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Contemporary Theme ⅞ (2)

8 December 2014

*David and Goliath*

The concept of an advantage being an absolute strength and a disadvantage being a weakness has been misinterpreted throughout the ages. The “giants” are always overestimating their own strength. Sociologist and journalist, Malcolm Gladwell, uses his book, *David and Goliath: Underdog, Misfits, and The Art of Battling Giants,* to examine what happens when ordinary people confront powerful opponents. Gladwell conveys how underdogs should never to be underestimated, he provides several examples where being the one with the “advantage” is less beneficial to success, than being the “disadvantaged” one . We form our self-perception based on our immediate surroundings, so if you put someone in a highly competitive “pond,” they are going to achieve a different result than someone who is in a smaller “pond.” Gladwell asserts that although the disadvantages may belong to the underdog, underdogs can still win if they “fight” in unconventional ways. .

Gladwell asserts that power and strength are not always what they seem. Those in position of power do not realize they need to pay attention to those who seem less fortunate than them, that’s the sorrow of the Goliaths in the world. Gladwell mention that, “He [Saul] doesn’t appreciate that power can come in other forms as well in breaking rules, in substituting speed and surprise for strength. Saul is not alone in making this mistake” (13). Our culture perpetuates this ancient misunderstanding of what may or may not be advantages. We make wrong assumption about power. Gladwell points out that Goliath was the vulnerable one. He is a giant, which made him slow and clumsy. The only way he could have beaten David was by literally getting his hands on him, but David, the underdog, did not go anywhere near him, he used his sling. As a result, the stone hit Goliath’s forehead and he went falling face down. This demonstrates that we ignore the fact that power has its burdens, and what might look to be a clear advantage often hides a hidden set of flaws. We know but easily forget that there is a point where more does not make a difference and more can still become a disadvantage. The powerful and strong are not always what they seem and effort over ability can be unrecognizable. We need to do a better job looking at what advantage is.

Gladwell challenges his readers to “push back” against the social construct of paying your way to a “higher education”. Parents who believe they are doing the best of their children by paying their way into the most exclusive schools, or pushing them into the most elite universities will be an advantage, but that’s not always the case. Like Gladwell said, “There’s a set of advantages that have to do with material resources, and there is a set that have to do with the absence of material resources” (24, 25). Our media does not sell it to us this way. We are trained to buy into the idea that bigger and more are always better. In addition, we are all aware that it is quite possible to get too much of a good thing and yet, when it comes to benefits and advantages, we tend to lose sight of this wisdom, and assume instead that the more the better. Challenges can cause us to develop skills that we might not have developed. When you’re an underdog, you are forced to try tasks in a manner you would never otherwise have attempted, therefore, allowing you to defeat those with the upper hand. Being weak can make you strong and vice- versa.

The wealthy understand the value of time. Therefore, instead of working themselves, these individuals figure out a way to make their job easier. If there is a task that they cannot handle, they will search for and hire someone to do the work for them. Gladwell states that, “It’s much harder than anybody believes to bring up kids in a wealthy environment…People are ruined by challenged economic times. But they’re ruined by wealth as well because they lose their ambition and they lose their pride and they lose their sense of self-worth” (47). Some psychological research has explored the idea that wealthier Americans are more narcissistic than others because they have money, they’re more likely to be self-centered and have feelings of superior self- worth. They won’t understand the meaning of money and the virtues of independences and hard work. My younger brother and I grew up in a single parent family since I was five years old. Therefore, we have financial problems. I see the sacrifices and effort made my mom makes in order to put a roof over our heads, providing three meals a day and have clean clothes to change into every day. I also exhibit strong responsibility skills. What wealthy families face as a parent is, they don’t know that to say to their children that they cannot afford it. They have a difficult time of keeping their children happy, since they already have all the materials they want and need. Working hard to earn money while educating yourself to continue to have more value. Knowing these traits can help you make changes so that you nourish the ones that you have and obtain the ones you’re missing. Money can powerfully influence our thoughts and actions in ways that we’re often are not aware of.

In conclusion, an underdog can still win if they choose to think in an unconventional manner, and have the driving motivation and passion to go with it. With these tools an underdog can beat almost any Goliath sized opponent at whatever challenge is dealt.