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Forge True Friendship



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

QUESTION 1

#BSFLrelationships

Strong friendships thrive because of shared commitment.



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 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.³

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.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 Samuel 18:1-4 (CSB)

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.

One of the most well-known stories in the Bible is the historical account of David and Goliath (1 Samuel 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 army. David succeeded in everything he did (18:5), and he became an instant celebrity.

Jonathan, the son of King Saul, "was bound to David in close friendship" (v. 1). 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 from Saul, but Jonathan saw in David the marks of a man of God. Jonathan devoted himself to his friendship with David. For that reason, Jonathan "loved him as much as he loved himself" (v. 1). The relationship these young men shared demonstrates what a healthy bond between two friends should look like.

The word for "loved" was used in the Old Testament for a strong emotional attachment. It was used for a variety of relationships, including a daughter-in-law's love for her mother-in-law (Ruth 4:15), and a father's love for his son (Genesis 22:2). To better understand Jonathan's love for David, we should note another key word in this passage: covenant. "Jonathan made a covenant with David" (v. 3).

What obstacles can hinder us from forming deeper friendships?

QUESTION 2

A covenant 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 Noah (Genesis 9:8-17), Abraham (12:1-3), and Moses (Exodus 19–24). Through Christ, God made a new, eternal covenant with us (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:15). God has never broken a covenant, and He will not break His covenant with us.

Covenants like this between two men were common in the time when Jonathan and David lived. Notice the exchange of garments and other items in verse 4. 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.

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 my own heart," (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22).

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.

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

QUESTION 3

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 (18:7-11).
- » 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; however, David passed Saul’s test two times over (18:20-29).
- » Saul tried to convince his own son 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. He 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).

Jonathan was bound by his covenant and commitment 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—even the position of future king.



"A friend loves at all times,
and a brother is born
for a difficult time."

PROVERBS 17:17

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

QUESTION 4

FAITHFUL AND TRUE



Listen to the song "Loyal" by Lauren Daigle.

What phrases or images most stand out to you from this song?

Jesus is our perfect example of loyal love. In the space below, write out a brief prayer of thanksgiving for His unending loyalty.

1 Samuel 20:10-13 (CSB)

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.”

Saul’s attitude toward David ran hot and cold. At times Saul loved David; other times he wanted to kill him. Even after swearing an oath not to threaten David’s life again, Saul threw another spear at him (19:9-10). Then he sent some men to David’s own home to kill him the next morning (v. 11), so that David had to flee for his life.

In the seclusion of the countryside, the two men devised a plan that would protect David and determine Saul’s intentions. As David hid there in the countryside, Jonathan would sound out his father and then communicate what he learned to David. During this planning, Jonathan gave two bold declarations.

- » Jonathan prayed that the Lord would punish him if he did not protect David as he had promised.
- » Jonathan prayed that the Lord would be with David as He had been with Saul.

Jonathan risked his own life to maintain his commitment and friendship with David. Jonathan did ask that, in return, his friend would show kindness to his household forever. 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 Samuel 9:11), something unheard of for a man with such a handicap.



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

QUESTION 5

LIVE IT OUT

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

- » **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 needs this week.

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.**



My thoughts