

The Blessing of Friendship

1 Samuel 18:1 through 1 Samuel 18:4 (NKJV)

¹Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ²Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. ³Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.

As we celebrate our family and friends day, I thought it would be appropriate to examine one of the best examples of friendship in the Bible. It is the relationship between David and Jonathan. Their relationship in God was so strong that not even death was able to diminish their bond.

In today's world, filled with social networking and global communication, the true definition of a friend may be misunderstood. I hope this message today will help all of us realize the true nature of friendship. And I hope we will all learn what it takes to find a friend that sticks closer than a brother. We will examine three episodes from the friendship of David and Jonathan, then conclude for the day.

The Bond of Friendship

There is a moment, a very precious moment when we are shining just right and another person can see something special in us. Maybe this moment comes when we share a smile or when we shed a tear. This special moment may come when we share a conversation with another person and they say "oh, you too? I thought it was just me."

For a blessed few, this moment may come on a playground when we see another kid making dirt pies. We share a gritty smile and become friends for life. A friend of mine told me he knew who his best friend was when his family was burned out of their house and another boy shared his clothes with him. Meeting a friend and building a bond is special. It is even more special when it happens in the Lord.

Our passage of scripture today reveals the beauty of this moment for a shepherd boy named David and a prince named Jonathan. How did it happen? What were the circumstances? Well, I'm glad you asked. It was a day like any other day. The Israelites were arrayed for battle on the side of a hill and the Philistines were on the hill on the other side. Prince Jonathan may have been in the tent with his father, King Saul. David on the other hand was delivering lunch to his brothers.

Then David heard Goliath and decided that he needed to battle the giant. He went to King Saul and presented himself. He was young and ruddy. He was not royalty or a part of the royal court. He looked common. He couldn't even fit into the king's armor. But he killed that giant.

What did Jonathan really see? There wasn't much to David. It wasn't the fighting skills. It wasn't his impressive stature. He didn't have great wealth or great status. David was nobody in the grand scheme of things. But the bible says Jonathan's soul was knit to David's. It says Jonathan loved David as his own soul.

There is something special about finding a true friend. True friendship isn't bound by titles, wealth, status, or stature. It isn't limited by popularity, or reputation. True friendship goes beyond dress or appearance. It transcends time or location. It is held together with something stronger than fairness. It is glued together with something greater than mutual benefits. It's bonded with the fabric of our souls and sown together with the threads of time.

"Friendship is a single soul dwelling in two bodies."
Aristotle

This friendship Jonathan had with David wanted what was best for him. Jonathan not only wanted what was best for David but was willing to do whatever he could within his power to see that David's needs were met. He made a covenant with David. All that was in his heart was expressed outwardly. He treated David as his equal and not as a servant.

Think about it. How many people do you think wanted to be close to the king or close to the prince? How many people do you think wanted to be a part of the royal court or even just be invited to sit at the table with the king? How many mighty men do you think wanted to give their service to the king to do his will?

Jonathan didn't treat David like one of his servants or subjects. He treated him like his friend. He treated him like they were equals. We know this because he took off his royal robe and gave it to David. He took off his royal armor, his sword, his bow, and his belt. Basically, Jonathan was saying if I'm royalty, you're royalty. If I have the best, you have the best. If I have a robe, you have a robe. If I have armor, you have armor. If I stand before the king, you stand before the king. If I have a dollar you got fifty cent. If I've got a sandwich, you've got a sandwich. If you cry, I've got a shoulder you can lean on. If we both walking, you got somebody to keep you company.

I won't withhold anything from you because you are my friend. From the very beginning their bond of friendship was strong, but it was about to get stronger. Turn to 1 Samuel 20:12 and let's talk about the Test of Friendship.

The Test of Friendship

1 Samuel 20:12 through 1 Samuel 20:17 (NKJV)

¹²Then Jonathan said to David: "The LORD God of Israel *is witness!* When I have sounded out my father sometime tomorrow, *or the third day*, and indeed *there is* good toward David, and I do not send to you and tell you, ¹³may the LORD do so and much more to Jonathan. But if it pleases my father *to do* you evil, then I will report it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. And the LORD be with you as He has been with my father. ¹⁴And you shall not only show me the kindness of the LORD while I still live, that I may not die; ¹⁵but you shall not cut off your kindness from my house forever, no, not when the LORD has cut off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth." ¹⁶So Jonathan made *a covenant* with the house of David, *saying*, "Let the LORD require *it* at the hand of David's enemies."

¹⁷Now Jonathan again caused David to vow, because he loved him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

How do you know that you have a good friend? Some say time will tell. But I say that time, trials, and tests will tell. Here we find David running for his life from King Saul. In fact, when you read the chapter David says there is only a step between him and death. Who does David turn to? He turns to his friend, Jonathan who happens to be the son of the man who was trying to kill him.

David comes to Jonathan and says, your father is trying to kill me. Now he wasn't playing. This was not some casual conversation. He was serious. Jonathan knew he was serious too. Saul tried to kill David four times in chapter 19.

1 Samuel 19:1 (NKJV)

¹Now Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David; but Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted greatly in David.

The first time, Jonathan talked him out of it. The second time, David was playing music for Saul and he tried to throw a javelin at David. The third time, he sent spies to David's house and David's wife, who happens to be Saul's daughter told him they are going to kill you in the morning. The fourth time, David fled to Samuel and when Saul found out, he sent to kill David and Samuel saved his life.

This was serious. Saul had all of his servants involved in trying to kill David dead. Jonathan could die for defying a direct order of the king. He could be killed for

harboring an enemy of the crown. But here he is trying to figure out how to help his friend. There are friends and there are acquaintances. Not everyone we meet is a friend. All it takes is a little hot water to prove the difference.

The Frog Example:

Did you know if you put a frog in a pot and gradually turned up the heat, he won't jump out? Let's say I have three frogs and I put two of them in a pot together and turn up the heat. Then, once the water gets hot, I put my last frog in the pot. Do you know what will happen? The third frog will jump out. The frogs that were in the pot from the beginning, the ones that endured the heat together won't move. But the frog that didn't experience the gradual raising of the temperature, will feel the heat and immediately jump to save itself.

Acquaintances are like that. When you try to draw them into your hot situation, they may very well jump out. They may stay for a few seconds, but their bond of friendship isn't strong enough to stay by your side and endure to the end.

“Prosperity begets friends, adversity proves them.”

When things are well, we can all get a lot of friends. But a little hot water will tell you if they are true or not. Let me take this moment to say something. There are a lot of people who are using MySpace and Facebook to network and meet people. Some of them have 20, 30, or even 100 “friends” on their accounts. Even though Facebook calls them friends, many of them are just acquaintances. They are only people that you know. But they are not true friends.

Not everyone at your office is your friend. You work with them, and you talk with them, but all it takes is a little hot water to find out who is a true friend. Not everyone is your friend at school. You may spend time with them, and you may talk with them, but all it takes is a little hot water to reveal who your true friends are.

When they start laying off at work and everybody is thinking “every man for himself” you will know who your friends are. Get seriously ill and you will find out who your real friends are. Get broke one good time and need some help. Have an enemy who is out to get you like David did. You'll see.

Some of us have family members who won't endure hot water with us. I'm sure that we can all admit, 90% of the people listed in our cell phones can't take the heat in our lives. Jonathan and David saw their friendship grow on this day. As they faced this hardship together, they re-affirmed their bond. They renewed their covenant. They strengthened their friendship and became even closer than before.

The same goes for us today. The more battles we endure together, the more we will be bonded. The more heat we face, the stronger we will become. The more shared experiences we have, the better we can relate to each other. We become frogs in a pot, and peas in a pod. We become inseparable in mind, soul, and spirit.

Turn to 2 Samuel 9:1 and let's talk about the Blessing of Friendship.

The Blessing of Friendship

2 Samuel 9:1 through 2 Samuel 9:7 (NKJV)

¹Now David said, "Is there still anyone who is left of the house of Saul, that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?"

²And *there was* a servant of the house of Saul whose name *was* Ziba. So when they had called him to David, the king said to him, "Are you Ziba?"

He said, "At your service!"

³Then the king said, "Is there not still someone of the house of Saul, to whom I may show the kindness of God?"

And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan *who is* lame in *his* feet."

⁴So the king said to him, "Where *is* he?"

And Ziba said to the king, "Indeed he *is* in the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, in Lo Debar."

⁵Then King David sent and brought him out of the house of Machir the son of Ammiel, from Lo Debar.

⁶Now when Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, had come to David, he fell on his face and prostrated himself. Then David said, "Mephibosheth?"

And he answered, "Here is your servant!"

⁷So David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore to you all the land of Saul your grandfather; and you shall eat bread at my table continually."

Jonathan is dead. David has become king. And now David is looking for someone from Jonathan's family he can show kindness toward. You see David made a covenant with Jonathan to show kindness to his family forever. The friendship they had with each other didn't end with death.

Just as David was blessed by Jonathan to be a part of the royal court, Jonathan's son Mephibosheth was blessed to be a part of the royal court of David. David's soul was still knit to Jonathan's. He still had a place in his heart for his fallen friend. Listen to the song he wrote about Jonathan's death:

2 Samuel 1:19 through 2 Samuel 1:27 (NKJV)

- ¹⁹ “The beauty of Israel is slain on your high places!
How the mighty have fallen!
- ²⁰ Tell *it* not in Gath,
Proclaim *it* not in the streets of Ashkelon—
Lest the daughters of the Philistines rejoice,
Lest the daughters of the uncircumcised triumph.
- ²¹ “O mountains of Gilboa,
Let there be no dew nor rain upon you,
Nor fields of offerings.
For the shield of the mighty is cast away there!
The shield of Saul, not anointed with oil.
- ²² From the blood of the slain,
From the fat of the mighty,
The bow of Jonathan did not turn back,
And the sword of Saul did not return empty.
- ²³ “Saul and Jonathan *were* beloved and pleasant in their lives,
And in their death they were not divided;
They were swifter than eagles,
They were stronger than lions.
- ²⁴ “O daughters of Israel, weep over Saul,
Who clothed you in scarlet, with luxury;
Who put ornaments of gold on your apparel.
- ²⁵ “How the mighty have fallen in the midst of the battle!
Jonathan *was* slain in your high places.
- ²⁶ I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan;
You have been very pleasant to me;
Your love to me was wonderful,
Surpassing the love of women.
- ²⁷ “How the mighty have fallen,
And the weapons of war perished!”

He says “I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; You have been very pleasant to me; Your love to me was wonderful, Surpassing the love of women.”

David memorialized the death of Jonathan in a song. He perpetuated their relationship with his kindness to Mephibosheth. It gave David joy to bless Mephibosheth. He wanted to show the kindness of God to someone from Jonathan’s family. Genuine

friends are a blessing to every generation. Genuine friends are a blessing to every extension of our lives.

When we have genuine friends we want for our friends what they want for themselves. We want our friends' businesses to be blessed. We want our friends' ministries to be blessed. We want their children and their parents to be blessed. We want their marriages to be blessed. We want their other relationships to be blessed because we care for them as we do for our own souls.

Let me say something important to the next generation.

Proverbs 27:9 through Proverbs 27:10 (NKJV)

- ⁹ Ointment and perfume delight the heart,
And the sweetness of a man's friend *gives delight* by hearty counsel.
- ¹⁰ Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend,
Nor go to your brother's house in the day of your calamity;
Better *is* a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.

If you have a true friend, don't forsake them. Stand with them and stand by them. Some of them will still be around later in life to bless you. But more importantly, don't forsake your parents' friends. Sometimes they turn out to be more faithful than family members.

The imagery here in this scripture is of a person who lives near his friends and his parents' friends but his relatives are far away. Solomon says it's better to have a good friend, yours or your parents' nearby than it is for you to travel a great distance to get to your relatives' houses.

When you leave home and go off to college you may be introduced to family friends. You may be told that they will watch out for you and help you. You never know when your parents' friends will be the people who have the power to hire or fire you. You never know when one of them knows somebody that you don't know who can open doors for you.

Proverbs 18:24 (NKJV) says

- ²⁴ A man *who has* friends must himself be friendly,
But there is a friend *who sticks* closer than a brother.

Don't abuse your friends or the friends of your parents. Don't alienate them. Don't be a stranger. Don't forsake them and don't take them for granted. Be a friend to them. Call

them even when you are not in trouble. Build relationships. Get to know them because there is a blessing in true friendship.

Many of us have friends who have become like brothers and sisters. They have been so close to us that they were like family. Our kids call them uncles and aunties but we are actually not related. We are just bonded in friendship. But even greater than those friends who become like brothers to us, there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.

There is a friend who has never walked out on us. A friend who tells us about ourselves because he wants to make us better. He'll be there in the lion's den. He'll be there even in the fiery furnace. There is a friend who has been bread when we were hungry and water when we were thirsty. There is a friend that is a proven battle ax in the time of battle and a shelter in the time of storm.

His name is Jesus.