



# EQUIPPER

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Dear preacher of God's Word,

In 2 Timothy 4:2, Paul admonished Timothy to "Preach the Word..." "Word" here is apparently a reference to the Gospel, which tells of the Living Word of God, Jesus. We are blessed to have that Word recorded for us in the Bible, the written Word of God.



Sadly, some use the Bible to preach something other than God's Word. We avoid that pitfall by keeping our preaching and teaching *Christ-centered* (or, we might say, *Gospel-focused*). Doing so is a challenge, even when preaching from New Testament passages. The challenge is perhaps even greater when preaching from Old Testament passages, including those telling such well-known stories as David and Goliath (1 Samuel 17).

A few years back I was attending a large children's ministry conference. One of the main speakers, a well-known evangelical author, gave a presentation in which he shared the story of David and Goliath as an example of how to teach children to express certain character traits (like courage) in facing down the "Goliaths" in their own lives. He certainly was creative in his approach—David's five stones became five character traits. But as I realized where he was headed, I was tempted to stand and shout, "No!" Well, I didn't stand, nor did I shout, but I felt that he was wrong (I still do). Where, I thought, is Jesus? Standing in the crowd watching? No, seen from a Christ-centered perspective, David pictures Jesus, who wins the victory over all of our Goliaths! One of the gospel-focused points of this story (and there are several) is that in facing our Goliaths, we must look to Jesus—trusting in him, not in our own strength. Our place in the story is standing with the men of Israel watching (in amazement) as David (the Savior) wins the victory.

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I'm sure you'll agree that we need to exercise care in how we preach Old Testament stories. A key is to avoid isolating any one story from the overall flow of redemptive history. For assistance, I recommend three resources:

- *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* by Sidney Greidanus
- *Christ-Centered Preaching* by Bryan Chapell
- "Scripture, God's Gift" by Gary Deddo at <http://www.gci.org/co/1212/godsgift>

On page two I've summarized insights on this topic from a Gospel Project blog post by Ed Stetzer. I hope you find it helpful in your preaching and teaching.

Thanks for all you do to point people to Jesus. Let's tell his story with joy during the upcoming Advent season. This year, the first Sunday of Advent is December 1. For some Advent resources, see <http://mindev.gci.org/Web%20Documents/Equipper6.11.pdf>

-Ted Johnston, *Equipper* editor

## Christ-Centered Preaching & Teaching

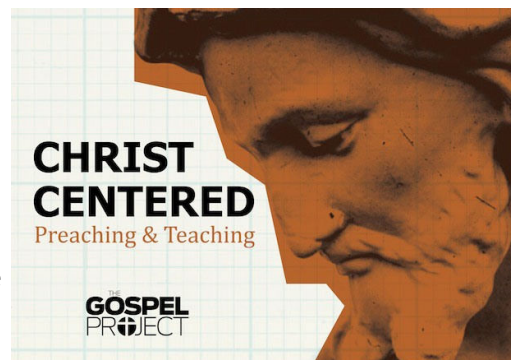
Ed Stetzer recently moderated a Gospel Project panel that discussed Christ-centered preaching and teaching. The question was this: How should we preach the story of David and Goliath? One of the panelists, Trevin Wax, commented:

I think you can pull courageous principles for living from David and Goliath... But there is something else there. Going back to the context of the story, you have the people of Israel being oppressed. You have the enemy of God that's there and the king [Saul] is AWOL.... Then, you have David who has been anointed king, but he's still under the radar. He comes and slays this giant. God uses this very ordinary person that no one would expect. So, with David and Goliath, you see that God keeps His covenant promises to His people by raising up an unlikely savior."

Another panelist, Jonathan Akin, commented:

If somebody were to ask me is David and Goliath about the courage to face your enemies, I would say yes. Now, the problem is that I think a strict approach to historical grammatical method in homiletics flattens the text. I'm going to argue that misses something. You cannot jump from David to your church member. There's one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, so this text applies to me in Christ or outside of Christ. But, it's mediated through Christ. So, how do you preach that?

You have the anointed one of God who receives the Spirit, goes out into the wilderness where an enemy is presenting himself before the people of God, 40 days and 40 nights. He crushes the enemy's head. In the Hebrew text it describes the enemy as wearing snake armor. That sure sounds familiar doesn't it? Jesus is baptized and receives the Holy Spirit. Out in the wilderness, the serpent is presenting himself 40 days and 40 nights. Then, Jesus withstands the temptation to bypass the cross and in doing that crushes the serpent's head. In Revelation 12, how do we overcome the evil one? Through the blood of the Lamb. That's the instrumentality by which the evil one is defeated.



So, the way I would preach David and Goliath is to start with, first and foremost, that we are not David. We are the Israelites... cowering in fear in the corner because we can't face the giant on our own. We can't beat our enemies on our own. So, we need a David to stand in our place and to defeat our enemies. But then what happens after that? David slings the rock that crushed the enemy's head. Then, David takes his sword and cuts his head off. Their enemies run. The Israelite army pursues.

You can face your enemies and you have the courage to face your enemies, but you only do that once you recognize [that] we don't fight for victory in the Christian life we fight from victory. So, it's a picture of sanctification, but a sanctification that is based in what Jesus has done in saving us.

Eric Hankins then countered:

I'm more comfortable saying the plot of the David and Goliath story is about a savior who stands before the enemy and acts and saves. I'm less comfortable with the snakeskin and the head. I think we should be very careful about moving into the specifics so that this is this and that is that. Then it becomes allegorical.

Jonathan replied by stating that what he said was rooted in history and that one only crosses into allegory "when you start saying the five stones represent this and that." Ed then concluded the discussion by noting that, "When we pay attention to the details and the context of David and Goliath, we see that this is not primarily a morality tale about courage in the face of one's giants. At the same time, we want to avoid turning it into an allegory, in which every detail represents a spiritual truth."

To read the original post, go to:

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2013/july/david-and-goliath-christ-centered-preaching.html>