

A Devotion for Kids: Why Hard Times Help Us Grow

This devotion will help kids understand that the trials they face today can help them in the future.

Most kids don't think about the battles they face, but the fact is, we all face battles in life. It might be a teacher who has something against you or a bully who won't leave you alone in the halls at school. Or parents who argue too much or a kid who is spreading rumors about you.

Think about the battle you're facing right now.

Now try this on for size: what you learn in one battle will prepare you for the next one.

Read 1 Samuel 17.

David's Story

David is an example of this. By the time he reached the battlefield and saw the monstrously huge Philistine giant shouting out his challenges to God's people, David had already fought off both a lion and a bear while protecting his sheep (1 Samuel 17:34–36).

That's right, David was nothing but a shepherd boy left behind by his older brothers, who were the "mightier" warriors of the family.

But in the end, David's experience fighting off threatening animals, as well as his relationship with God, prepared him to take on this new battle on behalf of all the Israelites.

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It's important to note how much David relied on God. Yes, David was a seriously buff little dude, strong in his own right, but his relationship with God made him even stronger.

David was the first to announce that the Israelites were allowing the unbelieving Philistines to disgrace the Lord and "defy the armies of the living God" (1 Samuel 17:26).

Still, no one really thought [David could beat the giant](#). His jealous brother chastised him (v. 28), King Saul offered David his armor in the hope that it would help (vv. 38–39), and David's enemy Goliath made fun of David (v. 43).

But David didn't waver. He stayed true to his confidence in the Lord and trusted his past experiences to see him through. And he killed the giant!

Imagine This Hard Time



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During the state basketball play-offs, Dave's team fought their way to the championship game. Definitely the underdogs in nearly every game, they gradually learned the winning plays their coach taught them. Plus, they learned how to respond to their opponents' plays time and again.

SUPERBAD ODDS

But now Dave's team faced the tall, brawny Philly Middle School dudes who looked like high schoolers! These opponents looked like they drank oil and ate nails for breakfast.

Dave and his teammates circled up with the coach.

"Did you see those guys?" asked Greg, his eyes wide.

"What, are they on steroids?" added Lucas.

"I think they've all been held back a couple grades," Aman chimed in.

"Can we just forfeit right now, Coach?" Kaleb said. "You know, before they pound us into the floor?"

DON'T GIVE UP

Coach laughed under his breath and then bent down, hands on knees, and looked around at them. "You've fought hard to get here, boys. You've learned some easy lessons and some hard ones, right?"

"Right, Coach," they all voiced together.

"But the point is, you learned those lessons. They'll serve you well when you hit the court. Those guys, big as they are, aren't likely to bring anything new.

They're probably going to play harder and stronger than other teams you've faced. If they get the ball, you'll likely have a hard time getting it back. But if you're smaller, you're—"

"Faster, Coach," the boys shot back almost in unison.

"And if you're faster, you can keep out of their reach, hold on to that ball, and score and score again." He looked into each of their eyes. "Now you might get knocked down a time or two, but do you think I'd send you out there if I really thought you had no chance or were going to get seriously injured?"

"No, Coach." Dave knew he believed in them. He'd invested in them, taught them well, and he would not leave their side.

"So there it is," he said matter-of-factly, reaching for the ball at his feet and then straightening. "Rely on what you know about me and what I've taught you. Play smart and—trust me—you can do this."

"Yes, Coach!"

That day Dave's team fought hard for every basket, and Coach helped them rise every time they fell. And bit by bit, they pulled ahead.

When the last quarter ended, the buzzer ringing loudly around the court, Dave leaped into Coach's arms, shrieking, "We won! We won!"

The Skinny on 1 Samuel 17

- As shepherd boy and [future king](#), David is an important person for us to learn about. Scripture covers his life through sixty-six chapters—more chapters than anyone else in the Bible except for Jesus himself.
- HISTORY FACTOID: The Philistines called for a champion to meet theirs, one way to decide a battle without combat (and potentially losing a ton of men). The Philistines were apparently related to the ancient Greeks, who sometimes did the same thing.
- Saul, the king, had some pretty serious issues with an evil spirit (1 Samuel 16:15–16). So by the time he told David to go to battle, Saul wasn't very stable and had to rely on David for the security of the nation.

No matter how big and scary the enemy is, our God is BIGGER!

- David's chief weapons were his staff (once a shepherd, always a shepherd), his sling, some rocks, and the almighty God (1 Samuel 17:45). Meanwhile, David's enemy was decked out in full battle armor and wielded a honkin' big spear.

- Later David used Goliath's sword as his own on other battlefields! This is proof that we can use what we earn and gain from today's battles to fight tomorrow's.

What Struck You in This Story?



Image Credit: Miguel Sanz/Moment/Getty Images

Look at the ceiling in your house. Most homes have eight-foot ceilings. Goliath was about a foot and a half taller!

Now pretend you're David. Even though you've faced down a lion and a bear, do you really think you'd be ready to face down an enemy who is that tall, waving a spear (and a javelin and sword too) in front of you?

How could you find the courage you need to face *your* enemy?
What do you know about God and His care for you that could help?

Your Future Story

What battle are you facing today? Or what was the last hard thing you faced? What do you think God wants you to learn from it and remember for the next battle? (You know there will be one!)

You come against me with a sword, spear, and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD of Armies, the God of the ranks of Israel.

—1 Samuel 17:45

Excerpted from [The Good Book for Kids](#).

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