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The Battle Is the Lord's

1 Samuel 17

The Bear is a story about an orphaned cub that is adopted by a giant Kodiak bear. The little bear copies everything he sees the big bear doing. He learns to eat honey from a beehive just like the big bear. He learns to fish from a mountain stream. And he learns to scratch his back—up and down and side to side—on a tree trunk just like the big bear.

Then one day, while the little bear is all alone playing in a field, a mountain lion begins to chase him. The bear runs across an open, rocky field and crosses a river. But with a splash and two leaps the mountain lion stands face to face with the baby bear and shows his teeth. He swipes at the bear's face with his claws and draws blood. He swipes again and makes another gash—and your heart breaks as you realize that the little bear is about to die.

But in a desperate attempt, the little bear begins to do what he's seen the big bear do—he stands on all fours, raises up the muscles in his back and begins to growl as fiercely as he can in his baby-bear voice. Suddenly, and surprisingly, a look of fear appears in the mountain lion's eyes. He backs up, turns and runs away while the baby bear continues to growl behind him. Then the camera pans back, and you see what you couldn't see before—although the lion could see it.

About twenty feet behind the growling baby bear the giant Kodiak bear is standing on his hind legs with his arms outstretched, roaring a terrifying growl.

There are many times in life when we face frightening situations like the mountain lion in the story. They may include a job change or a new and challenging ministry or even a life-threatening illness. How do we respond to situations that seem intimidating, overwhelming or even terrifying?

GROUP DISCUSSION. When you are faced with a challenge that seems beyond your abilities, how do you tend to respond?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. What situation are you currently facing that seems overwhelming?

In this passage David doesn't face a mountain lion, but he does face a mountain of a man named Goliath. *Read 1 Samuel 17.*

1. Humanly speaking, why were the Israelites justly terrified of Goliath (vv. 1-11)?

2. Spiritually speaking, what had the Israelites forgotten about God's covenant promises (see Deuteronomy 20:1-4)?

3. As David reaches the army camp, what does he learn about their situation (vv. 12-27)?

4. Why do you think David's brother is so harsh with him (vv. 28-30)?

5. From a human standpoint, why was David an unlikely choice as the champion of Israel (vv. 15, 33, 38-40)?

What risk was Saul taking in allowing David to fight Goliath (vv. 8-9)?

6. Normally, we select people who are humanly qualified to do a job. Likewise, we normally take on responsibilities for which we feel qualified. Does faith remove the need for human qualifications? Why or why not?

When is it proper to trust God to overcome our deficiencies?

7. David is confident that he can defeat Goliath (vv. 34-37). Is this faith or merely youthful bravado? Explain.

8. How can previous spiritual victories encourage us when facing

future battles?

9. What impresses you about the conversation and battle between David and Goliath (vv. 41-49)?

10. What "Goliaths" are you currently facing—either at work or home or in your personal life?

11. How can David's experience give you hope and courage as you face those battles?

Take time now to thank God for his powerful presence in your life.

Now or Later

One of the myths of our culture is "if you set your mind to it, you can do anything." The heroes of that myth are self-made men and women, those who climb from obscurity to fame through sheer willpower and determination. The message is clear: victory goes to the strong, and the spoils of victory to those who are powerful.

First Samuel 17 presents a very different picture: "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" (v. 47). In this chapter how does David confront not only Goliath but also our myths of human adequacy?