

Going Against The Grain - *Are You a God-pleaser?*

When I started working on my own recovery from people pleasing behaviors, I was struck by how confidently and courageously many of the people in the Bible stood up to authorities and held strong to their convictions in the face of it being challenged. Daniel before King Nebuchadnezzar, Peter before the Jewish authorities at Pentecost, Moses before Pharaoh, are just a few that come to mind.

Recently, the Spirit led me to consider a well-known person in the Bible who didn't give into people pleasing behaviors when the opportunities to do so were present and the stakes were high.

I'm referring to the young shepherd, David. Let's pick up his story in the Bible, 1 Samuel 17:31-47. This is a familiar scene and one of David's "claims to fame." We'll consider David's responses and I'll share a few thoughts.

"What David said was overheard and reported to Saul, and Saul sent for him.

³² David said to Saul, "Let no one lose heart on account of this Philistine; your servant will go and fight him."

³³ Saul replied, "**You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a young man, and he has been a warrior from his youth.**"

³⁴ But David said to Saul, "Your servant has been keeping his father's sheep. When a lion or a bear came and carried off a sheep from the flock, ³⁵ I went after it, struck it and rescued the sheep from its mouth. When it turned on me, I seized it by its hair, struck it and killed it. ³⁶ Your servant has killed both the lion and the bear; **this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, because he has defied the armies of the living God.** ³⁷ The LORD who rescued me from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear will rescue me from the hand of this Philistine." (emphasis mine)

Saul said to David, "Go, and the LORD be with you."

³⁸ Then Saul dressed David in his own tunic. He put a coat of armor on him and a bronze helmet on his head. ³⁹ David fastened on his sword over the tunic and tried walking around, because he was not used to them.

"I cannot go in these," he said to Saul, "because I am not used to them." So he took them off. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand, chose five smooth stones from the stream, put them in the pouch of his shepherd's bag and, **with his sling in his hand, approached the Philistine.**" (emphasis mine.)

Some thoughts to consider in light of overcoming people pleasing behaviors:

Vs. 33 - Saul labels David - Saul's opinion and visual assessment of the outward appearance of David was that Goliath had more fighting experience than David. Goliath was also much bigger physically than David.

Vs.34-37 - David's label for himself - David replies with an account of his own "battle" experience and sees no difference between those conflicts and this one. He gives the credit to God who he believes will help him again in this current battle.

Vs. 38 - The King tries to hedge for the victory - This is where it gets tricky. The king is offering his own armor as protection for David. So David, in humility, tries them on to see if they would work.

Let's pause here for a minute. Consider if David had engaged in people pleasing behavior at this point. He would have acquiesced to the king's opinion that armor and metal weapons were better. David would have silenced his own inner conviction voice about what tools or weapons he needed to fight this battle. He would have gone out to fight in the king's self-confidence in these outer elements to help him, rather than going in God-confidence, just as David was, using tools he was familiar with wielding.

David's belief in the LORD God to fight the battle and be the determiner of the outcome came forth.

Vs. 39b - David's courage to speak up - "I cannot go in these." Notice David didn't speak vaguely or work up to the "hard truth" he needed to say, he was direct, honest and told King Saul the truth. David has such conviction and courage here to speak up to the king this way! He has deep confidence in God, to rely on the tools that God has given him, to go into battle.

Vs. 40b- David moves forward in God-confidence - David approached the enemy with the tools God gave him and his confidence in God and his conviction that God would be with him in this situation to give the victory, as he had been with him in the past battles he faced, and God would get the glory.

As a person recovering from people pleasing behaviors, this would be a very triggering scenario for me. Authority figures are one of my greater temptations toward people pleasing. I'm tempted to willingly give over my power of choice and any autonomy to the preference or opinion of that authority figure. (*Wouldn't saying no be insulting? As an authority, don't they know more and have more power than I do? Might it bring down very negative consequences on me to say no?*) Notice these are fear-based thoughts.

From the Bible text it doesn't appear that David entertained those thoughts at all. In a high stakes, high pressure situation, David didn't give in to what *others* thought he should do, or how they thought he should do it.

Vs.45 - 47 David relies on God going into battle - In this very confident and inspiring speech David verbally pronounces his confidence in God to bring the victory:

⁴⁵ David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, **but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.** ⁴⁶ This day **the LORD will deliver you into my hands,** and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and **the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel.** ⁴⁷ 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.” (emphasis mine)

Vs. 48 - 52 account the resulting miraculous victory from God that changed the tide of the battle between Israel and the Philistines.

This kind of God-confidence is inspiring to me and reminds me to have courage when I must face down a temptation toward people pleasing behaviors. Below are a few questions for you to consider for your own life.

Personal Application:

- What do you approach challenging situations with? (e.g. “God tools”, or the world’s tools?)
- Do you silence your inner voice of convictions in favor of what others think when the pressure is high?
- Do you enter uncertain situations with self-confidence or God-confidence?
- What change do you need to choose to make in order to handle future situations differently?