



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

What About Manhood?

Our culture is deeply confused about manhood. Some say masculinity itself is the problem; others say it means dominance, aggression, and power. Preaching on Father's Day from his deployment in the Middle East, Pastor James Drake takes us into one of the most famous scenes in Scripture – David and Goliath, 1 Samuel 17 – and shows that the valley is crowded with three men, but only one of them understands what true manhood looks like. There is Goliath: nearly ten feet tall, all strength and pride, using his power for his own glory. That is toxic masculinity – strength without submission, which always ends in destruction. There is Saul: the biggest, most experienced, most responsible man in Israel, who hears the giant and does absolutely nothing. That is passive masculinity – the fear of man instead of the fear of God, and Drake argues it is the greater and more overlooked threat today: men waiting for someone else to lead, to pray, to step up. And then there is David: not toxic, not passive, but strong – courageous, humble, and utterly dependent on God. The thesis runs through the whole message like a drumbeat: biblical masculinity is strength surrendered to God for His glory and the good of others. Drake reminds us that David was not prepared in the valley but in the pasture – faithful with lions and bears that nobody saw, long before the giant nobody could miss. Everyone wants the platform; nobody wants the process. But here is the twist: we are not really David in this story. We are Israel – afraid, powerless, unable to save ourselves – until our true Champion steps forward. Jesus is the greater David. David defeated a giant; Jesus defeats sin and death, and shares the victory with His people. The hope of Christianity is not that you become David; it is that Jesus becomes your Savior. So what do we do? We run toward our giant. Faith moves; fear hesitates. Most giants don't live in valleys – they live in our homes, our marriages, our parenting, our habits, our fears, and our excuses. Not perfect men, but faithful men, whose strength is surrendered to God.

01 ICEBREAKER

Father's Day question: who is one man – a father, coach, pastor, teacher, or mentor – who shaped you into who you are today? What did they do that stuck with you? And before we start: when our culture says 'be a man,' what picture do you think it's actually painting?

02 READ TOGETHER

1 SAMUEL 17:45-47 (ESV)

Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand."

03 DISCUSSION

- 01 Three men, one valley. Pastor Drake found three men in 1 Samuel 17 — Goliath, Saul, and David — and said only one understands true manhood. In your own words, what does each man represent? Which of the three do you most naturally drift toward, and why?
- 02 The thesis. The whole message hangs on one sentence: 'Biblical masculinity is strength surrendered to God for His glory and the good of others.' Unpack it. What's the difference between strength that's surrendered and strength that isn't? Why is the answer to toxic masculinity NOT weakness?
- 03 Goliath / toxic masculinity. 'The strongest man in the room is not necessarily the godliest man in the room.' Where does our culture — or your own heart — measure a man by strength, success, or dominance instead of submission to God? Be honest about where that pull lives in you.
- 04 Saul / passive masculinity. Drake argued the greater threat today isn't aggression — it's passivity: 'men waiting for someone else.' Where have you been passive, waiting for someone else to lead, pray, or step up in a place that's actually yours to own? What has that passivity cost?
- 05 Prepared in the pasture. David was made in the pasture, not the valley — faithful with lions and bears no one ever saw. 'Everyone wants the spotlight; nobody wants the preparation.' What unseen 'pasture' has God put you in right now, and how does it change things to believe He's using it to prepare you?
- 06 Who shaped you. Drake's mentor, Dr. Dorsett, believed in him when he was ready to quit, and it changed the trajectory of his life and ministry. Who has been that person for you? And who is one person a step behind you that you could invest in this week?
- 07 Jesus, the greater David. Here's the twist: we're not David in this story — we're Israel, powerless behind the battle line until our Champion steps forward. How does it land that 'the hope of Christianity is not that you become David, but that Jesus becomes your Savior'? How does that take the pressure off — and put courage in?
- 08 Run toward your giant. 'Faith moves; fear hesitates.' Most giants don't live in valleys — they live in our homes, marriages, parenting, habits, fears, and excuses. Name your giant out loud to the group. What is the one specific step you will 'run toward' this week — and who here will check in with you on it?

04 PRAY

Father, we came in carrying a confused picture of what it means to be a man, and tonight You've shown us a better way in Your Word. Forgive us for the Goliath in us that wants to be seen, and the Saul in us that's afraid to move. Thank You that biblical manhood isn't fame or power or dominance, but strength surrendered to You for Your glory and the good of others. And thank You most of all that we don't have to be David — that Jesus is our greater David, who faced the giants of sin and death we never could and won the victory in our place. Give us faith that moves. Show each of us our giant, and by Your grace help us run toward it. We reject passivity, we accept responsibility, and we trust that the battle is Yours. So help us, God. In Jesus' name, amen.

This was a Father's Day message, preached by Pastor James Drake remotely from his deployment in the Middle East, with his son Luke reading the Scripture. It's aimed squarely at men, but don't let it become a night that leaves the women in your group on the sidelines — the core idea (strength surrendered to God for His glory and the good of others) is a discipleship truth for everyone, and Drake explicitly framed the closing as something whole families do together. Invite the women to speak into questions 1, 2, 5, 6, and 7 freely.

The arc of the message is three men: (1) GOLIATH — toxic masculinity, strength for self-glory, 'strength without submission becomes destruction'; (2) SAUL — passive masculinity, the fear of man instead of the fear of God, the biggest and most overlooked threat today; (3) DAVID — strong but surrendered, courageous, humble, dependent on God, and crucially 'prepared in the pasture' (the lion and the bear) before the valley. Then the GOSPEL TURN: we are not David, we are Israel — Jesus is the greater David who defeats sin and death and shares the victory. Then the APPLICATION: 'run toward your giant' (v.48), faith moves and fear hesitates, and the closing declaration ('I reject passivity, I accept responsibility...').

Questions 4 and 8 are where it gets real — don't rush them. Question 4 (passivity) will likely expose more than aggression does; give men room to be honest. Question 8 is the landing: push for ONE specific, nameable giant and a real next step, then pair people up to follow through. Aim to end on courage and grace, not guilt — the point of seeing our passivity or pride clearly is not shame, it's that our Champion has already won, so we can run. Good models to set the tone: Drake naming his own discouragement and near-quitting in seminary, and the Cam-and-Audrey example of quiet, faithful, unseen service. Note: this week's message was from Pastor James Drake.

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