

Prayer

When I call upon You, Lord God Almighty, hear my voice and deal carefully with me, for I am bruised from the journey of life. This is no excuse of mine, for I am not ashamed to come before You and I ask You, because You have called Your people 'friends'. Be my friend now when I need you most, and bring me by Your Spirit through my hour of need. I have vowed to do Your will O Lord; enable me to fulfil Your call. AMEN

Other Prayer Suggestions

Weekly Theme: Missions

At the end of this week of prayer for missions, ask the Lord to renew your own sense of call to 'spread the Gospel' through word and deed in whatever circumstances you live.

On-going prayers

- *Pray for your government*
- *Give thanks to God for the hard work of those who police our streets*
- *Pray for those who are suffering because of world food shortages*

Meditation

Memory; that precious gift, which, cultivated by the love of God can work within the soul for healing, love and restoration.

Give it time and space, and let it minister the beautiful hope of all in your past which has brought peace, love and happiness.

Give it time and space, and let it search you for the truth of how your life was touched by sin, and you were saved by grace!

Give it time and space, and let it tell again the story of how you walked away from self to Christ; your sacred testimony.

Give it time and space, and let it recall your knowledge of His Word, the written record of the love of God from start to finish.

Give it time and space, and it will serve you all your life until your life becomes a memory on earth, itself, and glorified by God.

Memory; that precious gift. Give it to God and dismiss the enemy; let Jesus rule your heart and mind, your past, your present, your future.

Bible Study - 1 Samuel 17:19-23

¹⁹ Now Saul, and all the men of Israel, were in the valley of Elah, fighting with the Philistines. ²⁰ David rose early in the morning, left the sheep with a keeper, took the provisions, and went as Jesse had told him. He came to the encampment as the army was going out to the battle line, shouting the war cry.

²¹ Israel and the Philistines drew up for battle, army against army. ²² David left the provisions in charge of the keeper of the baggage, ran to the ranks, and went to greet his brothers. ²³ As he talked with them, the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, came up out of the ranks of the Philistines, and spoke the same words as before. And David heard him.

Review

Trying to fit the whole story of David together is quite difficult. Up to now, we have heard about David's anointing by Samuel (1 Sam 16:11-13) and presented at court as a musician who calmed the troubled spirit of Israel's first King (1 Sam 16:14f.); this was quite a responsibility! In our passage today (1 Sam 17) we seem to be presented with a new story about the Philistines and their champion Goliath who are waging war against Israel after their earlier defeat at the hands of Jonathan and Saul (1 Sam 14). David appears (17:12) as the son of Jesse (which we already know), and in the following verses we are also told again that he is the youngest of his sons (16:11, 17:14) and certainly not old enough to bear arms for the nation (17:17f.). That privilege was afforded to his elder brothers, whilst David remained at home, looking after the sheep, travelling from Bethlehem to the army with provisions for his brothers in the army.

Scholars have separated this story out from the previous one about David's anointing because of its different Hebrew language and structure. 1 Samuel 17 appears to start the story of David a second time! However, those scribes who put together the account we possess in scripture must have compiled it in this way for a reason. Their priorities were not the historical sequence of events as we might expect from a narrative such as this, but to give a theological commentary on early life of King David.

These stories all show us that David, the greatest of the Kings of Judah and Israel began his life in willing service. His life was that of a servant because he was the youngest, moreover, in ancient times this would mean that he had little prospects of family inheritance because of the tradition of favouritism towards the eldest son. One would imagine that in those days the youngest would generally be jealous of the eldest, and this does seem to be the emotional seedbed of the disputes in earlier stories in scripture; for example, Jacob and Esau (Gen 25:25ff), Joseph and his brothers (Gen 37:2ff). However, there was no jealousy in David, who showed vitality and eagerness in the service of his father; 'David rose early ... and went as Jesse had told him' (17:20). Then, later he 'ran to the ranks, and went and greeted his brothers' (17:22). Our picture of David is of a young man who stood out in eager service, content in himself and willing to be involved; this was his 'gift'. The man who would prove to be Israel's greatest leader knew what it was to be a servant, and be busy about what was required of him, and last of all, to be observant. At the end of the passage we are told that David astutely had his ears open to all that was happening.

Israel's armies were being held in stalemate by the audacity of a strong, large and bold warrior, Goliath, who had challenged a single warrior of Israel to mortal combat. Every day his challenge was issued, and put great fear into the Israelites as they did not know who to put up against him (17:23). If you read between the lines of the text, it is obvious that the person who should have challenged Goliath was Saul. He was the great warrior of Israel who, with his son Jonathan, had previously defeated the Philistines to unite Israel and Judah (1 Samuel 14). Where were they? Clearly Saul was no longer at the head of his army, and after an altercation with his father (1 Samuel 14:43ff) Jonathan was not about to get himself killed for him! If we think that all David was doing was to pick up information about Goliath and the battle so that we could deal with this warrior later (as we who know the story anticipate), then we may be wrong. He would have learned a great deal about what was being said in the army about Saul and Jonathan and the politics of the situation. One thing is generally true about servants, and that is that they get to know all the 'gossip'!

David, although the lowest of the low in Israelite society, was no fool. He could see what others could not; the weakness of Israel not because of a bold Philistine warrior, but because of the lack of proper leadership. As he saw the boasts of Goliath and the vulnerability of his own family and brothers, he knew that Israel needed a leader who would act. Although a mere servant, David could see Goliath's weakness (all those who make brash boasts have their weaknesses) and knew what to do; and we will soon find out what happens next!

Questions *(for use in groups)*

1. Would you find it easy to be a 'nobody' at the bottom of the social pile? Would you live your life just as eagerly and enthusiastically if this were so?
2. Do you find it difficult when the scriptures talk of battles and war? Why?
3. Read through 1 Samuel 17 up to the point of our reading and discuss as if by way of gossip what might have been going on behind the scenes of Israel's armies.

Discipleship

Personal comment:

David was faithful in the ordinary things of life, and meanwhile observed carefully what was going on. That is a model for our discipleship, because observation takes us away from ourselves and our concerns, and focuses our attention on other things. It may even be possible to design a challenge for a week whereby 'observation' is the key discipline; much could come of that!

Ideas for discipleship programme

- *On one Sunday at church, instead of talking to people after the service, stand back and watch what goes on. Learn from what you see!*
- *In what ways do you serve the church? Your family? The world? How can your life become one of service?*
- *Pray and ask the Lord to show you the enemies you need to face now so that they will not defeat you later.*

Final Prayer

Show me the beauty of your creation; show me its fall from grace; show me the best of humanity; show me the worst that people can do; show me the beauty of the universe; show me the tragedy of destruction. Show me Kingdom, Lord God; show me your love; show me your love without end.