

Kingdom Kernels: Seven Elements to Emulate in Claiming the Promise

652. That's the latest number of kingdom movements (Church-Planting Movements or CPMs) slaying the giants of darkness in every major religious worldview on every continent:

Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Tribal or animist, Post-Modern

- Churched societies, Post-churched societies
- Academic, Rural, Urban
- Highly oppressive regimes, open contexts, skeptical communities
- Latino, East Asian, South Asian, Central Asian, Eastern European, Western European, North American, North African, Middle Eastern, Iranian, Sub-Saharan African

With an increasing number of movements on every continent, our generation is without excuse. There is no giant of unbelief that cannot be overcome through Acts-like kingdom movements.



BY **STEVE SMITH**

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It has been seven years since my article on precedent and promise appeared in *Mission Frontiers Mar-Apr 2011* (<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/someone-has-to-be-first>). King David's mighty men learned how to slay giants because they had the *precedent* of his defeat of Goliath. Precedent offered them hope and a model for overcoming huge problems. But before there was precedent for killing giants, the young shepherd boy David relied solely on the *promises* of God to defeat Goliath.

A lot has transpired in seven years. For many countries, kingdom movement strategists have lived out their strategies solely based on the promises of God with no clear modern-day precedents for CPM in their culture. However, as movements have begun proliferating in places where there had been none before, practitioners also have the power of CPM precedent in their own contexts. This precedent gives them clear models and a spirit of faith to emulate in implementing the promise of multiplying disciples, churches, leaders and movements in their context.

What are the elements that have led to such proliferation? Bold, faith-filled practitioners have emulated the same elements that we see in the life of David as he slew Goliath based on the promise of God alone. Upon entering the Valley of Elah where the Philistines were arrayed against the Israelites, David had a promise from God that the Promised Land should be Israel's. Armed with the covenant promises, in courage and faith he slew a giant against all human odds, when no one else would step out against the giant. ***In the beginning, SOMEONE has to be FIRST when there is no precedent. When you have no precedent, all you have is the promise. But the promise is enough.***

In I Samuel 17, we can highlight **seven elements to emulate** from the life of David in how he pulled off such an upset with only the promise before him.

1. **Settle the promise in your mind and make a decision to act** (I Sam. 17:31-37, ESV)

In the forty-day period of intimidation of the Israelites by Goliath, everything changed when a man of God entered the situation. I Sam. 17:23 simply says, "And David heard him."

Someone in the multitude of Israel's armies had to settle the truth of the promise in his mind, and then decide to act. David's entry into the fogs of despondency in the Valley of Elah was the beginning of enacting the promise of God and defeating the enemy. David refused to believe his eyes or the lies of the enemy, but

chose instead to believe the unseen covenant promises of God. In I Sam. 17:31-37, he recounts the promises of God to his listeners and decides to act upon those promises.

Two decades ago, when our family entered a dark, unreached place in Asia, my eyes told me there was no hope for a movement. The lies the enemy whispered in my ears reaffirmed my sight. Only by abiding in God's Word and reading the book of Acts every month could our family claim the unseen promises of God to reach our people group in power. With that perspective fixed in our minds, we then made a decision to act in expectation that the Spirit would show up in power as He promised. A movement of God was the result.

Without the right perspective and empowerment of the Spirit, actions taken toward catalyzing a movement are useless. Whether it is a shepherd boy named David or a fruitful CPM practitioner today, one perspective prevails in the minds of giant-slayers: God wants to start a movement 1) here, 2) now, 3) through me. With that fixed in their minds, fruitful giant-slayers make a decision to act.

2. **Jettison methods that don't help** (I Sam. 17:38-39, ESV)

Our modern ministry culture excels at repeating practices and patterns that will never help us reach our goals. Perhaps it is because these methods are all we know, or perhaps it is because they are the most fruitful examples we know of. Yet somehow we assume that with more diligent effort, our results will be different.

No doubt, King Saul was well-intentioned in arming David with his own armor. Armor had worked in other situations. But forty days of lining up for battle had proven that the king's armor was no match for the giant's taunts. Even so, a culture of repeating failed patterns prevailed.

Though the matter was settled in his mind, David almost succumbed to failed practices of clunky armor. However, David recognized the inadequacy of such an approach and jettisoned this course of action:

"I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them." So David put them off. (I Sam. 17:39, ESV)

Realizing that certain ministry practices do not get you to the goal of kingdom movements is a huge step

forward. Jettisoning them is a gutsy decision, but one that is essential. One fruitful practitioner remarked, “I feel like I’ve restarted my CPM ministry three times!” Yet each time, after careful evaluation, he jettisoned practices that were non-reproductive and replaced them with practices that could multiply disciples and churches. Knowing what to say “no” to is as important as knowing what to say “yes” to. But then, you actually have to make the gutsy decision to change.

3. Use proven approaches (I Sam. 17:39-40, ESV)

Though David did not know of a precedent for killing giants, he *did* have the precedent that a sling and a staff could help him slay lions and bears (verses 34-36). Later, David’s mighty men had in their repertoire the precedent of David killing a giant and the pattern for doing that.

Regardless of whether you have precedent for CPM in your cultural worldview or not, there are enough movements in the world for us to know what our five smooth stones and a staff are – methods that help get to multiplication. Our generation is without excuse. No matter their names, there are enough proven methods, tools and approaches for movements: Four Fields, T4T, DMM, Zume, Discovery Bible Studies, Three Thirds, the Big One, and many others. All are examples of healthy, biblical CPM models.

Pick some proven multiplying methods in a context similar to your own and implement them with faith. In God’s timing, He will empower your efforts and those of the local disciples you invest in to result in an Acts re-emergence. You no longer need to invent your own model, or if you do, at least do so informed by proven biblical kingdom movement practices.

4. Don’t be intimidated but remember the promise (I Sam. 17:40-47, ESV)

As you make a decision to act with proven approaches, then comes the real test. As David walked to the battle line with his staff and slingshot, the giant began a battle of intimidation. This battle was not primarily about plans and strategy. This was a spiritual assault of fear based on the lies of the enemy. No CPM plan—no matter how effective your methods—survives the battle of intimidation without remembering the promise of God.

Goliath’s assault was nothing less than spiritual warfare—a call upon the demonic powers to inject fear into the heart of God’s servant. And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. (I Sam. 17:42, ESV)

In response, David chose not to believe his *eyes* (vv. 40, 43) for the giant was truly bigger. He chose not to believe the *lies* (v. 44) of the demonic powers. Instead, he chose to keep remembering the promise of God. He even quoted this as he advanced toward the enemy, battle plan in mind:

“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.... For the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hand.” (I Sam. 17:45, 46, 47, ESV)

At any point in the fight for a movement you can cave in to fear which paralyzes. Yet, the giant stands no chance compared to the Lord of Heaven’s Armies. Keep believing that God will uphold His covenant and preserve His renown.

5. Run to the battle: take initiative and work hard (I Sam. 17:48-51, ESV)

When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, *David ran quickly* toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. (I Sam. 17:48, ESV, emphasis added)

While the enemy was attempting to paralyze him, David was acting. He took the initiative and did the hard work of slaying a giant. I doubt that he had all the steps of the battle plan figured out yet. For example, did he know he would use the giant’s own sword to behead him? Subsequent steps would be figured out *in the midst* of battle.

Too many would-be CPM practitioners tinker endlessly in the ministry laboratory until they feel they have planned for every contingency and devised the “perfect CPM model.” Instead, effective practices are built in real time, trying them 50-100 times, tweaking, adjusting and just plain working hard. Initiative and hard work will take any visionary practitioner a long way toward multiplication, even with less-than-perfect ministry methods.

To be fruitful, we must leave the laboratory and *run* to the battle even before we feel fully prepared. With first steps in mind, we just start and then adjust as we go, following the Spirit’s leading. We keep updating our methods, but we don’t let tinkering in the lab keep us from the battle.

6. Keep moving to the next stage until there is No Place Left (I Sam. 17:54, ESV)

David refused to be satisfied with one victory, no matter how big. The promise he held onto was that all of the Promised Land would be Israel's. Too many walled towns still held against the promises of God.

While the people of Israel pursued the fleeing Philistines, David was preparing to move on to the next stages until ultimately there was no place left to conquer (II Sam. 7:1; this is similar to Paul in Rom. 15:23—no place left).

David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem. (I Sam. 17:54, ESV)

It is easy to forget that Jerusalem belonged to the Jebusites at this time. A mere six miles from David's home town of Bethlehem, the walls of Jerusalem were a thorn in Israel's side. How many times had David shepherded his flock under the shadow of Jerusalem's walls incensed that the enemies of Israel could so publicly flaunt their resistance?

David's first act after defeating Goliath was to run to the city walls and serve notice to that high place: "You're next!" Years later, David's first act as king over all Israel was to take down this bigger giant and establish his capital there (II Sam. 5:6ff). David refused to stop until there was no place left to conquer.

Effective CPM practitioners are not satisfied with half victories. They do not stop the advance until all people have had a chance to hear and respond to the good news. In the global 24:14 Coalition, we have refused to be satisfied with 652 CPMs. We will press on so that every unreached people and place is engaged with an effective CPM strategy by 2025 (2414now.net).

7. Sojourn in the Tent of God and not the Valley of Elah (I Sam. 17: 15-16, 19-20; Psa. 15:1, ESV)

For forty days (I Sam. 17:16), the men of Israel had twice daily descended into the fogs of intimidation and disbelief. Their spiritual eyes moved from the God of heaven to the nine-foot tall giant. In the Valley of Elah, blinded to the truth, they lived in defeat.

Contrast this with the shepherd boy who shuttled back and forth from shepherding his flock under the

stars of heaven to visiting the battle line (v. 15). In the wilderness, besides defeating lions and bears, David was worshipping the Creator and writing Psalms.

Years later, likely from the hill of Jerusalem, David penned Psalm 15:

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? (Psa. 15:1, ESV)

The Hebrew word for "sojourn" implies a "abiding rest in the midst of a wandering life" whereas the Hebrew word "dwell" is the opposite; an "abiding rest in the midst of a *settled* life." David had learned to dwell in God's presence no matter his circumstances.

While the forces of Israel were mired in the intimidation of the Valley of Elah, David was abiding in the tent of God no matter where his feet wandered. Entering the valley, he held a true picture of the Most High in his heart and realized that the giant stood no chance. ***It is a dangerous thing to taunt a man who sojourns in the tent of God.***

Whether your life is filled with wandering or fixed in one place, the key is to dwell in God's presence—in the tent of God as it were. Only in this place of abiding in the Spirit of God will you find the perspective and strength you need to fight the battle.

Then you can be a difference maker as in verse 23 when it said that "David heard him." If you sojourn in God's presence, then you will see and act in proper perspective to the Maker of all things, and God will initiate movements around you. He wants a movement 1) where you work, 2) now, 3) through you. 