

An Eighth Step in the Disciples Way: Continue

Over the last seven issues of *Odyssey*, we have focused on discipleship. Specifically, we have looked at the seven steps of a disciple, introduced in the very first publication of Forward Movement in 1935. Gilbert Symons, the first head of Forward Movement, suggested that each follower of Jesus think about seven ways of being a disciple: Turn, follow, learn, pray, serve, worship, share.

This issue, we're focused on the implied eighth way of being a disciple. Continue. After we have been through the seven steps, we go right back around. Of course, the seven steps don't always come in the same order, and we may do some of them more than others. But we are never done. Our task is always to continue, to grow more fully into the stature of Christ.

I love how this "continue" step is the eighth step. Have you ever noticed that baptismal fonts are often eight-sided? That's because ancient Christians celebrated Easter as the "Eighth Day," and baptism is a recollection of death and new life in Christ. How is it that we have an eighth day? Creation began on Sunday, according to the scriptures. For six days, God created earth, and on the seventh, God rested. Hence, the Sabbath Day was appointed on Saturday. Jesus also rested on the Sabbath in Holy Week. After being crucified on Good Friday, his body was buried in a tomb. It was early Sunday morning that he rose to new life.

The earliest Christians celebrated a weekly Sabbath, but then they did something else. They gathered at night, late on Saturday. With the first light of Sunday, they

joyously welcomed the sunrise as a symbol of new life, as a recollection of Easter, as a new day of creation. It was all about Easter. Dying to old ways, rising to new life.



Photo courtesy of Spencer Means, Flickr

So it is for the disciple. We are continually dying to old ways, and as Christians we rise to new ways of living. When our seven days are finished, we too celebrate God's triumph over death and fear. When we have moved through the seven ways of being a disciple, we celebrate God's presence in our lives by committing anew to the disciple's way.

At Forward Movement, our seven-sided logo is a reminder of the seven steps of the disciple's way. Everything we do is geared toward inspiring you—in your work, your duty, and your joy as a disciple—and then empowering you to share the Good News of God in Christ with those around you.

Turn, follow, learn, pray, serve, worship, share. And then continue.

THE REV. CANON SCOTT GUNN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

David and Goliath: An Ancient Story Still Speaks



John Ohmer

David and Goliath isn't just a story for Sunday School. Rather the story offers a rich theological approach for obstacles and challenges in our lives. Episcopal priest John Ohmer turns often to the story from 1 Samuel for inspiration and guidance. His book *Slaying Your Goliaths: How God*

Can Help, is an engaging, fresh look at scripture and how it continues to speak to us today.

Why did you write this book?

Every once in a while, you'll be reading the Bible, and a word or a passage just kind of jumps out at you, as if the font size was growing or the word was suddenly in bold and underlined. When that happens, it's like God is trying to get your attention: "Hey, you can use this right now!"

About five years ago, that happened to me with the David and Goliath story. I had read it dozens of times and thought I was familiar with it: You know, "little guy sometimes wins."

But I never really dove deep into it or paid attention to its details. Once I started exploring the story, its riches kept exploding off the page. I kept thinking, "How come I've never noticed this before!?" Eventually I started taking notes. Those notes turned into a sermon, which turned into a three-part adult forum Bible study, which turned into a retreat and a couple of clergy conferences. And each time I shared my insights, I learned from other people what they gained from the story. Eventually I knew I had to share what we were learning with a wider audience.

What did you learn about yourself in the process of writing this book?

That—like most clergy—I need to practice what I (quite literally) preach. That I need to shift my frame of reference and compare my problems not to my own

size or my own abilities, but to God's size and God's abilities. In other words, I need to get out of the habit of telling God how big my problems are and tell my problems how big God is.

What surprised you about writing Slaying Your Goliaths?

How easily it came, and how much fun I had writing it. Somewhere writer Anne Lamott says that when writing goes well, you're not so much "making things up" as you are "taking things down." That's how it went with the book. I could hardly wait to get back to my writing desk.

What's your favorite part of the David and Goliath story?

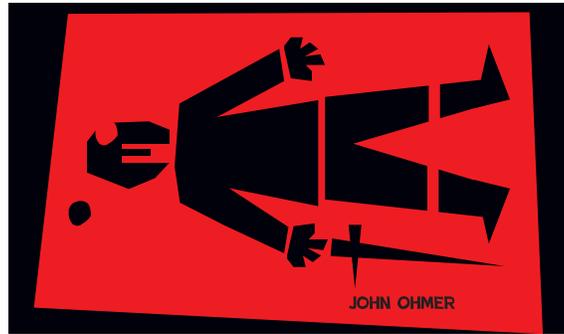
My favorite part is David's rejection of Saul's armor, especially in the context of what comes right before that—David is verbally attacked by his brother.

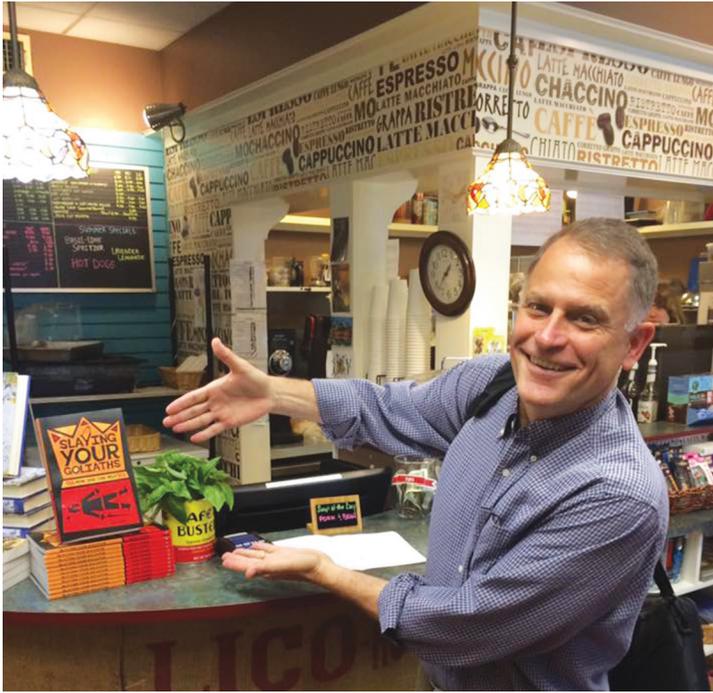
There's such complexity and nuance in how David responds to the two different kinds of criticism: the spiteful and the objective. When David gets spiteful criticism from his brother, he just turns away. He doesn't engage; he doesn't argue. But when he gets objective criticism from King Saul, he

engages. He meets King Saul where he is, addresses his concerns, and makes his counterarguments. When David convinces Saul to let him face Goliath, and King Saul, with good intentions, tries to equip David with his own armor, David is masterful in how he rejects it. He doesn't criticize the armor or Saul who is offering it. He just says, "I can't move around in this; I'm not used to it." Well, if "Saul's armor" is a metaphor for outdated ideas, customs, policies, and institutions, what great guidance we have here in how we can reject them, without rejecting the well-intentioned people who offer them to us.

What else do you want to tell people?

The book is applicable not just for individuals seeking to enrich their spiritual life but also for vestries or churches facing their own seemingly impossible odds.





It's not a "how to" book. There is nothing formulaic about our faith, so I've tried to avoid falling into the "ten easy steps to _____" gimmick. But the book is practical: It shows individuals and vestries and other church leaders how, with God's help, we can get and stay encouraged and hopeful—not so much because of who we are, but because of who God is and how God loves us.

This fall, we are offering a free copy of *Slaying Your Goliaths* when you set up a monthly donation of \$10 or more for 12 months. Please call us or visit our website for more details at www.ForwardMovement.org/donate



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A Disciple Continues

“Those who make decisions as Christians, and those who must carry them out, are the church, Christ’s disciples, who follow him as their leader. There is no substitute for discipleship, the full commitment to his way of life. It is a known way.” We can use as guidelines the steps of the Disciple’s Way as formulated in 1934 in the early days of the Forward Movement. It is essential that we know the meaning of discipleship if the church’s mission is to be accomplished. This outline, by Gilbert P. Symons, is still one of the best available descriptions of discipleship for practical application in our lives today.



“The Enemy expects us to slacken now. Our Master beckons us on. He promises: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye truly my disciples.” We have our hand to the plow. Let’s not turn back. Get a new grip on your discipleship. Keep up the rhythm of “Turn, follow, learn, pray, serve, worship, share.” Don’t fail the Master. Don’t let the church down. The Enemy expects to say of us: “You see, they don’t mean business. They are petty. They have no pluck. They want their kingdom for themselves. They don’t intend to change the world.” Give that the lie! Push forward the kingdom. There are great books that give light. Ask your rector. Stir for a program of new life.”

ODYSSEY FALL 2016

FORWARD MOVEMENT inspire disciples. empower evangelists.

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Continue Your Journey Through the Bible

We often get requests for free material from inmates, which answer our prayers of how we can best serve those who are in desperate need for messages of love and hope. We send thousands of copies of *Forward Day by Day* and *Adelante Dia a Dia* to those who request them, including institutions and churches on behalf of the inmates they serve. One request we could not answer with our resources was copies of the Bible. Forward Movement has published a new book that will be a perfect resource to meet these requests and to help everyone explore and engage scripture.

The Path: A Journey Through the Bible is an easy and accessible way to take a walk through the Bible. Excerpted from the New Revised Standard Version with helpful notes and questions for reflection, *The Path* offers an amazing 360-degree overview of the vast, sweeping story of God's extraordinary love for ordinary people.

We'd like to offer copies of *The Path* to our inmates and others who have limited resources. Your gift lets us say

“YES. People care about your spiritual growth and that you are a beloved child of God who has not been forgotten.”

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Continue your journey through God's Word with *The Path*. *The Path* links with our latest free curriculum, *Living Discipleship: Exploring the Bible*, available now. Visit www.ForwardMovement.org for more information, and to make your donation online.

