

Shutting Out Demons When They Get in Your Face

Is something keeping you from the life you've always dreamed of? Do you struggle with an addiction or bad habit you just can't seem to break? Have you tried to change again and again only to end up back in the same old cycle of behavior that leaves you exactly where you don't want to be? There is a way to gain victory over those battles—to un-become everything you were never meant to be and rediscover the person you were before the struggles of life happened to you.

If we want a life of freedom and victory, we must square off with our devils, just as Jesus squared off with the devil in the wilderness. The devils I'm referring to are the old, familiar patterns of behavior that keep us experiencing the same unwanted results.

Sometimes when we seek change, we say, "I can never become the person I want to be." But maybe the journey isn't always about becoming something new. Maybe it's about turning from what we've become so we can be who we really are.

The person you currently are was shaped by the past. While that may sound like bad news, the good news is what you do right now will decide who you become in the future. You can become great!

Jesus Fought the Same Devils as You

When I was in Bible college, we were never taught that after 20 years of ministry, it would still be a daily struggle to maintain purity, forgive those who treated us unfairly and let go of the devils from our past. I had been fighting some personal battles for a long time and was beginning to get very discouraged. For the first time in my life, I really thought I might not make it. This time the battle seemed different. The

devil seemed to have the upper hand, and he knew it.

I felt like the apostle Paul, who said, "For the good I desire to do, I do not do, but the evil I do not want is what I do" (Rom. 7:19). The desire I had for change and my ability to make it happen seemed a million miles apart. I placed my head on my desk and silently begged God for help.

At this point, my résumé was a lot more impressive than my life. My résumé said, "Pastor, professional counselor, giant killer and superhero!" My life said something very different. I was questioning everything: the ministry, my marriage and the future. My flesh was staging a revolt. I felt as if my life was scattered like the pieces of a puzzle, and I wasn't sure how or if I could put them back together. I knew that if I was to overcome, I would have to confront myself, my thoughts and my feelings.

Would I ever find my way back?

As I read through Luke 4:1-13, where Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, the answer suddenly became so clear to me. This man, Jesus, who had lived 2,000 years ago, was just like me. He fought the same devils I do. For the first time in my life, I realized just how human Jesus was. I began to understand that the reason Jesus was successful was because He chose to face the devil.

Even though I had read that story multiple times, I had overlooked the fact that Jesus was not just battling the devil. He was also battling Himself. Spiritual maturity doesn't take you out of the fight. Sure, my devils are different than Jesus' were, but the fact remains: I must face them. Like Jesus, I would have to spend some time in the wilderness facing what stood in opposition to my future.

Goliath, the giant of Gath, taunted Israel's army morning and evening for 40 days. It became like clockwork. But then a young shepherd boy rose up and refused to listen to his

insults any longer. After that epic showdown, David was no longer viewed as just a shepherd boy; he was now a mighty warrior and would eventually become Israel's next king.

Before the soldier can win any battle, he must decide to show up for the fight. Jesus showed up in the wilderness to fight the devil. Will you show up to fight yours?

Shutting Out Demonic Voices

Goliath's booming voice carried his taunts across the valley: "Why do you even bother to line up for battle? Why do you even choose to fight when you know you can't win?" When the men of Israel heard his words, "they were filled with terror" (1 Sam. 17:11).

Goliath was doing more than questioning David's ability with his jabs. He was questioning God's ability.

Do you recognize that voice? Does the enemy say to you, "Why even bother, you big idiot? You are outmatched and overpowered. Not even God can help you."

For most people, that voice says things such as: "You have never been able to exercise and lose weight"; "You're always going to be depressed because you're just like your mom"; "You can't be happy like everyone else because you're a victim"; or "You need this habit to help you with all the stress in your life."

Are you, like King Saul, terrified to fight your own battles because the voice of the opposition has left you believing you can't win?

I think it is important to note that of all the men standing before Goliath, King Saul was the most qualified to fight Goliath. The Bible says Saul was "as handsome a young man as could be found anywhere in Israel, and he was a head taller than anyone else" (1 Sam. 9:2, NIV).

Even Samuel, the most respected and honest priest of his time, got caught up in appearances. As Jesse's three oldest sons passed by, all Samuel noticed were their broad shoulders and rippling biceps—the kind that would fit perfectly into a king's armor. Just like the nation of Israel, even Samuel wanted a king who looked like a champion.

Saul was the logical choice to fight the giant that day. He was bigger than any other man under his command, and he certainly towered over the shepherd boy from Bethlehem. We know this because the Bible tells us Saul's armor didn't fit David (1 Sam. 17:38-39).

David must have looked like a kindergartner trying on one of his dad's work uniforms. It, no doubt, swallowed him up. The man who could wear this armor would be more of a challenge for Goliath than a boy who came to the battle just to bring cheese to his older brothers.

King Saul, no doubt, was the second-tallest man on the battlefield that day, but the voice of the opposition terrified and dismayed him. Saul had all the potential, charisma and size needed for winning battles. He even had a fan club cheering him on. But he was content to sit back while the enemy dominated his life. David, however, would not tolerate such defiance.

Saul may have been bigger on the outside, but David was the bigger man.

This is a picture of our lives in many cases. Even though we have the armor of God protecting us—with the Word as our sword and faith as our shield—and the Holy Spirit guiding us, we choose to allow the voice of the enemy to keep us from fighting battles that are in our power to win.

Saul heard the voice of the enemy. David heard the voice of God. Whose voice will you choose to hear?

“Now the Philistines gathered their armies for battle. ... The Philistine stepped forward morning and evening and took his stand daily for forty days. ... As he was speaking with them, the champion, Goliath, the Philistine from Gath, was going up from the battle line of the Philistines. And he spoke these same words and David heard them” (1 Sam. 17:1, 16, 23, MEV).

When the Devil Is in Your Face

This particular battle was unlike most battles fought during this time period because it went on for 40 days. It was defiance on a daily basis.

I'd bet this is probably a picture of your life. It's an everyday struggle with a familiar enemy. Most of us lose the battle before it ever begins because battles are bloody, painful and tedious. Daily defiance is exhausting!

In this particular battle, Goliath was there every morning and every evening. That tells me he was there when they got up and when they went to bed.

Does that sound familiar? You wake up and your opposition is there; you go to bed and your opposition is still there. Goliath was constantly in their faces, flaunting his strength before the seemingly helpless army of King Saul. I imagine King Saul slept with one eye open because, no matter how hard he tried to change the channel in his mind, his thoughts kept going back to the monster in the valley.

Is this happening in your life right now? Are you ever aware of the enemy's champion as he brazenly walks through every waking thought you have? Is he using the same old stuff he has been using on you for weeks, months and years? Is it just “the usual”?

Unfortunately, for a lot of us, Goliath is nothing new. We are well-acquainted with him. He doesn't bother with a disguise because he knows that what has worked on us in the past will

continue to work on us in the future. That is, until now!

I have gone through seasons in my life where, until I decided to fight my battle, my giant was there with me every second of every day. There have been seasons in my life when I got up with, ate breakfast with, rode to work with, spent the day with, came home with and went to bed with my giant.

Defiance on a daily basis is one of the most exhausting, debilitating and depressing things imaginable. If you don't rise up and confront the giant, the usual defiance will keep you from winning the battle.

"Now the Israelites had been saying, 'Do you see how this man keeps coming out?'" (1 Sam. 17:25).

Goliath kept coming. He never took a vacation day or decided to just not show up. He had taken his stand, and somebody was going to win. That winner can be you if you'll do like David did and focus on the size of your God instead of on the size of your goliath.

Larry Dugger is a pastor and professional counselor. Dugger travels extensively to speak at churches, marriage conferences and private venues. He lives in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri with his wife, Karen, and their two sons.

If you liked the article, you'll love the book

In 40 Days to Defeat Your Past: Confront the Person You No Longer Wish to Be (Charisma House), Larry Dugger teaches you how to overcome your biggest struggle. Square off with your devils and win! Find this resource at [www.charisma.com](#), or anywhere Christian books are sold.