



Fit 4 Gold: 3. Being Challenged

Full Plan with notes



Theme: Going 4 Gold- the heats – Proving it's for real

First big competition / challenge / big faith moment

Aim: To consider those 'oh wow' moments in life and in our journey with God

Theme verse: Zechariah 4:6-7: 'You will not succeed by your own strength or by your own power, but by my Spirit,' says the Lord All-Powerful. NCV

Or

Hebrews 11:1 Faith means being sure of the things we hope for and knowing that something is real even if we do not see it. NCV

Bible links references

David and Goliath: 1 Samuel 17

Saul/Paul: Acts 9:1-30

Jehoshaphat: 2 Chronicles 20:1-30 see back up notes for this.

Jesus sent out 72 disciples to preach and heal: Luke 10:1, 9, 17

Other Bible references

Psalms 18:31-36 ...³² God arms me with strength, ...³⁴ He trains my hands for battle ...

Philippians 4:13 I can do everything by the power of Christ. He gives me strength. NIRV

2 Corinthians 12:9 "My grace is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak."

Ephesians 6:10-18: the armour of God

Programme

Games themes: Target practice; exercising faith

Target practice games

Penalty shoot-out

Knocking tin cans off a wall with a beanbag or tennis ball

Throwing balls into a bucket

Dodge ball

Faith games

Eating something when blindfolded – do you trust the person feeding you? Check concerning allergies first

(Faith is sitting on a chair and believing that it will take your weight without even thinking to check it first)

Sports links: more detail on athletes available in Sports Links document

- ◆ Ellie Simmonds came out of nowhere to win 2 gold medals in the Paralympic swimming at the age of 13 – the youngest competitor of the entire 2008 Beijing Olympic Games



- ◆ Steph Cook was training to be a doctor when her hobby took off unexpectedly. Within 3 short years she found herself competing in the Modern Pentathlon at the Sydney Olympics in 2000 where she won the gold medal.
- ◆ Steve Bradbury - 'a tortoise behind four hares'
- ◆ Eric 'the Eel' did not expect the crowd to be so amazingly supportive for his Olympic venture
- ◆ Emil Zatopek entered the marathon at the last minute, not having run that distance before and after breaking the world record in both the 5000m and 10,000m races.
- ◆ John Boland did not expect to come back from his holiday with 2 gold Olympic medals as a souvenir
- ◆ Record breaking moments from people such as Usain Bolt
- ◆ Mark Austen's 24 hour run
"16-year-old Mark Austen has amazed friends and family alike by running the 75-mile 'Cumbria Way' in just 23 hours and 22 minutes! Making his way through the beautiful scenery, Mark battled the darkness as well as enjoying the lovely views to complete his challenge within his 24 hour target." Mark raised over £1200 for the Toybox charity which helps street children in Latin America. Source: booklet from www.toybox.org.uk

Talk about/discuss 'Oh wow' moments (Make examples relevant to your group)

- Have you ever had a 'oh wow' moment?
Like when you wake up and go 'Oh wow, today's the day we go on holiday'.
Or like in 2011 when Ireland beat Australia 15 - 6 in the Rugby World cup! (Rugby Union 7's will become an Olympic sport again in 2016.)
- Have you ever had an 'Oh wow I'm good at something' moment?
(If you haven't, your time will come)
Like my friend Julia when she won the Year 7 cross country run even though she had always come last when representing her school in years 5 and 6. She has since won at county level but hasn't yet decided whether to aspire to Olympic level.
- How about an 'Oh Wow God' moment? (or keep this part to discuss in small groups after the Bible link)
When something has happened that wakes you up to the fact that God is real and alive and active and answers prayer and does stuff that no one else can! This can be before, at the same time as, or after you become a Christian. (Give some examples relevant to you and your group.)

Bible links

A lot of Bible people had some pretty awesome 'Oh wow God' moments. For them, being chosen for the team was a huge wow moment but then there was also those times when ...

Think about several of the following or just one in detail:

I would probably focus on either **David and Goliath** see notes below, or Jehoshaphat - two great competitions/battles that proved that having faith in God really works.



Jehoshaphat: 2 Chronicles 20:1-30

This is a really exciting and less well known story. Jehoshaphat was one of the good kings of Judah and trusted in God. He had experience of God helping him when he had got himself into big trouble a few years earlier (chapter 18). So when he heard that a large army from 3 nations was advancing on his small kingdom, he declared a National Prayer and fasting Day. He then gave a motivational speech reminding the people (and himself) of the Truth about God – that he was powerful and had always helped them in the past. He remembered that they had treated these particular nations in the Right Way and had nothing to feel guilty about. One of the priests then brought an encouraging Message from God. It was a Message of Good News that God would Save his people without them even having to fight. The next day, as they went out to face their enemies, Jehoshaphat encouraged them to have Faith in God and he decided to send the best singers to the front of the army so that as they marched towards the battle line, they were singing praises to God. The result was amazing!! And if you look carefully you can find every aspect of the armour of God from Ephesians 6, being used here!

Other Bible links

Mary (Jesus' mum):

It had been an 'oh wow' moment when she was told that God had a specific role for her on the team. But then came that 1st experience of knowing that God was backing her up all the way. He reassured her fiancé, steered her away from danger and made sure she always had someone special to help her through. It became a reality, not just a promise.

Moses: His burning bush moment showed him that God was no longer a distant belief or hope but a here and now reality. Then there was a series of disappointments until the Hebrews finally crossed the Sea of Reeds and escaped from superpower Egypt. He experienced an incredible number of 'oh wow God' moments from then on.

Saul: 1 Samuel 11.

Saul had had the usual training in warfare but he had mostly worked as a farmer until he was chosen to be king. He didn't make too good a first impression at his selection when he was found hiding in the baggage. But with God's help, Saul rose to the challenge of saving the people of the town of Jabesh-gilead from being maimed and tortured by their enemies. He remained their hero until his death when they honoured his memory by rescuing his body from the enemy. No one had expected Saul to win his 1st international competition so decisively. He won many more battles against the Philistines over the next 42 years.

Paul: Acts 9:22-25

He found that his preaching became more and more powerful and he also had to escape from assassins with help from God and Christian friends. His 'oh wow' God was certainly livening up his life!

Peter and other disciples: In Luke 10, Jesus sent out a whole crowd of 72 disciples to preach and to heal people. They came back amazed at how God had used them - verse 17

Life Application:

First big faith moment. I knew God was real when ...

What are our giants/challenges? Have we ever 'seen' the size of God in relation to the challenge/problem?

Being selected for any team is exciting/encouraging/ a morale boost. But then there comes that 1st big competition. How good are you at your talent / sport etc?

Knowing that God wants you on his team is awesome but then there comes that 1st big challenge and you have to put reality to the test. What will happen when you do something in faith and you have to trust God to back you?

Application: small group or prayer space

Have you had any 'oh wow' moments in life?

- I realised I was good atwhen
- I knew God was real when
- I realised how awesome God is when
- I prayed about ... and God really answered by
- I knew God had answered my prayer when
- I feel close to God when

If you are going something different or daring and you are sure that God wants you to do this, then don't ever see yourself as the 'little' guy. David didn't. He just knew that he was going to kill Goliath, not because he believed he was the best but because he knew who his back up was.

Prayer space themes:

✚ Identify your 'giants'

Goliath was scary because he was 3 metres/9 feet tall, very strong and a top gladiator/fighter. Design a new monster/alien or bad guy perhaps for Dr Who or an action film.

Give it a name. What can it do? Why is it scary? How can it be defeated?

In real life, what are your giants?

How can they be reduced in size or wiped out?

Create or find a PowerPoint that shows something of the 'size' of God.

The children's book 'Is a Blue Whale the Biggest Thing There Is? By Robert Wells could be helpful, used the right way.

✚ Sand versus stone activity

"Write today's worries in sand. Write yesterday's victories in stone"

In a sand tray, write down what you are worried about; pray then rub it out.

Pick up a pebble and use something sharp like a Maths compass to scratch on it a word that reminds you of something that God helped you with or something where you believe that God will give you the victory.

Alternatively take a piece of clay and flatten it with a rolling pin. Use a cocktail stick to write on it as above. This will need a risk assessment.

Leaders Notes

David and Goliath

1 Samuel 17 especially verses 22-26 and 34-50

Whenever a little team is up against a big team people talk about 'David and Goliath' contests. But David never saw himself as the 'little guy'. He just knew that he was going to kill Goliath, not because he was young and arrogant but because he knew who his back up was. He knew that his God was bigger than anything Goliath believed in and that he was fighting as the representative of a very powerful God. Maybe afterwards when he looked back, did he think 'Oh wow! Did I really do that?!'

I don't usually 'tell Bible stories' to older children or teens because it is important that they come across as authentic. One good way is to absorb the story yourself so that you feel confident about it and then just chat casually about it with the young people. However here is a 'storytelling' format that can sometimes work with this age group. It will depend on how good they are at listening. It may also help you to think about the account in more depth.

Story

When he arrived at the battle ground that day no one took much notice of him at first. They were used to seeing him around. He sometimes served as Saul's armour bearer. However he wasn't from any of the big clubs so no one really knew who he was. He hadn't yet been part of the line up nor had a crack at any real action on the field.

They soon started to take notice of him though when he began talking about taking on the Philistine National Champion. What was his name again? No, not the Philistine, everyone knew the name of Goliath. He was a monster of a man, the undefeated Middle East Champion and seasoned warrior. He'd been taunting them for days, undermining their team spirit, challenging them to single combat. They were used to being in the full heat of battle but the thought of being out in front on your own, that was another matter.

King Saul, at 62 was getting a bit old to try new techniques. His son Jonathan was a man of great courage and faith. Too bad he had a knee injury. He would have been willing to try anyway but his father wouldn't take the risk of letting him. Saul's relationship with God wasn't what it had been but he still prayed.

When they brought David to him, Saul really wasn't sure at first. He recognized the lad of course. What was his name again? Saul was hesitant but desperate. Did they really have anything to lose? He was sadly too familiar with seeing young men die in battle. So - give the youngster a chance and offer to lend him some decent armour and weapons. It was the least he could do and more than the lad would have had in battle with swords in such short supply.

What went through David's mind as he walked toward the giant? He had compared this to killing a lion or a bear – but lions and bears don't wear bronze helmets that are designed to protect as much of the forehead as possible. David's aim was usually good but there wasn't much of a gap for him to target. This was way harder than anything he had done before.

But God is God. As long as David did his bit, he could leave it to the Holy Spirit to guide that small missile. He chose the stones carefully. Some soldiers used stones about half the size of a cricket ball.



Would that work today? Did the Holy Spirit prompt David as he selected the stones? Too big and it would bounce off the helmet. Too small and would it do the job? A skilled marksman could send a stone whizzing through the air at a speed of 100mph. No wonder the Benjamites had a whole battalion of slingshot soldiers.

David's training had taught him to arm himself with five stones. You always had to think ahead in battle and killing Goliath could well be the start of the fight rather than the end of it. Not far behind Goliath was the Philistine army and David was way nearer than the Israelite front line. He could not be sure how the Philistines would react once their champion was dead.

David was near enough now to start exchanging the usual pre-match banter, designed to undermine the morale of your opponent. A few choice comments about his age and size. No surprises there. At 19, David was still quite skinny even if he was good looking. It would be a few more years before he could boast a six pack.

As the Israelite army strained to watch from a safe distance, many of the soldiers uttered a prayer for David.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by your spirit Lord! Not with the help of swords or spears but the power of God will save the people today." Just focus on God, David!

It was over so fast it was almost difficult to remember how it all happened. No replay here. No medal either. David's trophy was Goliath's head and his weapons.

What was his name again? Fast track this one to a position of command. He shows real promise and there's a certain charisma about him too.

David had a heart of faith and he believed passionately in the power of God. He acted in the name and power of God and did not rely on his own ability. He knew exactly who his back-up ally was and wasn't deceived by Goliath's show of strength. Someone with the right heart can be used by God in amazing ways.

Spoiler alert: In the film 'GI Joe: the Rise of Cobra', there's a scene towards the end where 2 of the stars confront the top 2 bad guys. When the good guys announce that they are going to stop them, the baddies ask "Oh yeah – you and whose army?" The scene then pans out to show that just lurking in the misty waters behind them, there really is this huge force to be reckoned with.

Application

If you are going something different or daring and you are sure that God wants you to do this, then don't ever see yourself as the 'little' guy. David didn't. He just knew that he was going to kill Goliath, not because he believed that he was the best but because he knew who his back up was.

Background Note about David's comment "Who is this uncircumcised Philistine"

This was not just the current way of insulting someone. In the Ancient Near East when tribes made an alliance with each other, it would be sealed in a ceremony where they received a scar. So if you met someone with a scar you had to be careful about how you dealt with him because you didn't know who his back-up might be. Now all Israelite males received a scar when they were circumcised at 8 days old. It was in the shape of a ring and a ring symbolizes eternity. Of course they didn't go around showing it off but they knew it was there and it was a permanent sign that Almighty God was their eternal ally.



Quotes

From 'Facing your Giants' by Max Lucado

"Focus on giants – you stumble

Focus on God – your giants tumble"

"When David soaked his mind in God, he triumphed

When he didn't – he failed"

"Write today's worries in sand

Write yesterday's victories in stone"

Allyson Felix is a sprinter and is especially good at the 200 metre distance. When she competed in the Olympic Games in 2004, she was 18 and the youngest member of Team USA. She found this Bible verse very encouraging:

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. 1 Timothy 4:12

Kriss Akabusi's favourite quotes:

"Success comes in cans... not in cannots"

"Seize the day!"