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# FORGE TRUE FRIENDSHIP



*What have you enjoyed most about your friendships over the years?*

**QUESTION #1**

#BSFLrelationships

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE **21**

## THE POINT

*Strong friendships thrive because of shared commitment.*



## 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.

# WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

## ***1 Samuel 18:1-4***

**<sup>1</sup> When David had finished speaking with Saul, Jonathan was bound to David in close friendship, and loved him as much as he loved himself. <sup>2</sup> Saul kept David with him from that day on and did not let him return to his father's house. <sup>3</sup> Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as much as himself. <sup>4</sup> 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.**

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).

To better understand Jonathan’s love for David, we should note another key word in this passage: “covenant.” In the ancient world, a covenant meant much more than a nod and a handshake. It represented an inseparable commitment between two parties. Covenants like this one were common in those days. Notice the exchange of garments and other items in verse 4. In that culture, exchanging military gear represented the highest form of honor. Jonathan also 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 their affection toward God and concern for each other, would now and forever be identified with each other—even as Christ identified with us through His new covenant so that we could be identified with Him.

***What obstacles can hinder us from forming deeper friendships?***

**QUESTION #2**

## 1 Samuel 19:4-7

**<sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> 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?” <sup>6</sup> Saul listened to Jonathan’s advice and swore an oath: “As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be killed.” <sup>7</sup> So Jonathan summoned David and told him all these words. Then Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he served him as he did before.**

Jonathan and David had a friendship that withstood all manner of trials. If any friendship had a reason to fall apart, theirs surely did—yet they stood together and defended each other.

After slaying Goliath, David quickly became famous for his military conquests. He 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 (see 19:10-11).
- ▶ Saul required that David pass a test to pay the “bride-price” for marrying his daughter Michal. In truth, Saul was setting a trap, expecting David would be killed (see 19:20-29).
- ▶ Saul tried to convince his own son, Jonathan, and his servants to kill David (see 19:1).

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

***What risks do we take when we stand up for our friends?***

**QUESTION #3**

# FRIENDSHIPS PAST

*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 friend(s)	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?*

*"Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light."*

— HELEN KELLER

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 He had in the glories of heaven to come to earth, identify with us, and draw us to the Father (see Phil. 2:6-8). Even now, whenever we sin, He serves as our Advocate before the Father (see 1 John 2:1).

Jonathan's life exhibited a faithful love for God that led to a deep and abiding love for his friend. Jonathan's approach to friendship echoed what Jesus said centuries later: "No one has greater love than this: to lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

## 1 Samuel 20:10-13

**<sup>10</sup> So David asked Jonathan, "Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?" <sup>11</sup> He answered David, "Come on, let's go out to the countryside." So both of them went out to the countryside. <sup>12</sup> "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? <sup>13</sup> 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."**

Saul's attitude toward David ran hot and cold. At times Saul loved David; other times he wanted to kill him. It's no surprise, then, that David feared for his life!

Even though it might have been understandable if Jonathan's loyalty had been torn between his father and his friend, Jonathan held firm to his covenant. He told David, "If I ever find out my father has evil intentions against you, wouldn't I tell you about it?" (v. 9).

In the seclusion of the countryside, 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 then communicate what he learned to David.

***How do you typically respond when a friendship becomes complicated?***

### QUESTION #4

During this planning, Jonathan gave two bold declarations:

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

Jonathan risked his own life to maintain his commitment and friendship with David. He knew God's hand was on David, the future king. Jonathan did ask that, in return, his friend would show kindness to his household forever. And years later, even after Jonathan's death, David would maintain his side of the friendship. He brought Jonathan's crippled son, Mephibosheth, into his own house: "Mephibosheth ate at David's table just like one of the king's sons" (2 Sam. 9:11).

There's no doubt we'd all like a friend like Jonathan—someone to stick with us in good times and bad. And we need to be that kind of friend to others. Such friendship brings glory to God.

A millennium after these events, 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 came "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10), sacrificing all for us. 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 (see John 15:14).

***What can we learn about healthy friendships from the story of David and Jonathan?***

## **QUESTION #5**



# LIVE IT OUT

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

- ▶ **Say thanks to a friend.** If you have a friend who has stuck by you through adversity, thank that person. Also thank God for this friend, and let your friend know of your prayers.
- ▶ **Make a sacrifice.** Follow the example of Jonathan and David—and even more of Christ—by demonstrating a sacrificial friendship to someone you care about. Give up something in order to bless that person in a meaningful way.
- ▶ **Renew a friendship.** If you let someone down in past years or did not stand with someone 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.



If there's one thing we can learn from our disposable, drive-thru culture, it's that the number of our "friends" doesn't matter much. It's the quality of our relationships that counts. May you be blessed with strong friendships based on a shared commitment to Christ.

My thoughts

Share with others how you will live out this study: **#BSFLrelationships**