



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

We are familiar with business contracts and marriage covenants, but we rarely think of our friendships in terms of a covenant. It's not likely a formal agreement, but we often recognize a bond between friends that goes beyond just a shared interest or affinity. In the Book of 1 Samuel, David and Jonathan give us an example of what such a covenant looks like.

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 success, David became more of a hero in the minds of the people, becoming more popular than Saul. Saul's son, Jonathan, developed a strong friendship with David. Jonathan had already commanded the army to win two significant victories (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)—A covenant is an alliance or pact between two parties representing the strongest bond known to man; a covenant included obligations as well as the penalty for breaking the contract.

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

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



10 minutes

Notes



DISCUSS: Invite your group members to discuss **Question #1** on page 21 of the PSG (Personal Study Guide): **“What have you enjoyed most about your friendships over the years?”** Allow time for each person to respond.

ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL): In advance, secure a photo of yourself with a close childhood friend. Share the photo with your group and explain what made you such good friends. Then, share that to-

day’s session focuses on a friendship that thrived because of a shared commitment.

SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGE 22): 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 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?

SAY: “While different people have different kinds of friendships, we will study an incredibly deep friendship in the Book of 1 Samuel.”

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

PRAY: Transition into the discussion with prayer. Pray for the relationships in your group to be strengthened as you seek to follow Christ together.

LEADER PACK: Bring your group’s attention to **Pack Item #2**, “1 & 2 Samuel Timeline” poster, to give some background information on the major events from this book.

TIP: Love music? So do we! Each week you’ll find a song that corresponds to that week’s session. These “Playlist Picks” are available for purchase on iTunes®. Download one, a few, or all of them for a custom playlist to use with the Summer 2017 studies. See page 161 for more info.



PACK POSTER:
Pack Item #2
“1 & 2 Samuel Timeline” poster
PLAYLIST PICK:
“Loyal”
By Lauren Daigle

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 (1 Samuel 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 as his father interviewed David. 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 concerns and 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 because the writer used such intimate language to describe their relationship, they must have had a sexual relationship. Such conclusions are shallow and 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 each other.

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 (1 Samuel 16:1-13). 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.



STUDY THE BIBLE

NOTES

Dotted lines for taking notes.

1 Samuel 19:4-7 (CSB)

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: Ask a group member to read aloud 1 Samuel 19:4-7.

SUMMARIZE THE PSG (PAGE 25): 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 tried to convince Jonathan and his servants to kill David (19:1).
- » Jonathan wouldn’t honor such a wicked request from his father. Instead, he rebuked the king and stood between Saul and David. Jonathan stepped in as David’s advocate and spoke well of David rather than join in his father’s disdain.
- » Jonathan reminded Saul of how David’s deeds had brought good to the king. He reminded his father of David’s victory over Goliath, the foe Saul’s army refused to face. 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 by killing David for no reason” (v. 5).

DISCUSS: Question #3 on page 24 of the PSG: **“What are practical ways we can serve as advocates for our friends?”**

TRANSITION: Jonathan, the one who had the most to gain from David’s death, successfully stood in the gap for David, which would spare him from Saul’s attacks.

ALTERNATE QUESTION:

How does thinking of Jesus as your advocate impact the way you view Him?

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 (1 Samuel 18:10–19:1). Jonathan warned David of the assassination plot (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 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—it was not the work of Jonathan. Knowing the end of the story, Saul's promise seems hollow to us. Although Saul soon changed his mind, the promise, "as surely as the LORD lives, 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.

Having negotiated the reconciliation, Jonathan "summoned David and told him" of his success. 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 and David would have no reason to fear. 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." If Saul truly wanted to kill David, they had to guard their conversation. 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 Saul's state of mind to David. 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.



Want to dig deeper? Check out 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 www.lifeway.com/biblicalillustrator. Look for Bundles: Bible Studies for Life.



5 minutes

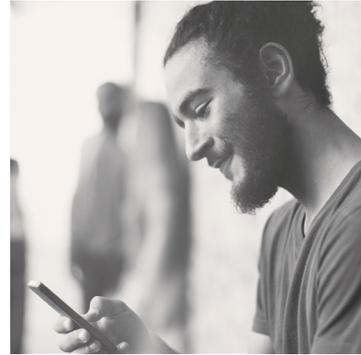
LIVE IT OUT

Notes

Dotted lines for taking notes.

SAY: “How will you allow the commitment of Jonathan and David to influence your friendships this week?”

GUIDE: Lead group members to consider the responses to the Bible study listed on page 28 of the PSG.



- » **Commit to pray.** Scroll through your phone contact list and pause to pray for those friends who have a specific prayer need right now.
- » **Get a deeper look at covenant love.** Search for “covenant” in a Bible Dictionary to learn more about God’s promised faithfulness to His people. Ask God to help you display this kind of loyalty in your relationships.
- » **Step up.** Identify a friend who could really use a listening ear, an advocate, or practical help. Find out how you can meet his or her need this week.

Wrap It Up

SAY: “Jonathan and David give us a practical example of a faithful friendship by maintaining and fulfilling their commitment to each other. **This week, make it your goal to faithfully demonstrate this kind of loyalty and be ready to see God at work in your life.**”



Additional ideas for your group are available at BibleStudiesforLife.com/AdultExtra