LUIS SUAREZ AND DAVID

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The way the Bible treats its heroes is contrasts dramatically with the way in which the Uruguayan football authorities are reacting to Luis Suarez' recent misbehaviour! God never requires perfection from his people, he knows they will fall and he knows they will fail â€“ all He requires is a willingness to seek forgiveness and to start afresh.
Category: Observations

I'm not sure what is the most surprising, the fact that Luis Suarez bit his Italian opponent, Giorgio Chiellini, on the shoulder during a football match or the response by the Uruguayan authorities. Despite the fact that TV footage clearly showed Suarez biting Chiellini and the presence of teeth marks in his shoulder, the Uruguayans are claiming that it was nothing more than 'casual play' and that the complaints about it are conspiracy by various countries.

Of course, you can understand their point of view. Suarez is by far their best player and they can't really afford to have him suspended while the World Cup is underway. Â However, this whitewashing of Suarez' actions compares very poorly to the way that the Bible treats one of its heroes.

This is something that I've been writing about the life of David.

> *David first makes an impact on The Story in the famous episode where as a small boy he defeats the giant, Goliath. This is often presented as an amazing spiritual act, where tiny David, armed only with faith and a few small stones, was able to defeat a huge giant. It is the sort of exercise of faith which is so extraordinary that it seems to have little relevance to us in real life. But letâ€™s take a closer look at what happens in 1 Samuel 17.Â*
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> *The first thing to note is that Goliath was big â€“ very big. He scared the Israelite army silly. But David was no seven stone weakling either. Reading the chapter we discover that David has gone into hand to hand combat with lions and bears. When the wild animals stole a sheep from his fatherâ€™s flock, David ran after them, beat them up and rescued the sheep. David was young, but he knew how to look after himself. There is also the famous episode where Saul gives David his armour to wear. Now Saul was a professional fighting man, he would only have given David armour that was suitable for him to wear. We know from earlier on that Saul was a head taller than anyone else in Israel â€“ so why did he give David his armour. The only reasonable explanation is that David, too, was a big guy. But David had never worn armour so he turned Saul down (the Bible never says that the armour didnâ€™t fit). David was young and untried in battle, but he was a big guy who had risked his life fighting animals a good deal bigger than himself. Taking on Goliath was still a huge challenge â€“ but it was in the realm of the possible. God had prepared David to fight Goliath; he had lived an active life in the fields and new how to look after himself and he had seen God at work. It still took a lot of guts for David to step out and face this eight foot giant â€“ but God had made sure he was ready.Â*
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> *Following on from his success with Goliath, Davidâ€™s life followed a fairly typical trajectory. He became incredibly popular, which made the reigning king extremely jealous and so David had to flee for his life and live as an outlaw. Eventually, he became a brigand; the leader of a pack of rebels and outlaws who lived from hand to mouth and by hiring out their services as mercenaries. It isnâ€™t a very edifying part of Davidâ€™s life. But during this period, David*

refused to kill his enemy, King Saul, even though he has clear opportunities to do so on at least two occasions. David had far too much respect for Saul as Godâ€™s appointed leader of the country and he didn't want to do him any harm. Eventually, Saul and his son Jonathan were killed in battle, paving the way for David to become king. But even here, David didn't rejoice, in fact he does the exact opposite and pens an extremely moving and beautiful lament to the fallen (2 Samuel 1:17-27)

For all his prowess as a king and a warrior, David wasnâ€™t very good at relationships. He had huge problems with one of his wives and eventually ended up with a permanent separation from her (2 Samuel 6). One of his sons tried to depose him as King and was killed in the process(2 Samuel 13). It is tempting to think that David is a wonderful person and that he couldnâ€™t be held responsible for the behaviour of his wife and grown up son. But God reaches out to people where they are and the Bible does not seek to whitewash people, making them artificially holy.Â

One Spring, when the army was out campaigning, David was walking on the flat roof of his palace (2 Samuel 11). This is perhaps a sign that he had grown lazy and used to the good life, because he wasnâ€™t out in the field with his troops. As he was relaxing, he noticed a woman washing herself in a neighbouring house. The woman was beautiful and she was probably not fully clothed. Any man reading this will know the temptation of catching sight of a gorgeous woman out of the corner of your eye. It only takes a split-second to decide whether to just to walk on, or to keep watching. David decided to stare at the woman, and then he sent messengers to find out about her. He discovered that she was called Bathsheba and that she was married to one of his officers called Uriah. David was king and he didn't need to bother about inconveniences like husbands; he told his servants to fetch Bathsheba over to his house and within a few weeks, surprise-surprise, she became pregnant.Â

Now things get really nasty. David had a reputation to think about and he didnâ€™t want to be seen to have got a married woman pregnant. He sent word to the army to have Uriah sent home with news about the military campaign. That way, Bathshebaâ€™s pregnancy could be accounted for by Uriahâ€™s time home on leave. But when he got to the city, Uriah refused to sleep at home with his wife, saying that he couldnâ€™t enjoy that sort of comfort while the army was camping out in the fields. In desperation, David sent a secret message back with Uriah saying that he should be sent to the hottest part of the battle field. Shortly afterwards, David received news that Uriah had died and he quickly married Bathsheba.

We canâ€™t make excuses for David, what he did was despicable. But it was also, depressingly ordinary. Countless men have caught sight of a pretty woman, allowed the image to dominate their thoughts and then wrecked their lives and the lives of those they love. Itâ€™s true that most adulterers donâ€™t arrange to have their rivals killed, but then again most of them donâ€™t command an army either.

> *Though David lived thousands of years ago, in a very different situation to our own, his character and actions are recognisably those of people all around us. In many ways, he is just like any guy you could meet in the street. What sets David apart, despite his character flaws, is his relationship with God. Even after the incident with Bathsheba, God did not give up on David, but sent a prophet to warn him about his behaviour. What follows is remarkable. David may have acted the high-handed king, ordering Uriah about, but when faced with his rebellion against God, he humbles himself, confesses his wrongdoing and turns back to God. The resulting poem in Psalm 51 is a remarkable example of a man seeking to restore a broken relationship with God.*
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> *There is lots more that could be said about David and we could examine any of the other characters who are mentioned in this part of the Bible and find the same sort of highs and lows in their lives. Quite simply, the Bible is about real people, people like you and me. The book of Job is about someone struggling with the question of suffering. The Psalms have examples of homesickness, depression and simple awe and wonder at the beauty of a rainstorm. The book of Ecclesiastes is written by someone who feels that life is pointless. All human life is here!*
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> *The Old Testament isnâ€™t full of heroes who are completely different to you and me, who are so holy that we canâ€™t hope to compare or to learn anything from them. It is all about real people, mundanely real people. But the big message is that God loves and cares for them anyhow. God never requires perfection from his people, he knows they will fall and he knows they will fail â€“ all He requires is a willingness to seek forgiveness and to start afresh.Â*

It would be nice to see this sort of attitude from Luis Suarez and some other high profile people, today.