



## SESSION 2

# FORGE TRUE FRIENDSHIP

### ▶ **The Point**

Strong friendships thrive because of shared commitment.

### ▶ **The Passage**

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

### ▶ **The Bible Meets Life**

“How many friends do you have?” These days, people typically answer that question by calculating the number of Facebook friends, Twitter or Instagram followers, and 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 in today’s world feel lonely and isolated, even while being surrounded by masses of people. So, a better question to ask would be this: “How many close, personal friendships do you have?”

In this session, we’ll explore an incredibly deep and powerful friendship recorded in the Book of 1 Samuel—the friendship between David and Jonathan. Along the way, we’ll discover what the Scriptures teach about developing true friendships that last.

### ▶ **The Setting**

Following David’s stunning victory over Goliath, Saul promoted him and brought him into the king’s court. Soon, Saul gave David command of Israel’s army. With each battle won, David became more of a hero in the minds of the people, even becoming more popular than Saul. The king’s son, Jonathan, developed a strong friendship with David. Jonathan had already commanded the army to win two significant victories (see 13:1-4; 14:1-46), so David’s courage likely attracted Jonathan to David.

## What does the Bible say?

**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.

**Covenant** (18:3)—An alliance or pact between two parties representing the strongest bond known to man; such a pact included obligations as well as the penalty for breaking the contract.

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

**18:1** When David had finished speaking with Saul, Jonathan was bound to David in close friendship, and loved him as much as he loved himself. **2** Saul kept David with him from that day on and did not let him return to his father's house. **3** Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as much as himself. **4** Then Jonathan removed the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his military tunic, his sword, his bow, and his belt.

**19:4** Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul. He said to him: "The king should not sin against his servant David. He hasn't sinned against you; in fact, his actions have been a great advantage to you. **5** He took his life in his hands when he struck down the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great victory for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced, so why would you sin against innocent blood by killing David for no reason?" **6** Saul listened to Jonathan's advice and swore an oath: "As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be killed." **7** So Jonathan summoned David and told him all these words. Then Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he served him as he did before.

**20:10** So David asked Jonathan, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?" **11** He answered David, "Come on, let's go out to the countryside." So both of them went out to the countryside. **12** "By the LORD, the God of Israel, I will sound out my father by this time tomorrow or the next day. If I find out that he is favorable toward you, will I not send for you and tell you? **13** If my father intends to bring evil on you, may God punish Jonathan and do so severely if I do not tell you and send you away so you may leave safely. May the LORD be with you, just as he was with my father."

# GET INTO THE STUDY



5 minutes



**DISCUSS:** Question #1 on page 21 of the PSG: **“What have you enjoyed most about your friendships over the years?”**

**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):** Ask for volunteers to call out the names of people from books, movies, and TV shows who are exceptional examples of friendship. Some examples would be Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer, Lucy and Ethel, and so on. Once you have a

good list of examples, encourage group members to identify traits that define those friendships to see what they may have in common.

**Note:** If you have access to a whiteboard or a large sheet of paper, consider writing out the list of friendships on the left and then recording the common traits among those friendships on the right.

**GUIDE:** Direct group members to “The Bible Meets Life” on page 22 of the PSG. Introduce the theme of strong friendships by reading or summarizing the text—or by encouraging group members to read on their own.

**GUIDE:** Call attention to “The Point” on page 22 of the PSG: **“Strong friendships thrive because of shared commitment.”**

**PRAY:** Transition into the discussion by thanking God for the friends who have blessed your life over the years. Pray that you and your group members will have wisdom to engage God’s Word in a meaningful way.

Notes

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes, starting below the 'Notes' header and extending down the right side of the page.



# STUDY THE BIBLE

## Notes

.....  
.....  
.....



.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**ALTERNATE QUESTION:**  
*What are practical ways to demonstrate selflessness in our friendships?*

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

## 1 Samuel 18:1-4

**1** When David had finished speaking with Saul, Jonathan was bound to David in close friendship, and loved him as much as he loved himself. **2** Saul kept David with him from that day on and did not let him return to his father’s house. **3** Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as much as himself. **4** Then Jonathan removed the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his military tunic, his sword, his bow, and his belt.

**LEADER PACK:** Display Pack Item 2, “1 and 2 Samuel Timeline,” so that group members can see the major events from the lives of Saul, Jonathan, and David.

**READ:** 1 Samuel 18:1-4 on page 23 of the PSG. Read the text out loud or ask a volunteer to do so.

**RECAP:** Read aloud the first paragraph after the Scripture text on page 23 of the PSG to provide some context for the relationship between David and Jonathan:

Jonathan, the son of King Saul, was drawn to David after the younger man defeated the giant Goliath and saved the Israelite army from destruction (see 1 Sam. 17). The word translated “loved” in these verses was used in the Old Testament for a strong emotional attachment. It could be used for the love between a husband and wife, but also for a variety of other relationships, including a daughter-in-law’s love for her mother-in-law (see Ruth 4:15) and a father’s love for his son (see Gen. 22:2).

**GUIDE:** Use the fourth paragraph on page 33 of this Leader Guide to offer additional insight on Jonathan’s actions while setting up the covenant with David.

**DISCUSS:** Question #2 on page 23 of the PSG: **“What obstacles can hinder us from forming deeper friendships?”**

**TRANSITION:** One of the major obstacles in the friendship between David and Jonathan was Jonathan’s father, the king. We can read about that situation as we jump to 1 Samuel 19:4-7.

## 1 Samuel 18:1-4 Commentary

### **Strong friends exhibit selflessness.**

**[Verses 1-2]** Immediately after the battle following David's defeat of Goliath, Saul summoned David and questioned him about his family background (see 1 Sam 17:57-58). Saul decided David should serve in the royal court on a permanent basis. Apparently that conversation lasted for some time, as Saul's son, Jonathan, listened to the interview. Perhaps David's confidence and clarity impressed Jonathan, who obviously admired David for his bravery and leadership—especially since Jonathan had witnessed David's glorious defeat of Goliath.

That conversation clinched it for Jonathan, who immediately **was bound to David in close friendship**. More than his victory over Goliath, David's words, his faith in God, and his humility had an indelible impression on Jonathan. From this point forward, these two men would enjoy a lasting commitment as kindred spirits. The Hebrew word rendered **bound to** literally meant "to chain or to tie together." Jonathan pledged his soul to David, which the biblical writer emphasized by stating that Jonathan **loved him as much as he loved himself**. The relationship between Jonathan and David surpassed the human level, for they both trusted the Lord and shared the same convictions.

Unfortunately, some mistakenly view David and Jonathan as simply young men who liked each other very much because they shared common interests. Some have even erroneously claimed that the intimate language used to describe their connection must point to a sexual relationship. Such conclusions are inaccurate.

**[Verses 3-4]** Jonathan **loved** David and, at some point, that love inspired Jonathan to initiate **a covenant with David**. Though the terms were not stated, at the very least the two men pledged their friendship and absolute loyalty to one another, meaning they would always look after the needs and welfare of one another. As Saul's oldest son, Jonathan stood in line for the throne of Israel. The Lord had already rejected Saul as king and therefore had instructed Samuel to anoint David as the next king (see vv. 1-13). Jonathan sealed the covenant by removing **the robe he was wearing and gave it to David**. "Robe" in this case denotes a royal robe worn by the crown prince. Therefore, when Jonathan gave this robe to David to wear, it equaled Jonathan renouncing his claim to the throne. Jonathan also gave to David **his military tunic, his sword, his bow, and his belt**, thus symbolizing that the two soldiers had indeed become knit together in a unique relationship. Together, these gifts represented Jonathan's willingness to relinquish his hopes for his father's throne, to acknowledge the Lord's choice, and to express his loyalty to David.

Just as Jonathan laid aside his right to royalty and gave it to David, Jesus has done the same for His children. Jesus for a time laid aside His own robes of glory to come to the earth in order to die for us (see Phil. 2:5-8). Moreover, Jesus proved His uncommon love for us through the cross and through His resurrection. In doing so, Jesus established a covenant through which we might be clothed in His robes of righteousness.



# STUDY THE BIBLE

## Notes

### 1 Samuel 19:4-7

***4 Jonathan spoke well of David to his father Saul. He said to him: "The king should not sin against his servant David. He hasn't sinned against you; in fact, his actions have been a great advantage to you. 5 He took his life in his hands when he struck down the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great victory for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced, so why would you sin against innocent blood by killing David for no reason?" 6 Saul listened to Jonathan's advice and swore an oath: "As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be killed." 7 So Jonathan summoned David and told him all these words. Then Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he served him as he did before.***

**READ:** 1 Samuel 19:4-7 on page 24 of the PSG.

**ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL):** The bullet list on page 24 of the PSG includes three Scripture references. Ask for volunteers to read those passages out loud so that your group can gain a better sense of Saul's hatred toward David.

**DISCUSS:** Question #3 on page 24 of the PSG: **"What risks do we take when we stand up for our friends?"**

**ALTERNATE QUESTION:**

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

**DO:** Direct group members to complete the activity "Friendships Past" on page 25 of the PSG. If time permits, encourage volunteers to share their responses.



*Who have been your strongest friends in the different phases of your life? Use the space below to list those friends and record what you know about them now.*

**Your closest friends**

**Where they are now**

*Elementary school:*

*Middle school:*

*High school:*

*Young adult:*

*Five years ago:*

*How have these and other friends helped you find and follow Christ?*

## 1 Samuel 19:4-7 Commentary

**Strong friends serve as advocates for each other.**

**[Verses 4-5]** Because of David's popularity with both the army and the people, Saul considered David a serious threat to his throne. Driven by his insane, paranoid jealousy, Saul plotted David's death (see 1 Sam. 18:10–19:1). Jonathan warned David of the assassination plot (see vv. 2-3).

The true strength of Jonathan's covenant commitment came not only when he helped David with information about Saul's schemes, but when he **spoke well of David to his father Saul**. Jonathan's actions did not come without great risk to himself, thus demonstrating the depth of his commitment to David. Jonathan modestly yet boldly pointed out to Saul the grievous wickedness involved in his conduct toward David. In declaring, **"He hasn't sinned against you,"** Jonathan delivered a needed word of correction to his father. He urged Saul to reverse his conspiracy to kill David by reminding his father about the great service David had performed. Saul knew that David had **struck down the Philistine**. But in his twisted mind, Saul thought David had done that so he could become famous and take the throne. Saul's wicked mindset made him think he needed to kill this grasping traitor before the traitor killed him.

By pointing out that David's **actions have been a great advantage** to Saul, Jonathan underscored David's loyalty to Saul by attempting to bring his father back to reality. David's actions had always benefited Saul. Furthermore, Jonathan suggested to him that, when David had taken **his life in his hands when he struck down** Goliath, Saul had rejoiced just like everyone else. Jonathan pointed out the undeniable fact that Saul knew: the Lord was with David. Therefore, to act in a hostile manner, Saul would have committed a terrible evil **against innocent blood by killing David for no reason**.

**[Verses 6-7]** For the moment, Jonathan's words made at least a temporary impression on Saul as he **listened to Jonathan's advice**. Saul heeded the voice of Jonathan and pledged not to kill David. By swearing an oath, **"As surely as the Lord lives,"** showed that God had genuinely touched Saul's heart. God had used Jonathan as the instrument of His work.

Knowing the end of the story, Saul's promise seems hollow to us. Although Saul soon changed his mind, the promise that **"David will not be killed"** would remain accurate. Yet it would have nothing to do with Saul, because he kept trying to kill David. The heart change in Saul would last only momentarily, but God Himself would protect David from Saul's evil intent.

So, Jonathan played the major role in interceding and protecting David. Having negotiated the reconciliation, he **summoned David and told him** of his success. Jonathan then accompanied David back to Saul's royal household, where **he served him as he did before**. At least for a little while, Jonathan, the one who had the most to gain from David's death, had successfully stood in the gap for David, which would spare him from Saul's attacks.



## 1 Samuel 20:10-13 Commentary

### **Strong friends maintain and fulfill their commitment to each other.**

After multiple attempts on his life, David had no reason to doubt Saul's resolve to kill him. David went to Jonathan, the only person he knew who might bring about reconciliation and who might be able to tell him what he had done to arouse Saul's violent anger. At first, Jonathan insisted his father had no plans to kill David. David proposed a passive plan by which Jonathan could learn the truth. By not attending the regular monthly dinner engagement with Saul, David knew Saul would notice his absence and ask about it. If Saul responded favorably to Jonathan's explanation, it would mean Saul was at peace with David. If, however, Saul reacted in an angry outburst, then Jonathan would know Saul's resolve to kill David.

**[Verse 10]** Jonathan's loyalty demanded an unbreakable friendship and a spirit of brotherly love. David further laid out the details of his plans to prove his charge against Saul to Jonathan. David specifically asked Jonathan, **"Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?"** concerning David's absence at the banquet.

**[Verse 11]** By now Jonathan appeared to have grasped the possibility that David's claim might have merit. Rather than immediately answering David's question, Jonathan said, **"Come on, let's go out to the countryside."** They did not go to the field for a change of scenery. They went where curious eyes and finely tuned ears could not discern what they said. Should someone have overheard their conversation and reported it to Saul, Jonathan's life would have been endangered too.

**[Verses 12-13]** Jonathan swore an oath to David, promising to report back on Saul's state of mind. He pledged his loyalty to David, promising to send word if Saul spoke favorably about David. However, if Saul intended **to bring evil on** David, Jonathan would bring warning. To affirm his loyalty, Jonathan pronounced a curse on himself if he betrayed David. Then, amazingly and humbly, Jonathan offered a blessing upon David, **"May the Lord be with you, just as he was with my father"**—a blessing that acknowledged David as the future king of Israel.

God loves and cares for His people; therefore, He often places people in our lives who will encourage and assist us during times of difficulty. Proverbs 17:17 says, "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a difficult time." Most of us know about "fair-weather" friends who abandon us when problems arise. True friends stay the course through all of life's ups and downs, no matter what the situation. When trouble comes, we find out who our true friends are.

*Note: For more information, read the article "Royal Succession in the Ancient Near East" in the Summer 2017 issue of Biblical Illustrator. Previous Biblical Illustrator articles "Jonathan: All We Know" (Summer 2016), "Saul, Israel's First King" (Summer 2010), "Jonathan: A Forgotten Hero" (Spring 2008), and "David: His Life and Times" (Fall 1980) relate to this lesson and can be purchased, along with other articles for this quarter, at [lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator](http://lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator).*

