

EXCELLENCE AND PREPAREDNESS

Text: I Samuel 16:15-18 ¹⁵And Saul's servants said unto him, Behold now, an evil spirit from God troubleth thee. ¹⁶Let our lord now command thy servants, *which are* before thee, to seek out a man, *who is* a cunning player on an harp: and it shall come to pass, when the evil spirit from God is upon thee, that he shall play with his hand, and thou shalt be well. ¹⁷And Saul said unto his servants, Provide me now a man that can play well, and bring *him* to me. ¹⁸**Then answered one of the servants, and said, Behold, I have seen a son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, that is cunning in playing, and a mighty valiant man, and a man of war, and prudent in matters, and a comely person, and the LORD is with him.**

Overview: It starts in a field alone, surrounded by a green meadow and an ample water source. The only ones there to see his actions are God and the sheep to which he has been given the responsibility to shepherd. This is where the choices of life are made, not in the public eye where others can applaud your actions and choices, but in the stillness of aloneness where character and integrity are formed. Take some time to ponder this paragraph.

David's flock of sheep, according to his older brother Eliab, were few (I Samuel 17:28), but to David, they were his responsibility and to that he dedicated his life. Don't take that statement lightly – HIS LIFE. Why do I say that, and why is that so important to this study?

David did not take his responsibilities lightly. Great Leaders never do. It mattered not the size of the flock. It mattered that he had been given responsibility to the flock. Jesus said that they that are faithful over little would be given responsibility over much. This would certainly prove itself to be true in the life of David.

- GREAT LEADERS MASTER THEIR SKILLS – David is the perfect poster child for this statement. Think of his skillset and the diversity it demonstrates. He was a musician, a writer, a shepherd, a skilled marksman with a sling, incredibly brave, well groomed, a skilled warrior, wise in the matters of life, a loyal and good friend, a man of high character, well behaved, approved of God, a God lover, and so much more. Well after others went in from training, David remained, probably alone, to continue to master skills to the highest levels he could attain.
- GREAT LEADERS LEARN FROM THEIR EXPERIENCES - In the story of David and Goliath there is one statement that stands out strongly – I Samuel 17 ³⁴ “And David said unto Saul, Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: ³⁵ And I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. ³⁶ Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them, seeing he hath defied the armies of the living God. ³⁷ David said moreover, The LORD that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine. And Saul said unto David, Go, and the LORD be with thee.” When David came to the battlefield, he did not come to fight Goliath, he came to deliver cheese and bread to his brothers. However, he came prepared and because of his preparedness and experience in the green pastures and still waters, he was prepared to fight a giant.
- GREAT LEADERS DEMAND EXCELLENCE IN ALL DISCIPLINES OF LIFE – An amazing observance about David was his relentless pursuit of excellence in everything. Groom well, carry yourself well, dress well, sing your best, pray longer, study harder, discipline yourself to be the best you can be, and then discipline yourself to be the best.
- DISCIPLINED EXCELLENCE OPENS DOORS THAT HAVE NEVER BEEN OPENED – David's most notable moment was his defeat of Goliath, however, that is but one moment in a very momentous life. Because he was skilled with a sling, his skillset allowed him to defeat the giant. From there, he would go on to lead an army and ultimately lead a nation. Most don't realize it, but it began with his skill on the harp.

It was there he won the heart, respect, and favor of King Saul. Had Saul not believed in David, the story of Goliath would never have been written.

- GREAT LEADERS UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VICTIMIZATION AND VICTORY – David was the only person on the field of battle that day who wasn't a victim in their own mind. Those who should have been leading weren't. Those who should have been encouraging the warriors didn't. Those who should have been lining up to demonstrate the tried and proven victorious power of God trembled. Those who should have believed lacked faith. David saw what others couldn't see. Great Leadership has the ability to see beyond the obvious.
- GREAT LEADERS KNOW THERE IS ALWAYS A CAUSE – The cause is not yours to determine or choose. You are a servant to your King. He, He alone has the right to determine your comings and goings. Your submission to His leadership and voice is your only right. You are an ambassador for Christ on this earth. You represent your King. Represent Him well.
- GREAT LEADERS BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES – Because of his life experiences, his countless hours of preparing, the filling of the Spirit, the anointing of Samuel, and his unrelenting pursuit of God and excellence, David knew he was up to any eventuality that would come. I Samuel 17 is the result.
- GREAT LEADERS BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF GOD IN THEIR LIVES – When David went down into the valley to face Goliath, he made it clear to Goliath and all who would hear that he was advancing in the name of 'the LORD God of the armies of Israel.' Though he was prepared and skilled, there is no preparedness or skill that is greater than the power of God.
- GREAT LEADERS GO WITH THE PROVEN – David was provided with the best armor and weaponry in all of Israel, that of King Saul. It was great armor and weaponry and would later be the weaponry David would use, but in the battle of Shocoh, he chose to go with what he knew. Great Leadership doesn't step out with unproven methodology or skill sets. It doesn't mean they aren't good. It means they aren't a tried and proven commodity.
- GREAT LEADERS CONTINUE TO ENLARGE THEMSELVES – David would become adept to all forms of warfare and the weaponry required for success. He was continually broadening his skill set. Great Leaders never stop learning and growing in life.
- GREAT LEADERS POSSESS A CONFIDENCE THAT CAUSE OTHERS TO BELIEVE IN THEM – The stakes were winner take all. In I Samuel 17:9, Goliath lays out the spoils of battle, "If he (any soldier in Israel) be able to fight with me and to kill me, then we will be your servants: but if I prevail against him, and kill him, then shall ye be our servants, and serve us." WINNER TAKE ALL. Somehow, the confidence that David possessed convinced King Saul that he could kill Goliath. That was the greatest miracle of the story.
- GREAT LEADERS LEARN TO SELL – This can't be overstated. Everyone is a salesperson. They are selling **themselves** everywhere they go. It is essential to believe in the product. If you believe in the product, you will have no problem selling the product with convincing passion. However, you are the person who knows the product better than anyone. Make sure you can look back at yourself in the mirror daily and say, "I would buy that person in the mirror." If you can say that, you can sell it
- GREAT LEADERS KNOW WHO THEY ARE IN CHRIST – What makes a Rembrandt valuable? The answer is, "The Master". So, who made you? God did. If we were to sell a table Jesus built, how much would it be worth? Priceless!!!! Who made you? You are priceless, not because of the piece, but because of the Master of the piece. That's why it is called a masterpiece. When you fully understand who you are in Christ, you will never again believe you are worthless. Read Ephesians 1 and underline everything Paul says about you in that passage. Then memorize it. Then believe it. It will change your life.
- GREAT LEADERS DO NOT VIEW FAILURE AS AN OPTION – David went to war with the mindset of success. Jack Nicklaus, the most famed golfer of all times, said he knew who would not win the major

tournaments before they began simply by listening to them talk about the difficulties of the majors. Some see obstacles as hazards. Others see obstacles as opportunities. Great Leadership is determined by which side you are on.

- GREAT LEADERS KNOW THAT BEING OVERPREPARED IS ESSENTIAL TO EVENTUALITIES THAT WILL INVARIABLY COME – David carefully chose six stones to fight Goliath. He only needed one. You can never “overprepare.” The Boy Scout motto is “Be Prepared.” The Rand Corporation is an American Think Tank that has one purpose – PREPARE FOR EVERY POSSIBLE SCENARIO. Think of David. Who would have thought a 10 foot tall giant would await his arrival? But, he did. David, many thought, was wasting valuable time and energy relentlessly training with a sling shot. Who would have thought that his many hours of playing a harp to the sheep would one day land him in the King’s palace? Prepare!!!! Then, prepare more. Have more ammunition than you will ever use.
- GREAT REWARD AWAITS THOSE WHO EXCEL – David did not fight for the reward, but reward came. Great Leaders do not do what they do because of the gain that will come. They do what they do because they are driven to excel in life. One of the mottos of the Marine Corp is to adapt to the situation. No field of battle ever lays out exactly like the textbook says. The greatest are those who can improvise to the situation at hand. Reward is the byproduct of success.
- EXCELLENCE BLESSES OTHERS – No man is an island. Others benefit or hurt because of the decisions we make in life. Great Leadership understands this. The decisions you make will have far reaching effects. Make sure you prepare wisely and vigorously.

What does this look like in a real life business day? When I prepare to leave my home each day to embark on the business I will do that day, I begin with prayer asking specifically for the LORD to fill me with His Spirit and to guide my life that day. I yield to His directions as I go out.

Each day is different, but when I go into homes, I go with the intention of being a blessing, not getting the business. Monetary gain is the result, not the goal. There are different challenges and opportunities each day. Some are easy. Some are difficult. All are opportunities to demonstrate Christ in a world that needs to see Him.

Like David, I don’t go out seeking a giant to kill. I go to deliver ‘bread and cheese’ to those in need. Sometimes, however, the giants of life are there and the opportunity to become something greater presents itself. It has many shapes and sizes, but experience, preparedness, and striving to become excellent in life have made the opportunities into victories instead of defeats.

If you look in the back of my van, you might be disgusted at the amount of stuff that is in there, not necessarily in an organized fashion. However, in that van are everyday opportunities to be a blessing and success. I have things I will rarely use there, but on those rare occasions they are needed, I’m prepared. I overprepare for the eventualities of life.

I would probably be classified as an elite salesperson. Is that true? Probably, but not because I set out daily to be an elite salesperson. That’s not my goal. My goal is to be a blessing and help to each life I encounter. Personal and monetary success is a result of that lifestyle choice.

I believe in myself because I know my heart is right. It is easy to be real with people if they know you are real. The old cliché, “People don’t care how much you know, they want know how much you care” applies. People buy what they believe in. People believe in me because God believes in me and because He believes in me, I believe in me. It is the outflow of confidence. I am His masterpiece. So are you.

I'm 65 and continually dreaming of how to enlarge my horizons as a person and businessman. I still write books, teach classes, and seek out opportunities to please God every day. I still seek ways to become more skilled and expert in the way I speak, act, and conduct myself on a daily basis. I am still actively building and enlarging my business on a daily basis.

I know what works, and, to a large degree, I know what doesn't work. I go with the proven and have confidence that it will work today just as it did yesterday. I invest in the necessary equipment to accomplish our goals as a business. I invest in those around me and love them. I know what I do is bigger than my portfolio and I am striving to help others achieve the success I've achieved.

My family will be blessed from my accomplishments just as David's family were blessed by his. My men are blessed by my leadership style every day.

There is a cause. There is an effect. Every day I live that out in real life.

None of this is said to brag. It is said to encourage you to believe in the greatness of who God has called you to be.