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Move to Love: Run Toward the Giant

I Samuel 17: 1

Love requires motion! Love of God, love of spouse, love of kids, love of self, love of world... if you **really** love... if you really want God's best for you... you can't just sit there! You've got to **move**! This morning's story is one of the **great** "move" stories in the Bible. You might have read it a hundred times. Let's make it 101. I Samuel 17: 1. (1-11; 16)

This monster of a man Goliath stood 9 feet tall. He wore armor that weighed 125 pounds. He carried a spear the size of a beam with a point that weighed 15 pounds! He stood in the valley of Elah between Saul's forces and the Philistine army and challenged Saul to send out their best man to fight him. A battle of champions. Winner take all. For forty days, every morning and every night, Goliath lumbered out to mock the Israelites and their God: "You weenies! Don't you have even one man who will accept my challenge?" What was there response? 11: **"...Saul and all the Israelites were dismayed and terrified."**

And along comes David. A shepherd boy. The youngest son of Jesse...too young to be in Saul's army. Left behind to tend the sheep. But dad wants a report from the front lines so he sends David with food for his brother and tells him to get the latest scoop. (22) **"David left his things with the keeper of supplies, ran to the battle lines and greeted his brothers. As he was talking with them, Goliath, the Philistine champion from Gath, stepped out from his lines and shouted his usual defiance, and David heard it. When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran from him in great fear."**

David is incensed! (26) **"Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?"** Of course, his brothers are proud and inspired by young David's courage, right? Not quite! They are offended that their twerp of a brother would stick his nose where it doesn't belong. But King Saul hears about this kid and sends for him. (32) David says, **"Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him!"** Yeah...right! This scrawny shepherd boy will take on a mountainous killing machine. Saul isn't very hopeful. But he doesn't have many options either. David persuades Saul to let him try. 40-50.

Everyone knows this story. "David and Goliath" is synonymous with the victory of the little guy over the big guy against overwhelming odds. But this summer, a verse jumped out at me that I had never seen before. Verse 48: **"As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him...."**

Goliath had had enough chit chat. The novelty had worn off. This bronze covered hulk stepped forward to squash this flea of a boy and be done with it. Can you imagine it? *[Someone on the stairs above Mark.]* This is how much taller Goliath was than David. Now, what were David's options when he saw Goliath lumbering towards him? **He could change his mind!** He could decide that this was a really bad idea and do what the rest of the Israelites had done. Remember? 24 **"When the Israelites saw the man, they all ran**

from him in great fear.” Who could blame David if, when this human mountain started moving toward him, ready to skewer him like shrimp on a spit...who could blame if he decided that a strategic retreat made a lot of sense? So...he could have done this... [Run]

Or he could have stood his ground. Considering the cowardice of the rest of Saul's army, it would have been impressive and inspiring if he had just stood his ground and waited for Goliath to come to him. We read this week of a Gig Harbor High graduate, Nicholas Robinson, who was awarded a Silver Star for his valor in Afghanistan. For David to stand his ground against Goliath...that would be valorous, wouldn't it?

But David didn't stand. And David didn't flee. What did David do? He **ran toward** the giant. That little shrimp **ran** right toward the giant who intended to kill him. In fact...that's not all of it. The Hebrew says, literally, that he ran **quickly** toward the giant!

Bill Robinson, who just retired from the presidency of Whitworth University, has written a great deal on leadership. My favorite Bill Robinson leadership maxim is this: **Move toward the problem.** When you identify an issue that is going to cause you difficulty, move toward it. That is not our instinct. When we see troubles brewing, our instinct is to what? Move away. Avoid. Delay. Defer. Why? Because, it is a **problem**. Who wants trouble? We know it will be difficult, painful, divisive, hurtful, scary...and we may worry, rightly, that we don't really know how to handle this scary problem...so...our first instinct, **every time**, is avoidance. Move **away** from the problem.

It is exactly the wrong instinct. The minute you are aware that an issue is rising up, resist your instinct to run or wait or avoid. Instead, what? **Move toward the problem.** David understood this. In fact, David doesn't just move toward the problem. What? He runs! **And** ...David doesn't just **run** toward the problem. What? He runs **quickly**!

How can that possibly make sense? When you see a giant lumbering towards you, why would you want it to get to you any sooner than necessary? Well, here's what I have discovered about the giants in my life. When you run toward your giant, **you go from being a victim to being a warrior.** The minute David started running toward his nemesis, he was declaring, "I'm not just going to sit here and wait to be overrun by my circumstances. I'm not going to stand here, quivering, waiting for whatever my giant dishes out! I'm going to take this battle to him! I'm going to bring this fight right to his doorstep!" And when you move from victim to warrior...from passive to active...from helpless to control...it changes everything about how you deal with that issue.

Here's something else: When you run toward the giant, you discover **he isn't as scary as he first appears.** Yes...he is huge! And the closer you get, the hug-er he is! But you realize, he's slow. He's ugly. And do you know what just got bigger? The target! The closer David got, the more Goliath's forehead looked like a billboard. Who could possibly miss a target that big?

When I have had the courage to run toward my giants, they are **never as scary as I expected them to be.** The anticipation of the problem...the mind games I play with myself as I weave out disaster scenarios...are always worse than reality. How many times have you said, "Wow...that wasn't so bad! I was worried about nothing! I wish I hadn't wasted so much life and energy worrying about it!" The closer you get...the quicker you'll realize **the giant is almost NEVER as scary as he first appears.**

Here's something else I've discovered. When you run toward the giant, **you put him off his game.** Goliath's specialty was huge, sweeping swings of his sword and gigantic, arcing spear tosses. But David jammed him! The closer he got the less effective Goliath was. Giants are bullies typically. Whether they are dominating people or overwhelming circumstances, they are used to intimidating others. Used to setting the tempo and type of the conflict. When you say, "I'm not just going to stand here and get kicked around by this situation. I'm moving right into the teeth of it," ...well...it can be very disarming!

Finally, and most importantly, when you run toward your giant, **you are trusting God!** The faster David ran, the closer he got, the higher his trust level. He knew this was dangerous; knew what was at stake; knew he couldn't accomplish this in his own strength. **Even so...he ran ...fast.** Straight toward the giant. And every step he took was a cry from his heart declaring, "I trust you, God! I trust you, God! I trust you, God!"

When we hold back...when we quiver before the giants in our life...we are really saying, "I don't trust you, God. This is bigger than you. You can't take care of me. I don't trust you, God." But when we run towards our giants, it is our declaration that, **"Greater is He that is in me than He that is in the world!"**

Of course, when David ran at Goliath, he was intending to kill him. We are not followers of David. We are followers of Jesus. Jesus had a different strategy for dealing with his enemies. Not killing them. What? Loving them. Forgiving them. Redeeming them! **Or, just dealing with them!** Remember Gethsemane? The soldiers approached with lanterns and swords. Listen to the courage of Jesus: **"Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"** Jesus ran toward the giant. In fact, Jesus' very incarnation...his coming to earth...was running toward the giant of sin and death!

In light of that, then, what should we Christians do when we discover giants that want to destroy us? **Run toward the giant!** Even if we intend to love him rather than kill him, run toward the giant. It requires more courage to run towards our enemies with the weapons of love and forgiveness. But it is even more effective for all the same reasons! When we run toward our giant in love, we are empowered by taking control instead of being a victim, we discover they aren't as scary as we thought, we put them off their game and we reaffirm our own trust in the Lord Jesus who told us to love our enemies.

I was talking to a woman in our church this week. Not long ago, she found herself facing a giant that threatened to destroy her family. With her permission, I share her story:

Just a few days after this last Christmas my daughter informed me she was pregnant. That was a bombshell I did not see coming. I found myself facing a situation I never dreamed of: trying to be a supportive parent to my unmarried, pregnant child who had no job and no prospects. I wasn't angry, but I was very emotional.

I was conflicted and unwilling to offer a reply when she asked me "Mom, what would you do if you were in my situation?" I avoided the question, paralyzed with fear and uncertainty. My daughter was old enough to make and be responsible for her own choices and decisions. How could I make them for her? But what if she made the wrong decision? Would she be able to live with herself? Would I? I have friends who, years ago, made the

very painful decision to end a pregnancy. To this day they continue to carry the guilt and grief resulting from their decision. Would I allow my daughter to do the same? Would I let her make a choice that would haunt her the rest of her life just so our family could save face?

I promised not to say anything to her father, or to anyone else, until we sorted things out. That was a mistake. I agonized, desperate for someone to talk to. It would have been so much easier if someone else would have told me the right thing to do. I cried to God: "Help me do the right thing, Lord." I was fumbling. Worse, I felt I was failing my child who was reaching out to me for help.

She wanted to know what her options were. She was leaning toward terminating. At her request I accompanied her to a local Planned Parenthood clinic. I felt sick as we pulled into the parking lot. Never in my life did I imagine I'd find myself in such a situation. I waited in the lobby while she went back to have the pregnancy confirmed, growing sicker by the moment. I felt like throwing up!

[After we left the clinic] we barely made it 2 blocks before we both started crying. My heart was so unsettled and my daughter was feeling the same turmoil. She didn't know what to do and I was still resisting giving her the guidance she needed.

When we were almost home I finally asked the question I'd been avoiding. "If it weren't for concern about financially supporting a child, what decision would you make?" She didn't hesitate - she wanted to keep and raise this child. She'd had her share of struggles in life already; so often unsure of herself, feeling like she could never measure up to the expectations of others. She mostly feared being a disappointment to her parents and especially to her dad. She didn't want to make this problem everyone else's problem. So she was prepared to "make it go away" so it wouldn't disrupt everyone else's lives.

As she spoke these words to me I distinctly felt the Holy Spirit give me a nudge I couldn't ignore. I told my daughter, "We need to talk to your dad."

The thought terrified her. She was certain he would not only be deeply hurt but very disappointed as well. Determined at last, I urged her to trust me and to give her dad the benefit of the doubt. I was moving forward solely on faith. It's hard to explain, but I knew this was God answering my cry for help. So together we headed home.

The three of us sat down in the living room, my daughter choked with emotion. With tears rolling down my cheeks, in a shaky voice, I explained the situation to my husband. **His reply was not what my daughter or I expected at all.** He immediately said to her, "Come here, honey, and sit by me." She did. He put his arms around her, hugged her, and said, "I love you so much. I would never want you to end a pregnancy, because the baby growing inside you is part of you. I know you didn't plan this but we will find our way through it together. I know things will change, and there will be lots of stuff we need to sort out, but I love you and we'll do it together. I am still proud of you."

This woman ran toward the giant, didn't she! She took control rather than remaining paralyzed. She discovered the giant wasn't as scary as she thought. She experienced the power of the Holy Spirit at work in her life as she dared to trust God. And something else very important: **she discovered that she did not have to face her giant alone.** David

did because God told him to. But **most of the time**, God gives us family, church, LifeGroups, friends, pastors, counselors to give us the courage and wisdom to face our giants. In fact, God's will is discerned **best** in a community of believers, not individually. And giants are fought best with trusted warriors at your side.

So...what is the giant you need to run toward? **Your marriage?** Your spouse is **not** Goliath, by the way. Your Goliath is Satan and this culture that tells you that your marriage is over; time to walk away; he/she will never change; just give up. Are you going to quiver in the Valley of Elah or are you going to run toward your giant? Is someone trying to **destroy you financially?** Run toward your giant! Are you **failing in your class** but afraid to face your teacher? Run toward your giant! Are you **suffering in a job** but afraid you might lose it? Run toward your giant! Are you **torn by a family feud** that has lasted for years? Run toward your giant! Are you **suspicious that your child or grandchild is making life-destructive decisions?** Run toward your giant!

Talk with God about it. Find the resources God has provided you in others: a friend, a parent, a colleague, a teacher, your LifeGroup, a pastor or counselor...and run toward your giant!

SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Read the passage out loud.

God's Twitter: Wisdom Longing for Peace

Reflect & Apply Individually: Each person take 5-7 minutes to circle words or phrases that jumped out at them; jot down your reflections; check the notes in your Study Bible for insight or help. Grapple with what the Spirit is saying to you, your group, the church: write down some applications.

Reflect & Apply Together: Share your thoughts. Don't teach! Listen and reflect on God's word together; grapple with what God is calling us to do and be through this passage.

Pray together: tell the Lord one thing you are thankful for and lay one concern before the Lord.

Dig deeper

What are the risks and the benefits that result from "running toward the giant?"

What giant in your life do you need to run towards? What would be the first step you might take? Will you hold each other accountable?