the clank of cooking pots could be heard as men lit fires and munched on bread and cheese. It wouldn't be long now until the shouter's voice came again. The king let out a deep sigh.

"How many days does this make?" he asked his aid.

"Forty, sir," came the reply. A ring of guards stood watch around the king's tent. The aid needn't have bothered answering, except his life depended on giving the correct answer to the king. But both the aid

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 11 2/20/17 3:16 PM

and the king knew that King Saul was already aware of the number.

"Can you see him coming?" the king asked.

The aid squinted, shaded his brow, and nodded. "Right on time, sir."

The king grumbled as he slipped into his royal robes, then went silent. His shoulders slumped.

"YOU!" boomed a shout from across the valley. "Why don't you line up for battle today . . . or are you too afraid?" All the soldiers in the Israelite camp turned to watch, many trembling. The taunt was nothing new, but the soldiers took no action. They received no commands. There were no orders to follow. There were no volunteers. They couldn't turn their eyes away, and they hated who stood in front of them, but none of them were brave enough to try and stop him.

The shouter was a brute of a man. Hairy and ugly and foul. Scarred and weathered from a hundred previous battles. A bronze helmet rested on his head. A massive coat of scale armor covered his body. Bronze plates protected his legs. A bronze javelin was slung on his back. The shouter gripped a spear shaft thicker than a weaver's rod, and his shield bearer stood before him, grinning as he relished the fight. With that amount of armor on the brute, the archers likely wouldn't be able to penetrate his defenses. And

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 12 2/20/17 3:16 PM

with an entire army behind him, swordsmen couldn't rush him. Spearmen and charioteers couldn't get close enough before they would be wiped out. The giant was impenetrable. Undefeatable. And no one knew that better than the giant himself.

"You bunch of babies!" the giant called forth. "Am I not a Philistine, and are you not the servants of King Saul? Let's have a contest for men! Same one I proposed yesterday. You choose a man. We'll choose a man. The two men will fight. Whoever wins the battle wins the war. I'll be the man for our side. Who do you have on yours?" He laughed with a long and loud cackle. The giant already knew the answer. No one was going to stand up to him. Jeers and catcalls came from the Philistine camp.

The aid glanced at King Saul. "Sir, any reply for Goliath *today*?" The aid's voice hinted at the significance of the last word.

The king ignored the question. No, there was no reply *today*. There was no reply yesterday, nor had there been the day before that, nor the day before that. The aid knew this. There had been no reply all week, and no reply the week before that, and no reply nearly six weeks ago when this whole debacle started. There was no reply, because nobody in the Israelite army could defeat this giant, and everyone in the Israelite

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 13 2/20/17 3:16 PM

camp knew it. No one knew that better than King Saul himself, the tallest, strongest, and most experienced warrior in the entire Israelite army.

"So that's a 'no' then?" Goliath yelled. "Or is that just the sound of birds chirping I hear?" He spit on the ground and added, "You're worthless! The whole lot of you. Powerless. Weak. Just like your God. I defy you, and I defy your God. Until you're ready to fight like men . . . See you tomorrow, chumps." With that, Goliath and his shield bearer turned on their heels and strode back to their camp.

King Saul cast a long sidelong glance at his aid. Saul already knew the answer to his own next question even before he asked it: "You've searched everywhere in camp for the strongest fighters, right? How much is the reward up to now?"

"Great wealth," the aid muttered. The king and his aid went through the same checklist every day.

"Anything else?"

"No taxes for the soldier's family."

"Right. Have we forgotten anything?"

The aid cleared his throat. "Your daughter in marriage, sir. The soldiers all know she's part of the deal."

The king sighed again. He looked at the ground and said, "Carry on then." He turned around and shuffled back inside his tent.

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 14 2/20/17 3:16 PM

Defeated for one more day.

Finding the Right Title

Plenty of us face a similar predicament every day—although we're not fighting literal giants. We're facing some sort of insurmountable challenge or problem that rips into our lives. Maybe it's fear. Maybe it's an addiction. Maybe it's anger. Maybe it's the feeling of rejection, a feeling that permeates so many areas of life. Maybe it's the sneaky giant of complacency.

Have you ever felt like King Saul and the Israelite army did? Some kind of giant stands before you, taunting you, harassing you, insulting you. Day after day this giant robs you of your power. You've tried any number of approaches to stop the taunts, but you feel immobilized. Held back. Slowed or stopped from moving forward in a healthy way. Ultimately, you know you're not living the kind of life you want to live. If this is part of your story, then this book is for you.

Our first response is often a quick "no."

"I don't have any Goliaths in my life. I'm in my lane, doing my thing. Living my life."

Some of you would say the opposite. You grabbed

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 15 2/20/17 3:16 PM

this book because you know you have a giant staring you down and you want to know how to defeat it. Yet, it's likely all of us have something lurking nearby that's stealing our joy. A habit or a memory or a way of thinking we've grown accustom to.

It doesn't have to be alcoholism or anorexia or depression. Giants come in all shapes and sizes, some subtle and others stark. The good news is it's not God's plan for you to live *with anything* standing in the middle of your life, demoralizing you day by day by day. These giants harm you and rob God of his glory in your life. God wants you to live free. God wants your giants to fall. He wants you to live without the chains that bind you, unfettered from beliefs that limit you. And you can!

No matter how many times you've tried before or how loud the voice is that says you'll never be different than you are, God says something else today. *You. Can. Live. Free.*

The pages ahead are not just filled with "pie in the sky" optimism. This book is a time-tested pathway for how your life can be different. I know, because I've been there. I've come face-to-face with giants of my own and experienced God's power and strength that surpasses my best efforts. In the chapters to come, I'm going to share from that experience as we carve open

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 16 2/20/17 3:16 PM

the biblical story of David and Goliath. Through that story you'll discover some tools and new habits, some new perspectives, a fresh way of walking through life. The plan toward freedom is doable and straightforward. It invites your success. But first we need to realize that it's not a simple wish that your giant will fall someday, some time. No. It's a *mandate*.

Goliath *must* fall.

Obviously, that's the title of this book, and each word of the title is deliberate—particularly the middle word. We kicked around this title for a long time and chose it purposefully because it underscores a significant God-idea that is important for you and me. By God-idea I mean a foundational theological principle. But don't let the word *theological* throw you off. Think of it like the frame of your house. Some beams or boards are bigger than others and bear more weight. The underlying idea here is a huge beam that anchors God's thoughts about your life and his reputation on earth. The premise is that Jesus' desire for your life and my life is that we would have life to the full. As a result, Jesus will get glory from our lives as the Provider of the very best.

If God has it his way, we live free and he gets glory for being the giant-killer.

We batted around the idea that maybe we should

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 17 2/20/17 3:16 PM

title the book something different, because much of the big idea we discuss in this book is that Goliath *has already* fallen. Past tense. The same is true of all our giants. The real work is already done by Christ, and Jesus has already taken down all the foes we face in our life. So, we thought, maybe the title should be *Goliath Has Fallen*.

Someone else suggested the title Goliath *Will* Fall. A future hope. Because even though Christ has done the ultimate work, there's still work for us to do. That title is hopeful and faith-filled, looking to the future. Something good is going to happen.

But we stuck with the idea that the clearest title includes the mandate

Goliath *Must* Fall.

It's the title that has the fuel inside of it. It's the one that says, "There's a giant in my life that's standing over me, and it's got to go down. Now. Today. Not ten or twenty years in the future. But in the immediate now. In fact, my giant has already been defeated because of what Christ has done, and yet it's going to fall too, because I'm going to put what Christ has done into motion in my life. This giant must go down and will go down and has gone down. It must stop talking

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 18 2/20/17 3:16 PM

to me, because God wants me to live free. God wants to get the glory of being the Liberator of my life. This giant isn't going to harass me anymore. God is going to be seen as the champion of my life. That's why Goliath *must* fall."

Yes, we do have a responsibility in this process. We need to lean together toward Jesus in faith and action. It's not a mild action we're taking. It's grace-filled, strong, and even severe. If there's any voice in your head that says, "Nope. Your giant will taunt you forever. You're not going to do it. You'll always need to live with things the way they are. Life will never change for the better," then I want you to know that voice isn't the voice of Jesus. And that voice can—and will—be silenced!

Jesus came to this earth to complete a beautiful work. He took hell for us on the cross so that our relationship with God could be restored. Jesus rose from the grave so we could shake off the prospect of a doomed life and walk in that same power that brought him to life again.

You don't need to live with a taunting, debilitating giant any longer. Your giant is going down. In fact, your giant *must* go down. Jesus will do it for you, and in the pages ahead, I'll show you how that happens.

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 19 2/20/17 3:16 PM

Your invitation is to lean into the work of Christ and to activate all that he has won for you.

You are closer than you think to a life that's not diminished any longer. A life of true freedom. A life that fully radiates God's glory.

—Louie Giglio
Atlanta, Georgia
Fall 2016



Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 20 2/20/17 3:16 PM

CHAPTER 1

Bigger Than Your Giant

Recently a woman was mauled to death by her *pet* tiger.

I was saddened by this tragic event. But I also thought what most sane people must have thought when they read the story: *Why would anyone have a pet tiger?* (No offense if you've got a pet Bengal in your backyard.)

Tigers are meat eaters! They survive in the wild by hunting and killing their prey. And a tiger will always be a tiger. So why would anyone try to tempt nature by making a pet out of one of these natural-born killers?

Here's what I think happened. When the woman first met the tiger, it looked cute and cuddly. That furry little cub was small and playful. Entertaining. Endearing. I bet she held that cub tight and it purred with delight. A bond was formed. She gave her pet tiger cub a name. Maybe Mooshie or BooBoo or

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 1 2/20/17 3:16 PM

Stripey or Elwood. She took it home with her and gave it a warm space to sleep and a safe place to play. All was well, day after day after day after day.

Until.

Elwood.

Grew.

Then that playful pet morphed into what it truly was and showed its true colors. It wasn't a fuzzy cub anymore. It was a savage killer. The tiger attacked and the results were heartbreaking.

It's not much different with our giants—the habits, the behaviors, the faulty beliefs, the same old broken ways we're accommodating in our lives.

These "pets" started out as cute and cuddly babies. They didn't look like they'd do us any harm. They were comforting. Reassuring. We formed bonds with these pets, and gave them a warm place to stay in our minds and hearts and behaviors.

But these same pets have grown. They're showing their true colors—and they aren't pets anymore. They're savages killers. Nine-foot-tall giants. They're ripping into us, mauling us.

We desperately want to rid ourselves of these giants.

But how?

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 2 2/20/17 3:16 PM

Whatever giant we're battling might be big—but it's *not* bigger than Jesus.

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 3 2/20/17 3:16 PM

My Own Pet Giant

Goliath wasn't born nine feet tall. And whatever has a stranglehold on you most likely didn't arrive on day one with threats of clenching you between its teeth. I'm guessing it was comforting and spoke to a need you had buried within. Your *killer* was camouflaged as a friend you couldn't live without. But, on the day not of your choosing, the gloves came off and the giant stepped on your throat, suffocating you with all its weight.

I've chronicled such a giant in my life in other talks and writings, and been up front about the tipping point where I fell into a deep, dark hole of depression and anxiety. If one of these behemoths is making life unbearable for you, I get it. For a time it was identified as my "anxiety disorder," a nice generic term generally accepted by people. Yet, over time I have been able to more acutely pinpoint the giants that shoved me over the edge and into that pit. For me, understanding that anxiety is not *a thing*, but a symptom of *something(s)* has been a game changer in dealing with the enemies of God's glory in my life.

To put it mildly, I had a breakdown. That was pretty obvious to everyone around me, and a nonnegotiable reality for me. The day arrived when the baby tiger was grown. It took aim, and the consequences were drastic and almost deadly. But what's more helpful is to understand *why*. I've come to learn it's usually not

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 4 2/20/17 3:16 PM

the result of one thing or one moment, but a combination of lots of things that fester over time, rotting us from the inside until we come unhinged.

So what pushed me into the hole of anxiety and depression? Genetic tendencies? No doubt. The rush and crush of having the engine revved too high for too long? For sure. Worry? Check. But looking back I see the footprints of my two of my own Goliaths: Control and Approval. I have a tendency to want to change whatever environment I am in. I want to make things better. I see what is, but I dream of what can be. I think like this driving through a city, sitting in traffic, eating in a restaurant, walking through a slum in Haiti, passing time between flights in an airport, waiting in a hospital. Anywhere. Anytime. I am thinking of how to create change, cast vision, and marshal people toward a common goal.

Being a change leader can be good. But it can also invite the baby cub of control into the mix. Some of you know what I mean. You're trying to control every outcome for your kids. You're sweating the stock market. You monitor all the conversations that flow throughout your crew, wanting to make sure everyone thinks the right thing and comes to the right conclusions. And like me, you find yourself staring at the ceiling when you should be deep in sleep, wondering which approach will work best to bring about the conclusion you are convinced is right.

Wanting to steer toward great outcomes is noble. But trying

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 5 2/20/17 3:16 PM

to control the world is disastrous. In time, controllers crack under the reality that none of us are in control.

Then there's the giant of approval. Couple my need to control with my underlying need to be liked and you have a perfect storm. This was especially true in the early days of planting the church we shepherd. Before we planted the church, being a speaker and ministry entrepreneur had been challenging for sure. We crafted stadium events in countries around the globe and forged a record label to bring music to the worldwide Church. I spoke here, there, and everywhere. But if people didn't like me there was always another opportunity around the corner. Another conference. Another group of people. Another endeavor to launch.

But in planting a church you sink roots with a tribe, and in leading people week by week you quickly discover you can't please everyone. Sadly, I thought I could make everyone happy (*control* is talking now). And I really needed to, more than I wanted to admit. In our embryonic days, my wife, Shelley, and I got an e-mail from a friend that shattered any notion that planting a church would be easy or that our good intentions would always be rewarded. When the giant of control met and married the giant of rejection, they tag-teamed me, tied my hands, and hurled me over the cliff. It wasn't anyone's fault but mine. Character flaws that were once smaller and manageable were now towering over me. Taunting me. Defying my God.

I was a controller who'd found he couldn't control anymore.

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 6 2/20/17 3:16 PM

I was an approval-seeker who'd discovered not everything he did was applauded. My pet tiger cub was a full-grown adversary I had to admit and deal with.

These are (I initially wrote *were,* but that's not as realistic as I'd like it to be)a couple of my giants.

What about you?

When One Voice Shuts You Down

For some of you, as soon as you read the title of this book, you knew exactly what your giant was. You didn't even need to think about it, because you battle against it every day.

Others aren't exactly sure what the name of their problem is because it's not as clear. All they know is something isn't right and they want to fix it.

A few, who read early copies of the manuscript, noted they didn't think they had any giants until they read a little more.

Either way, it's helpful to articulate what kind of giants can do us the most harm.

- Maybe a giant called "fear" rules our life. It's not like we walk around shaking in our boots all the time. But in our most honest moments, we know anxiety is a big piece of who we are. It shakes us up and rattles our world. It makes

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 7 2/20/17 3:16 PM

us dread the nighttime. The fear has begun to dominate us, and at the end of the day we know it diminishes God's glory in our life.

- Maybe we're battling rejection. We grew up in a performance-based environment, and because of that we're afraid that if we don't get everything perfect we're not going to get the approval we long for. We fear that people will only love us if we produce the needed result. If we ever take a break, if we ever turn in something less than perfect, if we ever say the wrong thing, if we ever show up in the wrong outfit, if we ever go slower than the frantic pace we're going now, then all that approval is out the window.
- Maybe a giant called comfort has taken hold. Comfort isn't wrong if we're talking about genuine rest that refreshes us. But comfort can become a huge problem if it morphs into complacency or entitlement. Too often we embrace the easiest path, the bare minimum, the "cush" job, the spoils of this life. But the easiest path might not be the best path, the path that Jesus invites us to take.
- Maybe the giant that harms us is anger. Not rage, necessarily. Yet something smolders inside. We can't keep a lid on our temper. Every once in a while we lash out for no good reason. Something jumps out of us in anger, and we wish we could take it back. We know this anger is shutting

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 8 2/20/17 3:16 PM

down God's best for us, but we just can't seem to get a handle on it.

- Maybe we are flat-out stuck in an addiction. Lots of different addictions taunt us, and most of us struggle with at least one. The addiction might be to a substance or behavior that's controlling us—alcohol, drugs, porn, gambling, shopping, or binge eating. Or maybe the addiction is to something subtle. The wrong kind of friend. A wrong kind of thought. Maybe we always feel we need to be the "caretaker" of other people—doing for them what they should do for themselves. Or we feel victimized if people don't give us the respect or love we think we deserve. Maybe we're always defensive. Or critical. We manipulate people. Or blame them. Our feelings have a way of hurting the relationships that matter, and we're not sure what to do. "Well, this is just the way I am," we tell ourselves—and some days we even believe that lie.

Maybe we find ourselves tolerating the harmful thing at first, even though we know it clearly goes against God's plan. Maybe we try to justify its existence. We wrestle with it and wish it were gone. We're annoyed the harmful thing is there in the first place, but we end up giving it free rent anyway. Before we know it, the harmful thing has established a foothold. It becomes a giant. A default routine is formed. Our giant becomes a habit in the way

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 9 2/20/17 3:16 PM

we think or act. Some days we fight to rid ourselves of the giant, but the problem never seems to go away entirely.

How do we get rid of the giants? Jesus offers an abundant life to everyone who follows him. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy," Jesus said; "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10). Jesus didn't come to earth to die on the cross and be resurrected from the grave so we could settle for a reduced amount of God's best. Jesus intended for us to "really live" (1 Thessalonians 3:8). And that means we can live freely in the power of what he has accomplished for us.

It starts with seeing and believing that whatever giant we're battling might be big—but it's *not* bigger than Jesus. Nine feet tall is nothing to him. And he intends to set you free.

We're going to see this in a powerful way as we unpack the story of David versus Goliath. I'm guessing you've heard this tale somewhere along the line. If not, get ready. It's a gripping tale jammed with possibility for you. I've heard this story since my days as a kid in church. But there's a fresh twist that's been exploding in my heart more recently. A life-altering way of seeing Jesus in the story that changes everything about the way your giant is going down.

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 10 2/20/17 3:16 PM

The Kid Comes to Death Valley

The backdrop of the story of David and Goliath, to catch us all up to speed, is that the ancient army of the Philistines was fighting against the army of Israel, the people of God. This was a pattern all throughout the Old Testament: the Philistine army was a constant thorn in the side of God's people, and the two armies often clashed. The Philistines have a god of their own, an idol we'll see more about in a moment. They were vile and surly, haters of the people who claimed allegiance to the one true God.

A lot of times throughout the story of Scripture the Philistines had the upper hand, and that was the case when this particular story unfolds in 1 Samuel 17. Here's the backdrop.

Picture a particular valley in ancient Israel. It's stubbly and rocky and green and thorny. It's called the Valley of Elah, and through that valley flows the Brook of Elah. You'd think such a bucolic scene would be peaceful, inviting. But it isn't. It's soon going to be the valley of death.

Flanking each side of the brook is a hillside. The Philistine army was camped on one hillside, and the army of Israel was camped on the other side. Each army would camp in their tents at night, then each morning they'd come out to their places of battle. They could look right across the valley at each other to stare each other down.

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 11 2/20/17 3:16 PM

When our story opens, the two armies weren't doing much actual fighting. The army of Israel was being held back from advancing—and the guy holding back the Israelites from doing their real work was a crude brawler named Goliath, a big, huge, giant Philistine, nine feet tall, a champion fighter, a fierce and awesome-looking black-bearded warrior with thick body armor.

Every day Goliath would come out and yell insults at the army of Israel. He'd stride right down into the valley with his army behind him, glare up at the opposing hillside at the Israelite army, and shout with a sneer, "Cowards! You and your God are not big enough to take on us. I challenge you to a fight, and I defy your God! If anyone's brave enough to fight me, then come on down. Whoever wins the fight will win the whole war. The losing army will serve the winning army. All you gotta do is get past me." (That's not exactly what it says in 1 Samuel, but you get the idea.)

Day after day Goliath did this. A week passed. Two weeks. Three weeks. Four. Day after day, the insults continued. Day after day, none of the Israelites dared to go down to fight. The Bible says Goliath did this for a full forty days, yet even then, not a single soldier from the highly trained army of the people of God could stomach the thought of facing Goliath alone. Goliath must have let out a slew of insults. He shouted and taunted. He harassed and mocked. He agitated and coaxed and cajoled and scoffed, but still no one would fight him alone.

The Israelite army was intimidated.

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 12 2/20/17 3:16 PM

Demoralized.

Immobilized.

Sunk.

The sound of a single bad voice had shut down the Israelites. Can you relate? They'd lost the fight, and they hadn't even gone to battle yet.

Step back for a moment and consider who the ancient Israelites were. It's hard to know exactly why they'd allowed themselves to become so intimidated. God had a rich history with these people. He'd chosen them as his own. He'd given them his presence. All they had to do was look to their times gone by to see how God had miraculously removed them from slavery in Egypt. He'd spilt the sea wide-open before them. Once they were safely through, its waters crashed down, and wiped out the enemies pursuing them. He'd guided them through the Sinai wilderness with a cloud in the day and by fire at night. When they were thirsty, God made water appear. When they were hungry, God gave them manna to eat. He'd taken them across the Jordan River and brought them into the promised land. They'd conquered the highly fortified city of Jericho thanks to God's mighty outstretched arm. A shout of praise brought Jericho's walls tumbling down. Time and time again, God had done miraculous things for his people.

But they'd forgotten.

They weren't tapping into how all-powerful their God is, and how if they would just trust him and follow him and lean

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 13 2/20/17 3:16 PM

into him, then they'd have access to that same power in their lives again.

In fairness, we've got to give the Israelite army a bit of a break. Personally, I've never fought a nine-foot giant before. I've never really fought another human being before, and I can't say that I'd have the grit to go up against an armor-plated warrior standing three feet taller than me.

But what if he had threatened the people I love? There's a good chance I'd take a shot at a nine-foot giant then. Particularly if I had a sword in my hand and my own armor on. Yet not a single one of the Israelites were willing to enter into the fray. Every day the people of God were shut down by one harassing voice. What a gloomy thought. One loud uncouth man was paralyzing the entire army of God.

Fortunately, help was on the way. And it was coming from an unlikely source.

On the fortieth day, a kid named David came up to the outskirts of the Israelite camp. Most folks at the time didn't think David was anything special. The only person who'd ever thought much of him was an old prophet named Samuel who'd come to the family's house once and anointed David's head with oil. But that had been awhile back. David was the youngest of a whole raft of older brothers. They were taller than he was. Tougher than he was. More handsome.

While the men in the family went off to do the fighting,

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 14 2/20/17 3:16 PM

David's job was to stay home with his aged father and take care of the family sheep.

On that particular day when he came to camp, David was bringing supplies to his older brothers who were up on the line. Basically, David was just a delivery boy.

The kid everybody yelled at to bring more cheese.

Remember the Training

Just at the very moment David was saying hello to his brothers, Goliath emerged on the other hill and started yelling his daily insults at the army of God. And in that moment, something snapped inside David. I picture him doing a double take. He was like, "Wait a minute . . . What's this overgrown ape yelling at us?"

The voice of Goliath came clearer and the giant yelled, "You idiots are actually putting your trust in the God of Israel? Your God is worthless. He's weak. He's nothing—just like you're nothing. Our god can smash your God."

David's eyes narrowed. His lips tightened. Incredulous, he asked his brothers, "Who is this joker? How is he getting away with saying all this about our God? Why is nobody taking him on? Why is nobody fighting?!"

David's brothers stammered, "Yeah, well, take a good look at this guy. His name is Goliath, and he comes out every day

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 15 2/20/17 3:16 PM

and does this. Nobody wants to fight him. It's a suicide mission, kid. Certain death. Just shut up and bring me another hunk of bread."

David glared across the valley.

"I'll fight him," he quipped. "I'm going to shut him up."

What?

Imagine how David's announcement went over with David's brothers.

I mean, picture a boxing match. Who would you pick? *In the red corner wearing nothing but sandals and a tunic is a runt of a kid named David. No armor. No sword. No shield. No army training.*

And in the other corner wearing a hundred and twenty-five pounds of steel-plated armor is an experienced enemy warrior. He's head and shoulders taller than Shaquille O'Neal and ripped head to toe with solid muscle. Highly trained in all kinds of combat. Carries a spear. A sword. Huge helmet. Has an infinite supply of ammunition. He's got a separate armor bearer just to carry all his gear. He's got a full army at his back. Breathes fire. Crushes mere men.

Yeah. Like *that's* a fair fight.

David's brothers were like, "Kid, you're embarrassing us. The Israelite army is filled with experienced fighters, and none of them are willing to take on Goliath. Now you want to fight him? You've lost your mind. Get lost before we tell Dad."

But David hadn't lost his mind, because David has had some

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 16 2/20/17 3:16 PM

real-life training to fall back on. This wouldn't be his first fight. Earlier, in all those years when David had been out in the pasture tending sheep, he'd actually been receiving a very advanced education. His Trainer was none other than God himself, and little by little God was revealing his righteous and mighty character to David.

Part of David's training was writing songs about God, studying the facts and history of his people, and learning who God was and what God had done. Another part of David's training had been far less academic, far less poetic. Far more hands on.

One day a huge bear growled his way up to David's flock and grabbed one of the prized lambs. It was David's job to rescue the lamb. There was no one to call. No help in sight. So David went after the bear and rescued the sheep from its mouth. Ever see the movie *The Revenant*? Remember the scene when the bear mauled Leonardo DiCaprio? That's the kind of predator we're talking about. But when that bear turned on David, the shepherd boy seized it by its hair, struck it, and killed it.

This type of fight didn't happen only once. Another afternoon a huge roaring lion came up to the flock and had the same idea. David took his shepherd's rod and beat the lion lifeless. David had survived many harrowing life-threatening battles. He knew these victories happened thanks to the power of God.

In the shadow of Goliath's taunts, David recounted these same stories of victory at the Israelites' camp. Those stories must have given him some credibility, because after David made

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 17 2/20/17 3:16 PM

his offer, word soon trickled up to King Saul, who had David brought to his tent. David told the stories to Saul and gave glory to God for the results. David said, "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. 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" (1 Samuel 17:36–37).

Saul stood frozen for a moment.

"Okay. That's a pretty good résumé right there. You killed a bear? *And* a lion?"

The king scanned the boy's frame.

"Nobody else wants to fight him, but you can have a turn if you're so confident about it all. We're going to let you have a go at Goliath. But wait—at least put on some armor first. No? You don't have any armor. Here—wear mine."

David put on a couple pieces of the king's armor. It was shiny and solid, the best of the best. But David wasn't used to it and could hardly walk. "This isn't going to work for me," David said. "I need to take this off. God's got another plan."

David went down to the brook and selected five smooth stones from the edge of the water. He put the stones in his shepherd's bag, took out his sling, and went out to face the giant.

To cut to the chase, this one didn't last long. If you'd paid a lot of money for a ringside seat or a pay-per-view pass you'd have been disappointed. But the action, though swift, was stunning.

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 18 2/20/17 3:16 PM

Goliath and David exchanged a few key words. David took out one stone, slung it at the giant, and the giant fell at his feet, dead. *Bam*.

The fight was a first-round knockout. Ten seconds after the opening bell, everything was over except the popcorn and sweeping up.

One Giant, Two Giants, Three, a Dozen

Why is this story such a major backdrop for the Christian faith? Is it only so we can have a powerful youth camp message and an awesome animated talk for kids? Or is it because God wants us to all know it's possible for huge giants to go down cold?

You might have a nine-foot-tall behemoth in your life, one that taunts and intimidates you day after day after day. But with the power of God, that giant will fall. It doesn't matter the size of a problem. God's power and might are always greater.

Or it could be a whole string of giants you're battling. There may be problems and temptations coming at you from every side. The same was true in Scripture. Did you know Goliath wasn't the only giant mentioned in the Bible? He was actually the descendent of a whole line of oversized nefarious warriors. Read 1 Chronicles 20, and the names of these other giants sound like

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 19 2/20/17 3:16 PM

the result of a laboratory potion gone wrong. There's Sibbekai and Sippai and Elhanan and Lahmi, and even a gargantuan fighter with six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot.

God doesn't want us to be demoralized if we face more than one giant that needs to be taken down. He's able to take them all. And we'll soon see he already has.

If some form of bondage is in our lives, if some attitude seemingly can't be shaken, if some character flaw seemingly can't be overcome, if some thought darkens our mind, if some problem has sunk its teeth into our life and we can't shake it as we move through our day, then take heart, because none of these giants are a match for Jesus. All these giants can—and will—fall.

Do we believe that?

Do we want to be free?

Jesus wants to ensure us that he is completely and totally able to take down the giants in our lives. It may look like the six-fingered, six-toed, furious, foaming, fearless thing coming at us can't be beaten. But through the power of Jesus, whatever needs to be overcome can—and will—come down.

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 20 2/20/17 3:16 PM

The Ultra-Important Twist to the Story

Over the next chapters, we're going to look at a variety of common harmful giants—issues that look huge and unconquerable, ones a lot of people wrestle with. And we're going to see how these giants will fall. But you're not going to be left standing alone with a mantra of "you can do it if you try." You're going to meet a fighter who can do what you alone cannot do.

That's important, because this isn't any old self-help book you could pull off a bookstore shelf, skim through in ten minutes, and afterward have three shiny action plans that help you lead a better, more prosperous life. The big idea of this book isn't about us trying harder or rolling up our sleeves and working to improve our lives through our effort. The message of this book is that God extends his grace and favor toward us to allow us to experience his supernatural power. It's about us agreeing with him and letting his Holy Spirit work in our lives to put us on right paths, right ways of thinking and living.

That's where the big twist in this story comes in.

While I get that the story of David and Goliath is familiar to a lot of us, there is one important angle to this story that will help make it come alive in our hearts. Chances are, this shift sets this book apart from anything you've ever been taught before

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 21 2/20/17 3:16 PM

on David and Goliath. I'll discuss this twist in more depth in later chapters, but I want to present the idea here so we catch a glimpse of the freshness and relevance of this familiar story right up front. It's this:

We are *not* David in the story
of David and Goliath.

Picture yourself at church or a conference. A speaker is going through the story of David and Goliath and he's really firing you up, saying something like this: "Come on, folks. David was a young person, and you're a young person too—or at least you're young at heart. David won the victory, so now you can win the victory too. David took up his sling. David selected his five smooth stones. David marched up on the battlefield. David took down the giant. If you want to take down your giant, then all you gotta be is just like David. Just get your sling. Select your stones. And aim big!"

Everybody gets a little amped at a message like that. We think, *Yeah. Okay. That's me. I can do this. I just need to have some more courage already. I just need to aim right. I can take down my giant with one shot, and I'm really gonna go big this time.*

What happens? Maybe we get extra brave for a little while. Maybe we double our efforts and tackle the problem of our giant with renewed enthusiasm. But this is only us trying to put on

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 22 2/20/17 3:16 PM

Saul's armor. It doesn't fit. At the end of the day or the conference or the next week we go right back to living with our giant taunting us. The bumper sticker methodology that promises "You can do it" or "Dare to be a David" or "Become braver" just doesn't work in our lives, and our giant remains.

Here's why: we are *not* David in this story. That's a man-centered interpretation of the story of David and Goliath. You know who David is in our story?

Jesus.

Jesus is David in the story of David and Goliath. Jesus is the giant killer.

Does that fact not wake us all up? Hello? We are not David. You are not David. I am not David. Jesus is David! Jesus fights the battles for us. Jesus stares down the face of impossible odds. Jesus takes up his sling. Jesus selects five smooth stones. Jesus takes aim at the giant. The giant falls because of the work of Jesus.

We are called to participate with Jesus, sure. We are called to follow his leadership and align ourselves with the direction he's going. But mere human thinking or mere human power—if it's only human thinking or only human power—can never produce a supernatural result.

I know what you might be thinking: *Are you telling me we've had this story wrong the whole time? How is that possible?*

What I am helping us see is that while we can (and should) take courage from the shepherd boy and walk in greater

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 23 2/20/17 3:16 PM

confidence in life, the whole of Scripture points not to our abilities, but to Jesus as the Savior of the world. On every page, and in every story, Jesus can be seen—victorious, steadfast, able, trustworthy, mighty, loving, worthy.

As long as our eyes are on the problem, and the solution lies within ourselves, the X's are going to pile up on the calendars of our fight, marking the days little to nothing has changed. But all that changes the day Jesus enters our Valley of Elah. The moment we stop staring at our giant and lock eyes with Jesus. The moment our hope shifts from us to him.

In the story of David and Goliath, God did not want victory to come about because David was fitted out with all the best armor and held a sword in his hands and was really brave and defied the odds and had a whole army at his back.

God wanted victory to come simply because one young man trusted in him.

The Power of Seeing

All through this book, and throughout our fight, worship is going to be the soundtrack that leads us to victory. Ultimately, this is a book about worship.

If you're thinking, *Wait a minute, I need a book about fighting my bad habits and enemies . . . not a book about church songs*

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 24 2/20/17 3:16 PM

and music, don't freak out. Worship is simply a shift of attention that allows us to see God better. Worship is like corrective lenses for our souls, bringing God clearer into view. That's important for all of us, especially when life goes off the rails.

Worship puts God in focus. When the Almighty is in view, our giant's power over our thinking begins to flicker and fade.

Once the giants of Control and Approval had washed me down the tubes, I was a wreck physically and mentally. During the roughest stretch I was in a different doctor's office every week. I couldn't sleep through the night. Doctors helped me out of the dark pit. Praising God led me into the light. Real change began to creep into the equation when the roots of control and approval were dislodged and disrupted.

While change didn't happen in one fell swoop (I'm still growing and healing today), the difference came when I shifted my thinking before I closed my eyes at night. As I named the things that I sought to control, I would say to myself, "That belongs to God." I would remind myself that if God wants a certain result, it would happen. If he didn't, why would I? I began lifting my eyes to the One who is *actually in control*. The result: my giants had to stop talking, or if they were still talking, I stopped listening.

I need someone bigger than my giant to set my gaze on. Otherwise, I listen needlessly to a dead Goliath when the Maker of heaven is holding me in his hands.

I don't know what's keeping you up at night or making you want to stay under the covers all day. But I do know Jesus is on

Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 25 2/20/17 3:16 PM

your side. He is fighting for you and he has won. That's not hype. Nor empty rhetoric. Jesus has, in fact, defeated every foe. And he is inviting you to come and see what he has done.

That's what I love about the next few pages we are about to journey through. Together, we will see that Jesus is far more than just a good idea. He is the all-sufficient source for all we need, available every step of the journey and in every hour of our battle.

But, it's still a fight because even dead giants can still call your name.



Goliath Must Fall_2P.indd 26 2/20/17 3:16 PM