

Be a Man After God's Heart: Life of David, Study Five
Brotherhood

"Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as he loved himself... And Jonathan made a covenant with David..."¹

Fraternity, brotherhood, comradeship, there are a dozen names for the bond that exists between friends, but no word could fully encompass the depth of emotion, loyalty, sacrifice, and love embodied in them. The bond is rare and often takes either years or extreme circumstances to be forged. The first we hear about the friendship of David and Jonathan is in 1 Samuel 18:1, "Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself." Other versions say, "the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David."² God joined the hearts of these two men and it all began with a covenant, "Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt."³

The depth we see in this exchange is really astonishing; it represents the willingness of an intimate friend to sacrifice. Jonathan's relinquishment of his robe, tunic, sword, bow, and belt symbolized his covenant tangibly, while representing the sacrifice of his title and position. You see Jonathan was the "heir apparent." That is, he was next in line to be the king, after Saul. No one expected him to give up his power and

position, regardless of the prophecies concerning David. No one expected him to essentially abdicate his role to David so willingly. He was David's intimate friend and he was willing to sacrifice because of that bond.⁴

But Jonathan would suffer more than the loss of his position for David's sake. He was also faced with the choice of whether or not to stand in his friend's defense. Just as David and Jonathan found their hearts knit together by the Lord, Saul was turning against his son's best friend with a jealous hatred. Saul began to obsess about killing David because he saw him as a threat to his and Jonathan's legacy. David fled his wrath, but before making the decision to leave for good, he sought Jonathan out and pleaded with him stand in his defense. The tone of David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20 is full of deep emotion. David is overwrought, almost despairing. He "came very close to holding Jonathan responsible for Saul's actions and Jonathan came very close to getting defensive."⁵ But David's friend does not take offense, instead he responds with great loyalty, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."⁶ Jonathan is willing to stand up, even to his father, the king, on behalf of his dear friend.

The exchange between David and Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20 also demonstrates a key characteristic of the true bond of brotherhood: complete freedom. Because he chose not to take offense when David was panicked, Jonathan gave David complete freedom to speak his mind without fear. "When your

¹ 2 Samuel 1:26

² 1 Samuel 18:1 ESV

³ 1 Samuel 18:3-4

⁴Swindoll, Charles R. *David: A Man of Passion and Destiny*. p. 53

⁵ Moore, Beth. *David: Seeking a Heart Like His*. p. 48

⁶ 1 Samuel 20:4

heart is broken you can bleed all over a friend like this and he will understand. He won't confront you in your misery or share with you three verses and then tell you to straighten up."⁷ When you are hurting, a real friend will let you hurt and be yourself, standing by you no matter what that self looks like.

That *doesn't* mean a real friend will let you wallow. The last interaction we see between David and Jonathan occurs after David has hit proverbial "rock bottom." He is hiding out in the desert after fleeing from Saul, and Jonathan comes to him. Amazing, the son of the man who has a hit out on David comes to encourage him in the wilderness. The presence of his best friend no doubt encouraged David's heart to some extent, but the truthful words of Jonathan may have had the most profound effect. Jonathan comes to "help David find strength in God" and reminds him that "You will be king over Israel and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this."⁸ Jonathan didn't allow David to wallow in his pain, sorrow, doubt, or fear. He listened, he was a shoulder to cry on, and then he reminded David of the truth of who he was.

Please note that Jonathan had already laid the foundation to be able to come alongside his friend - through his willingness to sacrifice on his friend's behalf and his choice to stand in his defense. Jonathan's selfless behavior toward David set the stage for him to be able to speak truth into his life. And the words he spoke in the Desert of Ziph weren't the first time he had reminded David of what the Lord had

promised him. When David was seeking Jonathan to intercede for him, these brothers made another covenant before the Lord - Jonathan declared his intentions of faithfulness to David and declared:

May the Lord be with you as He has been with my father But show me unfailing kindness... and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family - not even when the Lord has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth.⁹

Jonathan was a source of constant encouragement to David, reminding him of his calling even as he walked through the painful trials God used to refine him.

Do you have intimate friends like this? "Often we have only one, occasionally two... usually not more than three in our entire lives."¹⁰ When God knits your heart with another's it is a precious gift, to be valued, cultivated, and protected. Invest in friendships with others. Jonathan had nothing to gain and everything to lose when he threw in his lot with David. His was a selfless love. David, likewise, could have been suspicious of Jonathan because of his position and pushed him away, but instead, each embraced the other as a gift from God. It is not good for man to be alone, and sometimes God gives us brothers, so that we can sharpen each other and persevere to become all He has called us to be.

⁷ Swindoll, Charles R. p. 54

⁸ 1 Samuel 23:16-17

⁹ 1 Samuel 20:13-15

¹⁰ Swindoll, Charles R. p. 52-53

Scripture Reading: NIV

1 Samuel 18:1-4

After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. 2 From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family. 3 And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4 Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

1 Samuel 20:16-17, 24-41

16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the Lord call David's enemies to account." 17 And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself. 24 So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon feast came, the king sat down to eat. 25 He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David's place was empty. 26 Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, "Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean—surely he is unclean." 27 But the next day, the second day of the month, David's place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, "Why hasn't the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?" 28 Jonathan answered, "David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem. 29 He said, 'Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.' That is why he has not come to the king's table." 30 Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a

perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? 31 As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die!" 32 "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father. 33 But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. 34 Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the feast he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David. 35 In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for his meeting with David. He had a small boy with him, 36 and he said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows I shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. 37 When the boy came to the place where Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, "Isn't the arrow beyond you?" 38 Then he shouted, "Hurry! Go quickly! Don't stop!" The boy picked up the arrow and returned to his master. 39 (The boy knew nothing about all this; only Jonathan and David knew.) 40 Then Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said, "Go, carry them back to town." 41 After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most.

1 Samuel 23:15-18

15 While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. 16 And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. 17 "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul

will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this.”

18 The two of them made a covenant before the Lord. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh.

2 Samuel 1:11-12, 23-26

11 Then David and all the men with him took hold of their clothes and tore them. 12 They mourned and wept and fasted till evening for Saul and his son Jonathan, and for the army of the Lord and for the nation of Israel, because they had fallen by the sword. 23 Saul and Jonathan—in life they were loved and admired, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions.

24 “Daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery, who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold. 25 “How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. 26 I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.

Partner Assignment

1. Memory Verse: **1 Samuel 18:3**, “*And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as he loved himself.*”
2. This week read 1 Samuel 18, 23, Psalm 59, Psalm 142, and 2 Samuel 1.
3. Please meet with your prayer partner from this week to discuss the following questions on the above readings.

- A. What do you consider to be the catalyst (starting point) for Jonathan and David’s friendship? How was God a part of this?
- B. Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. How do Jonathan and David exemplify the message of these verses?
- C. How can you invest in the friendships you have more selflessly?
- D. David wrote these Psalms when fleeing for his life and hiding, in what ways can you relate to his words and heart? How do these Psalms speak to you?

Sample Questions

Pre-Article Questions:

1. How would you define the word “brotherhood?”
2. To you, what character qualities do the men in your life possess that you deeply respect and hope to emulate?

Text Questions:

1. How does 1 Samuel 18 say Jonathan loved David? How did he demonstrate this love in 1 Samuel 20?
2. What does Jonathan do when Saul curses at him and tries to kill him? How might we have expected him to respond? (Jonathan fasts because of his anger at Saul’s poor treatment of David, but his own father just tried to kill him!)
3. What did Jonathan say to encourage David when he was in the Desert of Ziph? Why are these things

significant in showing Jonathan's heart toward his friend?

4. Where do we finally see David's feelings for Jonathan in 2 Samuel 1? How does he express the depth of their bond and what does this mean?

Speak our minds, be ourselves, and give encouragement to one another?

Application Questions:

1. Scripture does not specifically say that David and Jonathan went to battle together, yet they possess a bond not unlike one between warriors who have fought side by side. How did this deep loyalty and camaraderie develop between them? Have you had a friendship like this? How did the bond between you form?
2. In what ways can having a "Jonathon" in your life draw you closer to the Lord? What are the Christ-like characteristics in Jonathan that you value the most and why?
3. Read Proverbs 18:24. What do you think this verse means? Are you a man who strives to have many companions or do you invest in friends with whom God has knit your heart? Would you rather be popular with many or deeply known by a few? Why?
4. List some instances in which Jonathan showed loyalty to David or vice versa. Have you ever experienced (or shown) loyalty like this? What kind of impact did it have on your friendship?
5. What can we do as a small group to foster deep relationships and build trust with one another? How can we create an environment where we are free to