

## FROM CHAPTER ONE (REVISED EDITION)

ONE LITTLE PHRASE tucked away in a somewhat obscure verse in the book of Psalms tells us that God has “magnified his word above all his name”. Found in Psalm 138:2, that phrase holds the smooth stone that defeats giants.

Most of us have met Goliath in one form or another. Self-employed and renegade, he wears different disguises—disease, financial ruin, family crisis—but every one of them has the face of a terrorist. Like Goliath in the Bible story, our tormenter shows up to challenge and mock us. We don’t even have to see his face. We watch news of war and economic and physical disasters on television; we comfort friends in crisis; we bury loved ones too soon. From down the street or from the other side of the world we can hear his taunt, “You are helpless.”

Sometimes, like all but one of the children of Israel, we’re convinced Goliath is right. We want nothing more than to run and hide, but we aren’t going anywhere. We’re paralyzed, perhaps waiting for a David to show up and take out the troublemaker. Hoping, even praying for a David. We’re all too familiar with giants.

But giants aren’t the only troublemakers we encounter in life. We also face mountains, towering and black, that stand between where we are and where we need to be. Neither as seriously nor immediately threatening as the giants, mountains are still daunting prospects. The sight of them can make us stomach-and-heart sick.

Sometimes the biggest, most disheartening mountain of all is that we simply can’t muster the courage to follow a God-given dream. Scaling the heights is not for ordinary people like us. The safe choice, we think, is to stay right where we are and leave the mountains to mountain climbers.

What I’ve just described is all too common. Those of us who have walked a few miles on this earth have faced and will face circumstances where our confidence is challenged—not only our confidence in ourselves but also our confidence in God.

We may be embarrassed by our struggle. After all, God said he didn’t give us a spirit of fear but here we are, shaking in our shoes. We may even wonder if God is paying attention to what we’re going through. I remember praying while perched precariously halfway up one of my life’s mountains, “God, you see where I am, don’t you?”

Often, even though we may know God is watching with loving concern, we still aren’t sure he’ll get involved to help us. Maybe we don’t want to be presumptuous or we don’t want to be disappointed. But while we’re singing the old hymn “O God Our Help in Ages Past”, we really don’t expect any help in the present. We hope for it, but...

It may be that our expectation of God’s involvement has been tempered by a large dose of what we call realism, born of troubling experience. Perhaps his promises don’t ring true anymore. As a result, we don’t really expect him to do what he says. I remember hearing a Christian television personality say ...