

SESSION 2

FORGE TRUE FRIENDSHIPS



Who is your oldest friend?

QUESTION #1

#BSFLrelationships

*Strong friendships thrive
because of shared commitment.*

THE PASSAGES

1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:4-7; 20:10-13

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

These days, when you ask, “How many friends do you have?” people often start calculating the number of Facebook® friends, Twitter® or Instagram® followers, or contacts in their phones. In our fast-food, microwave, disposable world, it’s all too easy to pass through life with lots of acquaintances and scores of connections, but few, if any close friends. Ironically, many people feel lonely and isolated, even while being surrounded by masses of people.

A better question to ask is: How many close, personal friendships do you have?

In Bangalore, India, numerous call centers answer queries for a variety of American companies. While most calls relate to a specific product, some unusual calls come in. For example, one man spoke to a lady at a call center for some time, and before hanging up, he asked her to marry him. Another person called and talked for hours to a stranger in another land because she was so lonely.¹

While different people have different kinds of friendships, we will study an incredibly deep friendship in the Book of 1 Samuel. Along the way, we will discover how we can develop true friendships that last.

1 Samuel 18:1-4

1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

KEY WORD

loved (18:1)—The Hebrew word covers a range of relationships in the Bible. Here it describes the idea of being knit soul to soul in desire and purpose.

One of the most well known stories in the Bible is the historical account of David and Goliath (1 Sam. 17). This one event not only brought a great victory for the Israelites, but it launched David's career as a soldier and threw him into the national spotlight. From that moment on, he was a part of Saul's court. David succeeded in everything he did (18:5), and he became an instant celebrity.

Jonathan, Saul's son, was also drawn to David: "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David." Perhaps it was because of David's focus on honoring God at the battle with Goliath, his humility before the king, or his diligence in carrying out his orders, but Jonathan saw in David the marks of a man of God. Jonathan devoted himself to his friendship with David: Jonathan "loved him as his own soul." The relationship these men shared demonstrates what a healthy bond between two men should look like. Every man and woman benefits from this kind of friendship.

The word for *loved* was used in the Old Testament for a strong emotional attachment. It could be used for the love between a husband and a wife, but it was also used for various relationships, including a daughter-in-law's love for her mother-in-law (Ruth 4:15), and a father's love for his son (Gen. 22:2). To better understand Jonathan's love for David, we should note another key word in this passage: *covenant*. "Jonathan and David made a covenant."

A covenant meant much more than a handshake. It represented an inseparable commitment between two parties. The idea of covenant is a central theme in the redemptive story of the Bible. God made covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, and Moses. Through Christ, God made a new, eternal covenant with us. God never has broken a covenant, and He will not break His covenant with us.

Covenants like this were common in the time when Jonathan and David lived. In the ancient Near East, exchanging military gear represented the highest form of honor. Jonathan gave his royal robe to David, demonstrating his humility in deferring to David his rightful claim as heir to the throne of Israel. These two men, alike in affection toward God and concern for each other, now and forever would be identified with each other—even as Christ identified with us through His new covenant so that we could be identified with Him.

DIGGING DEEPER



COVENANT

Oath-bound promise whereby one party solemnly pledges to bless or serve another party in some specified way. Sometimes the keeping of the promise depends upon the meeting of certain conditions by the party to whom the promise is made. On other occasions the promise is made unilaterally and

unconditionally. The covenant concept is a central, unifying theme of Scripture, establishing and defining God's relationship to man in all ages. In the OT, the Hebrew word translated "covenant" is *berit*. The term probably derives from the verb *bara*, "to bind."

"Covenant," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, gen. eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 355.

Jonathan's character reflected humility and servanthood. As King Saul's son, Jonathan was next in line to the throne, but his love for David and for God surpassed his earthly rights. Jonathan saw in David the qualities that affirmed God's assessment of David as "a man after mine own heart," (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22).

What obstacles can hinder us from forming deeper friendships?

QUESTION #2

1 Samuel 19:4-7

4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good:

5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.

7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle observed three kinds of friendships.

1. **Useful friendships.** If you work alongside someone or share a common role, such as a teammate or roommate, Aristotle said it was better to be that person's friend than his enemy. This type of friendship is very common, but not very deep or lasting.

2. **Friendships derived from pleasure.** Most of us enjoy being around people who amuse us with their humor. This friend comes and goes as quickly as other things that bring pleasure.
3. **Perfect friendships.** Perfect friendships are based on goodness and virtue. This kind of friend remains a friend for life, so long as both of you live virtuous lives. This is a sacrificial kind of friendship.

We could all use more of these perfect friendships! We live in a throwaway culture filled with items easily discarded, from fast food to disposable diapers. Unfortunately, too many people treat people like throwaway friends (similar to what Aristotle described as the second type of friend). We “unfriend” others on social media when they no longer interest us, or if they post something with which we disagree. When even a single, mild conflict occurs, we move on to find another friend.

David and Jonathan exemplified the third type of friendship. Jonathan and David had a friendship that stood both tests of time and trials. If any friendship had a reason to fall apart, theirs surely did. They faced all sorts of difficulties, yet they stood together and even defended each other.

We’ve already seen how David quickly became famous for his military conquests. David was very popular with everyone—except the king. Saul was insecure, and His jealousy of David led him to try repeatedly to eliminate the younger warrior.

- ▶ Saul threw his own spear at David (1 Sam. 18:10-11).
- ▶ Saul required that David pass a test in lieu of a dowry for marrying his daughter Michal. In truth, Saul was setting a trap, expecting David would be killed; however, David did twice as much as Saul had demanded (vv. 20-29).
- ▶ Saul tried to convince his own son Jonathan and his servants “that they should kill David” (19:1).

Jonathan would not honor such a wicked request from his father. Instead, as we see in this passage, he rebuked the king and stood between Saul and David. Jonathan stepped in as David’s advocate.

Jonathan had all the rights of royalty awaiting him as the king's son, yet he sacrificed them for his friend. What a beautiful image of Christ! Jesus laid aside all the glories of heaven to come to earth, identify with us, and draw us to the Father (Phil. 2:6-8). Even now when we sin, He serves as our Advocate before His Father (1 John 2:1).

As David's advocate, Jonathan spoke well of David. He called Saul to remember how David's deeds had brought good to the king. He reminded his father of David's victory over Goliath. In doing this, Jonathan gave glory to the Lord, just as David had done. Jonathan even rebuked his father for his desire to "sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause."

Another in line for the throne might quickly join his father in this plot to remove the competition. But Jonathan was bound by his covenant to his friend. Instead of the natural response of bitterness or selfishness, Jonathan's love for David and for God mattered far more than any position. Jonathan's life exhibited a faithful love for God that led to abiding love for his friend. Jonathan's approach to friendship echoed what Jesus said later: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

What are practical ways we can serve as advocates for our friends?

QUESTION #3

1 Samuel 20:10-13

10 Then said David to Jonathan, Who shall tell me? or what if thy father answer thee roughly?

11 And Jonathan said unto David, Come, and let us go out into the field. And they went out both of them into the field.

12 And Jonathan said unto David, O LORD God of Israel, when I have sounded my father about to morrow any time, or the third day, and, behold, if there be good toward David, and I then send not unto thee, and shew it thee;

13 The LORD do so and much more to Jonathan: but if it please my father to do thee evil, then I will shew it thee, and send thee away, that thou mayest go in peace: and the LORD be with thee, as he hath been with my father.

At times Saul loved David; other times he wanted to kill him. Even after swearing an oath not to threaten his life again, Saul threw another spear at David (1 Sam. 19:9-10). Then he sent men to David's house to kill him the next morning (v. 11), so David "went, and fled" (v. 12). No surprise, then, David feared for his life! Saul's vacillating emotions and unstable spiritual health continually challenged Jonathan and David, but nothing changed their friendship.

How can we support our friends during difficult seasons?

QUESTION #4

Although it might have been understandable if Jonathan's loyalty had been torn between his father and his friend, Jonathan maintained his steadfast commitment. The two men devised a plan that would protect David and determine Saul's intentions. As David hid, Jonathan would sound out his father and give a signal to David. During this planning, Jonathan gave two bold declarations.

1. Jonathan prayed the Lord would punish him if he did not protect David as he had promised, demonstrating his complete integrity toward David.
2. Jonathan prayed the Lord would be with David as He had been with Saul, boldly affirming Jonathan's willingness to sacrifice everything, including his claim to the throne, for his friend.

Jonathan risked his life to maintain friendship with David. Jonathan did ask that, in return, his friend would show kindness to his household forever. Years later, David would do just that.

A millennium later, another Man would demonstrate an even greater example of this depth of loyalty. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth, taking on human flesh to die for sinful humanity. Nothing would deter Him from keeping this commitment. He took the Father's wrath for our sin, He bore our shame, and He made a way for us to be called His friends (John 15:14).

What lessons from David and Jonathan's friendship can we use to strengthen our group?

QUESTION #5

EVALUATING MY FRIENDSHIPS

Take a moment to evaluate and circle the statement(s) that is/are true about you:

I have at least two deep, committed friendships that have endured challenges.

I have genuine, transparent relationships with at least two other people on earth.

I have experienced the loss of one or more close friendships because of disagreements.

In truth, I have no close friends with whom I share my inner life and the hurts of my heart.

Write 1-2 sentences of observation, and/or ideas about what you need to do from here, to grow in the way you develop and maintain strong friendships.

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LIVE IT OUT

What are some ways you can imitate David and Jonathan this week? Consider the following applications:

- ▶ **Say thanks to a friend.** If you have a friend who has stuck by you through everything you've faced, thank that person. Also, thank God for this friend, and let your friend know of your prayers.
- ▶ **Seek to be a friend to others.** Follow the example of Jonathan and David—and even more of Christ—to demonstrate a sacrificial friendship to others. Consider what you might sacrifice in order to bless that person this week.
- ▶ **Renew a friendship.** If you have a friend you have let down in past years or did not stand with during a difficult period, seek to restore that friendship. Let Christ be seen and honored as you return to being the kind of friend He calls you to be.

Remember, the number of our “friends” doesn't matter much. It's the quality of our relationships, based on a shared commitment to Christ, that counts.



END NOTE

¹ Thomas L. Freidman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 25

Share with others how you will live out this study: [#BSFLrelationships](#)