

Jonathan and David: Best Friends Forever

1 Samuel 14-23

David Feddes

I always loved the stories of David in the Bible. They're exciting stories, plus I am named after David and Jonathan. My first name is David, and my middle name is Jon. My mom often called me "Jonathan David." Today I want to focus on Jonathan and David BFF: Best Friends Forever.

When we think about David and Jonathan and about friendship in general, one of the first things to be aware of is that we live in a time where friendship is seldom practiced well and is often misunderstood in various ways by different people.

Common confusion about friendship

- Close friendship is for women, not men.
- Showing feelings is wimpy, not manly.
- Friendship is mainly for sharing fun times.
- Parents, not friends, have positive impact.
- Family matters; friendship doesn't matter.
- Your spouse must be your best friend.
- Intense friendship must be homosexual.
- Friendship has little to do with God.

One is that close friendship is really for women, not for men. Men can't really get that close to each other and be that good friends.

Showing your feelings is wimpy, not manly.

Friendship is mainly for sharing fun times, playing video games together, playing other stuff you like doing, hanging out, enjoying a bit of time together. But it's not for more serious, difficult things.

Parents have a positive impact on people. Friends drag you down. Protect the children from friendship, and make sure they are under the control of parents and kept within their family at all times. Family matters. Friendship doesn't matter.

Your spouse should be your best friend. "My best friend proposed to me. I'm married to my best friend." Well, maybe so, sometimes not. Friendship is not the same as romance and marriage.

Intense friendship, where people of the same sex have strong feelings and care about each other a lot, must have a sexual element to it. You must be gay or lesbian if you're really, really committed and care about somebody of the same sex.

Friendship is just one of those things where the chemistry is right, and it doesn't have much to do with God.

Now, not everybody holds all of these error at the same time. But these are some of the mistakes about friendship that are floating around. As we go through the story of David and Jonathan, we'll see how these ideas are all contradicted by this story.

Jonathan's Faith and Courage

I just want to start out with Jonathan the hero. And at this point in the story, Saul and Jonathan are about the only men in Israel with decent weapons. Because the Philistines won't allow anybody to refine iron and make metal weapons (1 Samuel 13:19–22). So most of Israel, if they're armed at all, have sticks and sharp poles and stuff like that. Saul and Jonathan are about the only ones with good weapons. But Jonathan sure knows how to use his weapon.

The Philistines have been dominating the country, and there is a pass with a cliff on each side of the pass, and they've got a small outpost guarding the cliffs on each side. Nobody can get through because the Philistines control the pass. Jonathan decides to do something about it.

Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few." And his armor-bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Do as you wish. Behold, I am with you heart and soul."

Then Jonathan said, "Behold, we will cross over to the men, and we will show ourselves to them. If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place, and we will not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up, for the Lord has given them into our hand. And this shall be the sign to us."

So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, "Look, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves." And the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor-bearer and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you a thing." And Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Come up after me, for the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel." Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, and his armor-bearer after him... And that first strike, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made, killed about twenty men... And there was a panic in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and even the raiders trembled, the earth quaked, and it became a very great panic.

Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and went into the battle. And behold, every Philistine's sword was against his fellow, and there was very great confusion. Now the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines ... also turned to be with the Israelites... Likewise, when all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too followed hard after them in the battle. So the Lord saved Israel that day. (1 Samuel 14:6-23)

It all started with one guy with some guts, who got things going—Jonathan. And then one thing led to another, and it resulted in a tremendous victory. Saul didn't even know about this when Jonathan started out. Jonathan had just kind of done it on his own initiative. And after the battle, Saul finds out that Jonathan had broken an oath or command that Saul had given that Jonathan

didn't even know about and wanted to kill Jonathan (1 Samuel 14:24–44). But Jonathan was rescued by the people because he'd been the hero that day (1 Samuel 14:45). So Jonathan won this great victory in spite of his father and not because of him. Not out of spite toward his father, but his father just wasn't involved until things were already well underway. That's how Jonathan becomes a great hero in Israel. He takes on almost impossible odds, takes down 20 people on top of some cliffs, and sets off a great military victory.

David's Faith and Courage

David also faces some very tough odds against the Philistines. The mighty giant Goliath comes out and defies the armies of Israel. David doesn't get a lot of encouragement from his family. Back when David was a shepherd boy, and one of the members of the family was to be anointed king, David wasn't even part of the lineup. Dad left him out with the sheep while the other brothers were all there in the championship lineup (1 Samuel 16:6–11). But none of them were chosen. David was chosen, but not because his family thought he could do it. When David is visiting the army and Goliath is shouting these challenges, David says, “Well, isn't anybody going to do anything about this?” (1 Samuel 17:26). Right away, his older brother Eliab scolds him and tells him what a dunce he is, and how foolish he is, and how he's got a bad attitude (1 Samuel 17:28).

So if Jonathan and David depended simply on their family to launch them into action, they'd still be sitting on the launching pad. But David, like Jonathan, dares to fight despite very difficult odds. And David knows why he can take down Goliath, just as Jonathan expected to win. Earlier Jonathan said, “The Lord can win a victory by many or by few” (1 Samuel 14:6). And David says to Goliath, “You come to me with a sword, with a spear, and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day, the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand” (1 Samuel 17:45–47). And sure enough, Dave fires the stone, he hits Goliath, he goes over to Goliath and cuts off his head (1 Samuel 17:49–51). And as in the case of Jonathan's victory, one victory on a small scale sends the whole army into action and the whole enemy army fleeing, and David wins this great victory. Jonathan has won a great victory against nearly impossible odds, and so has David.

Souls Knit Together

Then David and Jonathan meet. “As soon as David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt” (1 Samuel 18:1–4). So, all the symbols of royalty and military power that Jonathan has, he just hands over to David because he loves him and sees in him such a tremendous friend.

Let's pause a moment. Would you say that friendship is for wimps? If somebody took down Goliath and the whole army, and another guy killed 20 people on top of a cliff single-handedly, you might not want to call them wimps. David and Jonathan weren't women either. This obviously means that friendship may be for men, and even for manly, even deadly men.

And after Saul turns against David and is very jealous of him and wants to kill him, Jonathan stands up for his friend David. "And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David. And Jonathan told David, 'Saul, my father, seeks to kill you. Therefore, be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you. And if I learn anything, I will tell you'" (1 Samuel 19:1-3).

And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you and because his deeds have brought good to you. For he took his life in his hand, and he struck down the Philistine, and the Lord worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?" (1 Samuel 19:4-5). And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan (1 Samuel 19:6), and he brought David back to court.

You see again the kind of man Jonathan is. He's standing up for his friend, he's defending his friend, he's using wisdom. He doesn't just side with his friend against his father, but he tries to talk with his father and reason with him and to bring about peace. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the sons of God" (Matthew 5:9). Jonathan reasons with Saul, he talks with him and gets David brought back into the court again, and he still loves his father, just as he loves his friend.

Saul reverts to his old ways and again tries to kill David. And at that point, David is almost worried that Jonathan will turn against him as well. After all, when push comes to shove, do you side with your father? Do you protect your own right to the throne that you're going to inherit if David's out of the way?

Covenant of Friendship

David said to Jonathan, "Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you. But if there is guilt in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?" And Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! If I knew that it was determined by my father that harm should come to you, would I not tell you?" (1 Samuel 20:8-9).

Jonathan said, "May the Lord be with you as he's been with my father. If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord, that I may not die and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever, when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth" (1 Samuel 20:13-15). And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the Lord take vengeance on David's enemies." And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul (1 Samuel 20:16-17).

That conversation took a strange turn. Jonathan speaks with David, and David is worried that Jonathan might turn on him and kill him because Jonathan has all the power. And Jonathan instead says, “I would never do that! And please, don’t wipe me out.” Jonathan is not in a position to get wiped out by David at this point, and yet he understands that the Lord is going to make David very powerful and make him king. So even when Jonathan is in the position of power, he asks his friend to make an everlasting covenant with him never to wipe out Jonathan or his family members.

Jonathan was going to check things out to see if David is safe from Saul. David didn’t show up for a feast, and Saul exploded in anger at Jonathan: “You son of a slut! Shame on you, and on the mother who birthed you!” He raged, “Don’t you know that as long as David is alive, you’ll never have the throne?” And then he threw his spear at Jonathan (1 Samuel 20:30–33). The father tries to kill his own son, and Jonathan evades the spear and gets away.

He has pre-arranged a signal with David where he says, “I’ll check things out with my father, and if it’s good, I’ll go out with my boy and shoot some arrows, and I’ll say, ‘The arrows are on this side of you.’ And if you’re in trouble with my father, I’ll say, ‘The arrows are beyond you.’” (1 Samuel 20:19–22). And so Jonathan goes out, and David is hidden nearby. Jonathan fires the arrows far and he shouts to the boy, “The arrows are beyond you!” (1 Samuel 20:37).

But Jonathan can’t bear to just send that signal and go back to the palace. He sends the boy back with his weapons. He feels like he has to meet David one more time before David takes off. “David came out of his hiding place. And he bowed with his face to the ground before Jonathan three times. And then he and Jonathan embraced each other and kissed, and they wept and wept, and David wept the most. And Jonathan said to David, ‘Go in peace, because we’ve both sworn, both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, “The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring forever.”’ And he rose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city” (1 Samuel 20:41–42).

From there, they don’t see each other very much because David is on the run and Saul is on the prowl, always trying to hunt David down, always trying to kill him. One time David and his men are running away on one side of the mountain and Saul and his troops are on the other side of the mountain, not knowing David is there on the other side. They’ve just about caught him, but then they get news that there’s been an invasion. They’ve got to go back and deal with the Philistines (1 Samuel 23:26–28). David gets away yet again.

But the hunting keeps on going, and it gets very hard and very discouraging for David. “David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. And Jonathan, Saul’s son, rose and went to David at Horesh and strengthened his hand in God” (1 Samuel 23:15–16).

What a statement! David is out in the desert, on the run for his life, and Jonathan goes to him and strengthens his hand in God. Now, that’s a friend. When you’re in danger of your life and you’re very discouraged, your friend strengthens you—and he doesn’t just strengthen you by being a nice guy in general; he strengthens your hand in God. And he said to him, “Do not fear, for the hand of Saul, my father, shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to

you. Saul, my father, also knows this” (1 Samuel 23:17). And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home (1 Samuel 23:18).

Sometimes all a friend does is tell you what you already know. But you needed to hear it again. And you needed to hear it again at that particular point in time. Because when you're down, it's hard to believe what you know. You need to believe what you know, and sometimes a friend can help you do that.

Jonathan and David, true friends, best friends forever—they make this everlasting covenant with each other, that they will always treat each other and their household well, and they stick with each other through good times and bad.

Then comes that heartbreaking day when Jonathan falls in battle, and David finds out about it. “How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. 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. How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished” (2 Samuel 1:25–27).

David’s heart breaks as the person he loved perhaps more than anybody else in the world is gone. Again, some people nowadays read out and say, “See, David and Jonathan were gay!” Well, this tells you more about the age we live in than it tells you about David and Jonathan. David and Jonathan were both married men with children. The Bible never hints at anything that our age would talk about. They were simply the dearest of friends, loyal to the death, and loved each other with a tremendous love. And even after Jonathan was slain, David did not forget his covenant with Jonathan.

Jonathan had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth... David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always." ... So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. (2 Samuel 4:4; 9:7, 11) David gives the inheritance of a king to Jonathan's son—all the land that his grandfather Saul had owned. And he gives him a spot right along with all the other royal princes at David’s own table, because he is the son of his dear friend Jonathan .

So that's the story of David and Jonathan, as we read of it—at least some of the main excerpts from First and Second Samuel. What do we learn about friendship in that?

We've seen some of the misconceptions or mistakes or the confusions. "Close friendship is for women, not men." Really? "Showing feelings is wimpy, not manly." Jonathan and David are both weeping, and David is crying the most—was the killer of Goliath and the destroyer of armies wimpy? "Friendship is for fun times." Well, there were a lot of not-so-fun times for David and Jonathan, and they stuck with each other. "Parents, not friends, have positive impact." Well, not necessarily. Saul was family; David was a friend. "Family matters and friendship doesn't

matter." Not if the Bible is true! "Your spouse must be your best friend." "Intense friendship must be homosexual." "Friendship has little to do with God." These are all untrue.

Facts about friendship

- Friendship is for men, not just women.
- Brave warriors show strong feelings.
- Friends often deal with serious things.
- Friends can bring out the best in you.
- Friendship matters, not just family.
- You need friends besides your spouse.
- Intense friendship isn't always sexual.
- God is central in the best friendships.

In the story of David and Jonathan, we find that friendship is for men as well as for women.

We see brave warriors weeping and showing strong feelings.

Friends don't just have fun times. Friends are often into very serious things together, whether it's partnerships and ventures—sometimes where they have heroism in common—they've both taken on great enemies. And part of what David and Jonathan loved about each other was that they were men of courage who faced deadly enemies and accomplished serious things.

Friends can bring out the best in you. Sometimes your friends are those who have the same vision with you, the same sense of mission that you have, and you work together in that. And it makes you powerful in that. My dearest friends are those who've been involved in ministries with me, starting this church or being part of this church or serving at Christian Leaders Institute. Sometimes friendship can be bad if you have the wrong kind of friends or if it takes a bad turn. But it's a mistake to think that parents are always good and healthy, and friends are always bad. In this story, it's David's family who sometimes pulls him down from what he could be. It's Jonathan's father who's trying to turn him into a murderer, and his father who's trying to get him to pursue his father's dream for him. His father is desperate for him to be king—no matter what, no matter who has to die. But Jonathan knows that his father's vision for him is wrong. And so, he pursues God's vision for him. Friendship matters. Family matters a lot, but so does friendship.

Some parents, in their concern about what friends might do to their children, try to shield their children from any tight relationships. It's a matter of pride sometimes. Sometimes the parents aren't quite as wise as they think. Sometimes they're not as healthy for their kids as they think they are. And so, we need to be aware that we're not infallible as parents either, and that parenting and family is one kind of relationship that is very, very important. And friendship is another kind of relationship that is very, very important. It is a great error to think that one type of relationship wipes out the other.

You need friends beside your spouse. Maybe some of you married your best friend. Hey, I have other friends besides my wife. My wife has other friends besides me. When we would move to a new area, she would not be very happy for a while. And I could give the speech, "Well, aren't I

enough for you?” And the short answer would be, “No, you're not.” It puts tremendous pressure on a marriage relationship to try to be the other person's be-all and end-all—that magnificent specimen of humanity who is all that anybody would ever need. Maybe you can do that, but I can't be everything my wife needs. The marriage relationship is a very precious one, but it's not the only one. Don't feel bad about that. Don't feel guilty about that. Find ways to enjoy friends. Your marriage will be stronger if you've got good friends as well, and if you're not so desperately needy and dependent for every good thing on just one person in the world.

Intense friendship isn't always sexual. You can be dear friends or even be roommates with somebody of the same sex and not have a hint of homosexual attraction between you.

God is central in the best friendships. You see this in David and Jonathan, you read that. If you reread the passages that I selected, you see again and again the references to the Lord, the covenants they make in the Lord, the way they strengthen each other in the Lord, the way they win battles in the Lord.

Before just summing things up and some of the application for friendship, just look again at Jonathan. There's only a handful of people in the Bible that the Bible doesn't say anything bad about. I'm sure he had his sins and his faults—the Bible doesn't mention any of them. You read about Daniel, maybe Joseph, a couple others—where you just don't hear anything bad about them. And as I say, we're all sinners. But look at what kind of man this was.

Noble Jonathan

- Brave: outnumbered but unafraid
- Strong: wins victories for his people
- Wise: understands people and events
- Protective: defends friend, pursues peace
- Faithful: loyal to father and friend
- Encouraging: strengthens friend in God
- Generous: gives all he has to his friend
- Content: accepts and advances God's plan

Jonathan is **brave**. Outnumbered, facing superior weaponry, yet totally unafraid. He's **strong**. He wins victories for his people. He's **wise**. He understands his father's anger, his tormenting by a spirit. He understands that and does his best to try to make peace. He understands what's going to happen with David. He's got this vision of what's going on. He's **protective**. He defends his friends. He pursues peace. He's **faithful**. He sticks with his father. He dies in battle with his father. Sometimes you go all the way to death with somebody who doesn't deserve it. But he did anyway. He was loyal to his father. He was loyal to his friend, David. He was **encouraging**. He strengthened his friend in God. And he was **generous**. He gave everything he had to his friend. When good weaponry was rare, he gave all he had to David. He gave his royal robe to David. When he knew David was going to be taking his throne, he remained David's friend and tried to work to protect David so that David could get his throne.

Think about that. If you had interest, if two girls were friends, and both of you had interest—let's say in the same guy—and one got him, would you say, "I'm so happy for you!"? If you were both seeking the same kind of job position, and one of you got it and the other one didn't, would the one who didn't get the job truly rejoice and say, "I'm so happy you got that position"? Somehow, Jonathan did.

You read a hint of that in the New Testament where Barnabas is the main leader in the church at Antioch. And it's going great and the Lord's adding to their numbers, and they're growing in grace, and things are fantastic. So what does he do? He goes off and gets a guy named Saul from Tarsus and brings him in to be a leader too. And in doing so, he probably already knows that he just knocked himself down to number two, because he's bringing in this great genius who nobody else really wants to touch with a ten-foot pole at that point. And he brings him in, and pretty quick, you're not reading about Barnabas and Saul—you're reading about Paul and Barnabas. It's Paul first now. But these tremendous friends and encouragers, like Barnabas and Jonathan, are actually willing not to be number one. And that takes a tremendous amount of love.

Jonathan is *content*. He loves his friend David. He knows God's plan to make David king, not Jonathan. And he accepts that plan. He even advances God's plan.

And then he is killed, and you feel sad. When I read the story of Jonathan and David, by the time it's all over, I'm thinking, "You know what? Whatever reason God had for not allowing Saul's dynasty, his family line, to continue on the throne, you can't say it's because Saul's son wasn't a good guy." Jonathan was about as good as you could get. And yet he was not chosen and appointed to be king.

But at another level, shed no tears for Jonathan. He died heroically. He died without the murders that David would later commit. He died without the adultery that David would later commit. Don't shed too many tears for Jonathan, because in the eyes of the world, it's not always the guy who gets the throne who is great in God's eyes or great in God's kingdom. We remember the great David and the even greater Son of David, Jesus Christ. But Jonathan was dear to God, is dear to God, because God is the God of the living and not of the dead (Matthew 22:32). Jonathan, though he died in battle, was mourned here on earth by David, and Jonathan lives and reigns with God.

When you hear the kind of person Jonathan was, one thing you can pray is, "Lord, give me a friend like Jonathan—somebody who will be there no matter what and will always be wanting what's best for me and strengthening my hand in God. Give me a friend like Jonathan!" Pray that you'll have friends like that.

But don't stop there. Don't just say, "Lord, give me a friend like Jonathan." Say, "Lord, make me a friend like Jonathan. Help me to be a person like him—noble, brave, strong, wise, faithful, encouraging, generous, willing to follow God's plan wherever it leads, even if it doesn't seem to lead to my greatest glory here on earth. Make me a noble friend, like Jonathan."

Healthy friendship

Thinking about the friendship between David and Jonathan in the wider context of the Scriptures, here are a few statements from the Proverbs, from David's son Solomon: "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm" (Proverbs 13:20). There's a reason why your parents worry about your friends. Because if they're not good ones, they will bring you harm. So pick good ones. "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity" (Proverbs 17:17). That's why we need other people. We're not so strong and so heroic that we can always do it on our own. At those times that are tough, we need a friend who loves all the time and lifts us up again. "A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

Friendship is a wonderful and beautiful thing. It's something that's been misunderstood and maybe fallen on hard times in our age, but it is still worth pursuing. That statement in First Samuel 18:1 is worth thinking about: "The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved David as his own soul" (1 Samuel 18:1). There's a statement in the New Testament that echoes that. The apostle Paul says, "My goal is that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:2–3). What is the church? It's meant to be a place where hearts are knit together in love.

A church is not a place where you go for an hour on Sunday and you say, "Well, what am I looking for? I'm looking for certain kinds of music, and a place that makes me feel a certain way." Is that how you pick your friends and the people you really depend on? You happen to like the same music? A husband and wife don't get divorced because they have different musical preferences. But somehow in church, music reigns supreme. You know, this is nutty! Look for a place that teaches the Word of God and where hearts are knit together in love. Everything else is negotiable, okay?

Paul prays for hearts knit together in the full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mysteries, which is Christ. David and Jonathan were knit together in God's kingdom, and because they belonged to God and they were serving God together. The very fact that the phrase "knit together in love" is applied to the church should be instructive for all of us in what we're looking for in a church, as well as what we're being as part of a church. May God knit our hearts evermore closely together in love.

Jonathan and David's covenants are always centered in God. David says, "You have brought your servant into a covenant to the Lord with you" (1 Samuel 20:8). And Jonathan says to David, "May the Lord be with you. Show me the steadfast love of the Lord, and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever." And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David (1 Samuel 20:13–16). Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring forever'" (1 Samuel 20:42). You want to talk about BFF—Best Friends Forever—these two make a covenant of love that even includes their offspring and families forever.

"Jonathan went to David and strengthened his hand in God. And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord" (1 Samuel 23:16–18). They knew that God is somebody who is there. He's faithful. He makes promises. He keeps them. And so, they had a God-centered covenant of friendship together.

The Lord's friendship

As you think about that, think about God's own friendship. It is a tremendous thing to have human friendship with people who know the Lord and can encourage you in the Lord. But the Bible goes on to say, "The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant" (Psalm 25:14). You can have a better friend than Jonathan or David. You can have friendship with the Lord himself. When you revere him, you worship him, and he makes known to you his covenant.

Our Lord Jesus said, "My command is this: Love each other as I have commanded you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants... Instead I have called you friends" (John 15:12–15). What a friend we have in Jesus!

There's a phrase that come up again and again in the Bible and in the story of David and Jonathan: "steadfast love." When God revealed his name—"I am who I am"—and when Moses asked to see God's glory and proclaim his name, this is what God said: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Exodus 34:6). Steadfast love and faithfulness—God is the source of that. If you want to truly be a friend and to find friends who are full of steadfast love and faithfulness, then you need to be friends in the Lord.

David is well known as a foreshadowing of Jesus Christ. Jesus is often called the Son of David in the New Testament. David's victories over the giants and other enemies foreshadow Jesus' victories over Satan and sin and death. David is kind of a preview, an advance notice of who's coming after him—his great Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

But in his own way, Jonathan is also a foreshadowing of Jesus. Jonathan, who lays down his sword and his robe and his kingdom and gives it all to David. "Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself" (Philippians 2:5–7). Our Lord Jesus Christ, when he laid aside the throne of heaven and the robes of heaven and came down to us and lived as a servant and suffered terribly and died, was very, very much like his dear friend Jonathan, who gave it all up so that his friend could have his throne. Jesus gave it all up so that you and I could have a throne and reign with him forever (Revelation 3:21). So when you read the story of Jonathan, you're getting hints of the greatness of our Lord Jesus Christ, what he would later do, and what he continues to do for us.

I want to mention one more thing in connection with the story of Saul and Jonathan and David. Sometimes, when you read of these Old Testament figures, you learn ways in which they

compare to God and to Christ and see more of God through these similarities. But sometimes it's also valuable to see the contrast between them and what God is like.

I mention this because some Christians seem to relate to God the Father and God the Son kind of like David related to Saul and Jonathan. They feel like the Father is out to get us; he doesn't like us very much. But lucky for us, he's got a Son who does like us, and he protects us. Jesus rescues us from that mean and nasty Father who is out to destroy us. Although God the Father would zap us at every chance he could get, Jesus his Son came through and plucked us from his Father's wrath.

This is a terrible mistake. God the Father and God the Son do not have different attitudes toward us. Their attitude toward us is exactly the same: steadfast love. Father Saul and son Jonathan had different attitudes toward David, but God the Father and God the Son never differ in their attitude toward us. What Jesus did for our salvation was not contrary to the wishes of his Father, but because of the will of his Father. All the love that Jesus pours out on us and his friendship is because our Father has loved us with an everlasting love. As the Bible puts it, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:7–8).

We love each other because love is from God, and God is love. It's not "God the Father is like Saul, but Jesus the Son is like Jonathan." God the Father always has been and always will be pure love, pouring out his love upon us. And that love comes to us in the person of his Son Jesus, because he is "the Lord, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, the one who keeps covenant forever" (Psalm 103:8; Deuteronomy 7:9). This is the God you can trust.

Prayer

Father, give us trust in you—that you are a loving Father from everlasting to everlasting in your eternal plan for us. We praise you that you destined us even for a throne and that you, Lord Jesus, did not count your throne and your equality with God something to be grasped, but emptied yourself that we might have your fullness, and left your throne that we might sit on the throne with you forever and ever.

Thank you, Lord, for the great stories of David and Jonathan and the wonderful love and friendship between them. Help us experience and taste something of the love and the power and the courage that you give. Make us friends and helpers and encouragers to those around us. May we seek and be open to receiving encouragement and friendship from one another, rather than being isolated and cut off from one another.

Thank you, Lord, that the way of greatness is the way of serving, that even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). As we hear of the heroism of David, remind us also of a different kind of heroism that Jonathan had—and all of these wonderful traits combined in the perfect person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Savior, give us trust in you and make us more like you, for your sake and for your glory. Amen.

Jonathan and David: Best Friends Forever

1 Samuel 14-23

David Feddes

Slide Contents

Common confusion^L_{SEP} about friendship

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- Showing feelings is wimpy, not manly.
- Friendship is mainly for sharing fun times.
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Jonathan's Faith and Courage

Jonathan said to the young man who carried his armor, "Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised. It may be that the Lord will work for us, for nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few." And his armor-bearer said to him, "Do all that is in your heart. Do as you wish. Behold, I am with you heart and soul."

Then Jonathan said, "Behold, we will cross over to the men, and we will show ourselves to them. If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you,' then we will stand still in our place, and we will not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up, for the Lord has given them into our hand. And this shall be the sign to us."

So both of them showed themselves to the garrison of the Philistines. And the Philistines said, "Look, Hebrews are coming out of the holes where they have hidden themselves." And the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor-bearer and said, "Come up to us, and we will show you a thing." And Jonathan said to his armor-bearer, "Come up after me, for the Lord has given them into the hand of Israel." Then Jonathan climbed up on his hands and feet, and his armor-bearer after him... And that first strike, which Jonathan and his armor-bearer made, killed about twenty men... And there was a panic in the camp, in the field, and among all the people. The garrison and even the raiders trembled, the earth quaked, and it became a very great panic.

Then Saul and all the people who were with him rallied and went into the battle. And behold, every Philistine's sword was against his fellow, and there was very great confusion. Now the Hebrews who had been with the Philistines ... also turned to be with the Israelites... Likewise, when all the men of Israel who had hidden themselves in the hill country of Ephraim heard that the Philistines were fleeing, they too followed hard after them in the battle. So the Lord saved Israel that day. (1 Samuel 14:6-23)

David's Faith and Courage

David said to Goliath, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head.... that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand." (1 Samuel 17:45-47)

Souls Knit Together

As soon as David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul... Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt. (1 Samuel 18:1-4)

Defending a Friend

And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David. And Jonathan told David, "Saul my father seeks to kill you. Therefore be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself. And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you. And if I learn anything I will tell you."

And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have brought good to you. For he took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine, and the Lord worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?" And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. (1 Samuel 19:1-6)

Covenant of Friendship

David said to Jonathan, "Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you. But if there is guilt in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?" And Jonathan said, "Far be it from you! If I knew that it was determined by my father that harm should come to you, would I not tell you?" (1 Samuel 20:8-9)

Jonathan said, "May the Lord be with you, as he has been with my father. If I am still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord, that I may not die; and do not cut off your steadfast love from

my house forever, when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the Lord take vengeance on David's enemies." And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul. (1 Samuel 20:14-17)

Abusive Father

Saul exploded in anger at Jonathan: "You son of a slut! Shame on you and on the mother who birthed you!" ... Saul hurled his spear at Jonathan. (20:30,33)

Painful Parting

In the morning Jonathan went out into the field to the appointment with David, and with him a little boy. And he said to his boy, "Run and find the arrows that I shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. And when the boy came to the place of the arrow that Jonathan had shot, Jonathan called after the boy and said, "Is not the arrow beyond you?" And Jonathan called after the boy, "Hurry! Be quick! Do not stay!" So Jonathan's boy gathered up the arrows and came to his master. But the boy knew nothing. Only Jonathan and David knew the matter. And Jonathan gave his weapons to his boy and said to him, "Go and carry them to the city." And as soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times. And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most. Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.'" And he rose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city. (1 Samuel 20:35-42)

Strengthened in God

David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this." And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home. (1 Samuel 23:15-18)

Lament for a Friend

"How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. 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. How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!" (2 Samuel 1:25-27)

Jonathan's Son Treated Like Royalty

Jonathan had a son who was crippled in his feet. He was five years old when the news about Saul and Jonathan came from Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and as she fled in her haste, he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth...

David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father Jonathan, and I will restore to you all the land of Saul your father, and you shall eat at my table always." ... So Mephibosheth ate at David's table, like one of the king's sons. (2 Samuel 4:4; 9:7, 11)

Common confusion^{[1][2]}_{SEP} about friendship

- Close friendship is for women, not men.
- Showing feelings is wimpy, not manly.
- Friendship is mainly for sharing fun times.
- Parents, not friends, have positive impact.
- Family matters; friendship doesn't matter.
- Your spouse must be your best friend.
- Intense friendship must be homosexual.
- Friendship has little to do with God.

Facts about friendship

- Friendship is for men, not just women.
- Brave warriors show strong feelings.
- Friends often deal with serious things.
- Friends can bring out the best in you.
- Friendship matters, not just family.
- You need friends besides your spouse.
- Intense friendship isn't always sexual.
- God is central in the best friendships.

Noble Jonathan

- Brave: outnumbered but unafraid
- Strong: wins victories for his people
- Wise: understands people and events
- Protective: defends friend, pursues peace
- Faithful: loyal to father and friend
- Encouraging: strengthens friend in God
- Generous: gives all he has to his friend
- Content: accepts and advances God's plan

Healthy friendship

Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm. (Proverbs 13:20)

A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity. (Proverbs 17:17)

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

Knit together in love

The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. (1 Samuel 18:18)

My goal is that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Colossians 2:2-3)

God-centered covenant

David: "You have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you." (20:8)

Jonathan: "May the Lord be with you... show me the steadfast love of the Lord ... and do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever..." And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David. (20:13-16)

Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever.'" (20:42)

Jonathan went to David and strengthened his hand in God... And the two of them made a covenant before the Lord. (23:16, 18)

The Lord's friendship

The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant. (Psalm 25:14)

"My command is this: Love each other as I have commanded you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants... Instead I have called you friends." (John 15:12-15)

Self-giving, steadfast love

The Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. (Exodus 34:6)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself. (Philippians 2:5-7)

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God... God is love. (1 John 4:7)