

Made for Friendship (3)- A Model Friendship - 1

Samuel 1:18-23

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[0 : 00] Turn with me in your Bibles to those sections of 1 Samuel, 1 Samuel chapter 18 on page 290. We continue in our series, Made for Friendship.

The Bible teaches us that you and I as human beings, we're made for relationship, we're made for friendship. And here we find, in a sense, a model friendship presented to us in the Bible, particularly focusing on Jonathan and his friendship towards David in increasingly difficult circumstances.

Let's begin our time with a testimony that comes from North Korea of costly friendship. I read this a few days ago.

A lady called Heowoo, a survivor of one of the North Korean prison camps where Christians are put for hard labor because of their faith.

She came on a visit to the UK, this lady Heowoo, and she gave to the head of the Open Doors charity a pair of socks. And on the pair of socks were written, adversity does teach you who your real friends are.

[1 : 20] Now, she wrote that on a pair of socks so that her friends in the UK would remember to walk with, as it were, North Korean Christians going through persecution.

But Heowoo tells this story of life in a prison camp and the time when they instituted as Christians a policy of holy rice.

So the conditions were awful, as you might be able to imagine. From early morning until lunchtime, they were given three teaspoons of rice to keep them going on the labor camp.

But the Christians in this particular camp practiced holy rice. So what they did was they ate half. So they had one and a half teaspoons for themselves. And then they deliberately kept the other one and a half teaspoons of rice to give to somebody else that was in more need than them.

And they did that for two reasons. They did that to express their fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ. But they also did that to build up trust with non-Christians as a way to say, we love you.

[2 : 27] We want you to know about the love of Jesus. It's a really profound demonstration of costly friendship. Maybe we know the second great commandment that Jesus spoke of, love your neighbor as yourself.

We have probably heard the golden rule, do to others as you would want them to do to you. And we understand that these are wonderful qualities to find in a person.

But isn't it difficult sometimes to be that person? Today, we're going to look at Jonathan. We're going to look at Jonathan as a model friend in David's joys and in David's sorrows.

So that we can learn for ourselves, what does true friendship look like? And to think, how does Jonathan provide a model that points us forward to Jesus?

So we're going to look very briefly at five qualities of Jonathan's friendship that we can identify from these texts that we read and another one. The first quality that really stands out is that of affection.

[3 : 37] So Donald read from us from chapter 18 of 1 Samuel. Now, this comes straight after David had won that famous victory over the giant Goliath. And in chapter 18, verse 1, we read, Now, these two men, in some ways, were similar.

Both young, both brave. Both men of strong faith in God. Had both won victories in battle because of their faith in God.

But at the same time, they're very different. Jonathan was a prince. And David was a humble shepherd. One was well-known. One, his father seemed to have forgotten about him just a few days earlier.

But from the beginning, these two men, some ways similar, some ways different, you see that they're bound together in love and admiration. Verse 1, he loved him as himself.

What is that? That's the second great command in action. And as the story goes, we see their affection and admiration develop. So in chapter 19, again, we read it.

[4 : 51] Saul begins to plot. Saul is very jealous of David's fame. He begins to plot to kill David. But what do we read there? Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David.

But Jonathan was very fond of David and warned him. So you imagine Jonathan as a man of faith, a man who lives under the Old Testament law.

Here is an internal collision going on. He's told to honor his father. But his father wants him to kill his best friend. That's a difficult situation for him.

And what we see in those seven verses is that he both seeks to protect his friend and not just protect him at distance. He also acts to restore him into Saul's good books.

He demonstrates that kind of costly, risky love. And then as the story developed, we read in chapter 20, again, of David being fully persuaded that King Saul wants to get rid of him.

[5 : 53] And Jonathan isn't sure about that. But if we read to the end of the chapter, we discover just how determined Saul is to kill David. But again, chapter 20, verse 17.

In the middle of this growing threat, Jonathan made David reaffirm his oath out of love for him because he loved him as he loved himself.

And then at the end of the chapter, verses 41 and 42, we find the story of a sad parting between two friends, that Saul's anger is such that they have to be separated.

We find them weeping. We find them speaking peace to one another. Against the odds, they had real affection for each other.

And they clearly know how to express that affection and care towards one another. For us, this might be a challenge.

[6 : 56] How comfortable are we in demonstrating, expressing admiration for the qualities that we see in a friend?

How good are we at finding, taking opportunities to share affection for the people who mean the most to us? Some of us, culturally, we are at a disadvantage in it.

If you're here today and you're Scottish and you're a man, this is a really difficult thing to do. To talk to a friend and to speak warmly and admire a quality in them.

But here's one of these times when the Bible must be allowed to speak to our culture and say, do you know, there are things about our culture that's not always right and not always a biblical pattern.

And so one of the challenges for us might be to find ways to tell someone about the good qualities that we admire in them.

[8 : 03] And when we do that, we're following the example of Jesus. Jesus was a man who loved his friends and showed that love. Think about that friendship he had with Mary and Martha and with Lazarus.

That's why when Lazarus, the brother, died, we discover Jesus weeping at his tomb. Because he sees the grief of the sisters in the community, even while he knows he's going to raise Lazarus from the dead.

Or if we go to the night before, Jesus will go to the cross. Read John chapter 13 to 17. And you discover there, Jesus is primarily concerned with showing love and care for his disciples.

By preparing them for what's to come. By promising the help of the Holy Spirit. By speaking truth into their lives. And in that section, in John chapter 15, we are reminded of this profound truth that Jesus speaks.

Greater love has no one than this. That he lay down his life for his friends. Jesus says that he loves his friends.

[9 : 18] But then he shows that he loves his friends. By dying on the cross. To deal with sin. To deal with guilt. To take away shame. To give forgiveness and new life and fellowship with God.

It's the affection of Jesus that leads him gladly to give his life for his people. So affection is a really important quality in our relationships and in our friendships.

There's another quality that really stands out from Jonathan and David's friendships. That's loyalty. As Donald was reading for us, you maybe noticed the number of times that the word covenant or oath came up.

This idea of binding two lives together in a mutual commitment to one another. The idea of their lives being welded together. That they are joined together.

They are fully committed to each other. It's like a wedding. And we have wedding vows. And we speak about a wedding as a covenant. When a husband and a wife are committed to each other no matter the circumstances.

[10 : 27] And that's what we see in Jonathan and David's friendship. So the story begins in chapter 18 in verse 3. In a time of joy and success. And there, 18 verse 3, Jonathan made a covenant with David.

Because he loved him as himself. So after that stunning victory against Goliath. When things are good, there's covenant. There's loyalty. There's commitment. Then in chapter 20, verse 16 and 17.

This time of deep anxiety and fear where David is hiding from Saul. Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David. And Jonathan made David reaffirm his oath out of love for him.

And it's the example that we see in chapter 19. In those first seven verses. What does loyalty look like in Jonathan's experience? It looks like him taking a great risk to first of all hide David away from King Saul, his father.

And then he goes to speak to Saul. To remind Saul of all that David had done for him. So chapter 19 in verse 4.

[11 : 37] Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul and said, Let not the king do wrong to his servant David. He has not wronged you. And what he has done has benefited you greatly. Do you think that was an easy thing to do?

I suspect not. To challenge the king on his attitude towards David. But he is committed to his friendship. Friendship is shown both in happiness and in trouble.

Friendship looks like loyalty and devotion. Whether we're thinking about a family grouping or whether we're thinking of other friendships. Loyalty matters. Drew Hunter in his book *Made for Friendships*.

I think I've spoken about that once or twice. An excellent practical book on Christian friendship. He talks about the difference between covenantal friendships on the one hand and consumer friendships on the other.

And he says true friendship is always covenantal. In other words, we're not just in it for the benefits and the good times. We're not just a friend to someone when they're happy and they're full of life and they're celebrating.

[12 : 45] We're there no matter what. And so one of the questions he asks in the book is this. What kind of friend am I when there is nothing in the friendship for me?

When I'm giving and giving and giving because somebody finds themselves in a time of distress. It made me think of the story that Jesus told of the prodigal son.

Prodigal son who shamed his father. He had nothing more to do with his father. He wanted to take his father's money and run. And when he went away and he was spending his money recklessly, he had loads of friends because people loved the parties and the good food.

But when the money ran out, the friends disappeared. That's a consumer friendship. But then as the story progresses and the son comes to his senses, he returns to his father and there he finds a covenantal friendship.

There he finds a father who embraces him, who welcomes him back in, cleans him up and throws a feast for him. He shows us God's grace and reminds us of what loyalty looks like.

[13 : 48] And again, that's something that we see in Jesus. Jesus was loyal and devoted to his friend. We can think about that in the case of Peter. Peter made many mistakes.

And when Jesus was arrested, Peter denied three times even knowing his law. But Jesus restored him. Jesus was loyal beyond Thomas' doubt that Jesus had risen from the dead.

But Jesus was loyal and came to him and restored him. And that speaks to us of the kind of savior that we have. In the Bible, Jesus reminds us that he is the good shepherd.

He doesn't abandon his sheep. He calls his sheep. He pursues his sheep. He lays down his life for his sheep. And he also spoke, Jesus spoke of the new covenant that he was establishing through his body and his blood, given for his people.

That Jesus would die to demonstrate just how much he loved us, giving us a way into friendship with God.

[15 : 00] And that sacrifice, that love is an unbreakable commitment from God to his church for now and for eternity. Sometimes we might find ourselves wishing that we had a friend who was with us and who was for us.

And we're reminded in the Bible that Jesus offers to be that person to us if we will put our trust in him. So there is affection.

There is loyalty. There's also humility. Perhaps not always so easy to see, but there's humility. Let's just imagine for a moment.

Imagine you have grown up in a family where there is a family business. And from as young as you were or as old as you were able to understand, you knew that you were destined to the top.

You left school and that was the course that you were heading on. Whole life is going in that direction. But then somebody else shows up and somebody else takes over the family business. How would we feel in that situation?

[16 : 05] It might be hard to celebrate and say, well done, sir. Take my place. When you look at the story of Jonathan and David, we see something really remarkable about Jonathan.

Verse, chapter 18 again. And at verse 4. So again, after this battle, after they've got to know each other, after they've entered into covenant with each other.

Verse 4. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David along with his tunic and even his sword, his bow and his belt. Jonathan takes off the symbols of royal power and privilege.

And he passes them to David. Why in the world would he do that? He's the prince. He's going to be the next king. But as friends, no doubt David has shared with him a story that we didn't read.

A story in 1 Samuel 16 where Samuel, the prophet, came to David and anointed him, declaring him to be the next king after Saul.

[17 : 19] Jonathan knows this and Jonathan humbly submits and acknowledges David as God's choice of king. Now that's unusual, isn't it?

Power says, try and get rid of your rivals. Try and block your rivals. Resist them at all costs. It doesn't say transfer your rights gladly.

It doesn't say celebrate promotion that comes at your expense. So what we find here is Jonathan is a wonderfully humble man. He's willing to receive God's way and he wants God's best for David.

And King Saul, in a sense, tempts Jonathan to change paths. Chapter 20. Again, we didn't read this bit.

But chapter 20 and at verse 30. Let's read that together. Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan. And he said to him, You son of a perverse and rebellious woman.

[18 : 28] Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established.

Now send and bring him to me for he must die. So there's Jonathan being confronted with this reality that he can have power and glory, but it must come at David's expense.

There's temptation. Grab it. Grab power. But Jonathan refuses to claim what Saul thinks is his rights.

Verse 32. Why should he be put to death? What has he done? Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.

Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger. On that second day of the month, he did not eat. Why? Because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.

[19 : 31] His dad's just thrown a spear at him. And he's more concerned with how the king is treating his friend David.

It's a remarkable example of a humble friend. It's a challenge to us. It's a call to us to say you before me and the friendships that we have.

It's a challenge to us to seek to celebrate the successes of others, even if that comes at our own expense, whether that's in a work setting or a family setting.

Here is a call to sacrifice our time, our energy, and our resources in various ways to be able to say to someone else, It's you before me. I'm putting your needs ahead of my own.

It's hugely challenging, isn't it? The example of David is profoundly challenging, the story of Jonathan and David. How can we do that? How can we be that kind of humble friend that seeks the good of others before ourselves?

[20 : 40] I think we need to see it in Jesus. I think we need to draw strength from Jesus. Jesus, by very nature of becoming human, it is not clinging to his right.

When he could have stayed in the glory of heaven, Jesus, in humility, Philippians 2, came down to be one of us. And all through his ministry, we find Jesus wanting to be alone with his disciples or wanting to be alone in times of rest.

And he sees the needs of others and he serves them. He teaches them. He feeds them. He heals them. It was the pattern of Jesus' life. He told us that explicitly in Mark chapter 10 and verse 45.

The good news at the heart of the Bible is that of a humble king who left the glory of heaven to become the suffering servant for us.

To live for us and then to die in our place, taking the penalty for our sins. And as we are united to him, as he comes to us, then we have strength from him.

[22 : 03] He is the source of humility that we need for true friendship. We look to him and we look to his example and we seek to use grace to be that kind of humble friend.

Another quality that we see of Jonathan that's so important in a friendship is that of empathy. So remember where we are in the story of David.

David is distressed. The most powerful man in the kingdom is after him, is out for his blood. He is afraid. He's alone. He's in caves. He's in the wilderness.

And how does Jonathan respond in that kind of a context? Well, let's read chapter 20 and verse 41.

So this is when David's going to have to go it alone and go on the run. David got up from the south side and bowed down before Jonathan three times with his face to the ground.

[23 : 03] They kissed each other and wept together. But David wept the most. Jonathan said to David, go in peace for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the Lord.

Saying the Lord has witnessed between you and me, between your descendants and my descendants forever. So there is sympathy there. There is love there. There is a reminder of promises that have been made.

And so David departs and he begins to run around the countryside and Saul and his men are hunting him down. Turn with me to chapter 23.

Last verses we'll look at. Chapter 23 and at verse 15. 1 Samuel 23 verse 15.

While David was at Horesh in the desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him to find strength in God.

[24 : 06] What does he do in that situation? When his dad is trying to kill David, he goes to be present. He takes that great risk of going to be present with his friend. And he speaks words to encourage and strengthen him.

Jonathan is a man who demonstrates emotional intelligence. He is able to use emotional information to guide his words and his behavior towards his friend.

How do we do when it comes to emotional intelligence? Can we put ourselves in the shoes of someone else? Are we able to begin to understand what they might be going through?

It's a thing that takes practice. It involves building trust. It's such a gift in a friendship when you find somebody who truly empathizes with you.

How do we begin to do that? Well, I think it starts with learning to listen and to listen well. I'm not always trying to jump in with quick remedies or here's how you can fix this in three easy steps.

[25 : 19] Learn to listen well to where a person's at, to their struggles, to their burdens, to their heart's desires. It involves learning to weep with those who weep, to rejoice with those who rejoice.

It's about committing ourselves to bearing the burdens of someone else and to be putting ourselves in their shoes and wanting to love them well.

And I think empathy as Christians will always lead us to take our friends to Jesus. Jesus, we find a remarkable picture of Jesus in the book of Hebrews as our high priest in chapters 2 and 4 and onwards.

And we're told that Jesus is our sympathetic high priest. Jesus became one of us so that he might know what it is to suffer and to experience weakness and hardship.

So that when we go through something that we know that we're not the only person in the world that has this experience. And Jesus understands. So we can be honest with him.

[26 : 25] But also because he's Jesus, he can help us. He can deliver us. And he promises to walk with us and hold us fast.

Again, God knows our situation. It's the heart of the gospel. That God sees our distress, our sin, our rebellion, our walking away from him.

And it causes him in love to send Jesus. Jesus comes to rescue us and to bring us back. And now the Bible tells us he is the one who stays with us and who prays for us.

He expresses that empathy that we need. The last thing I want to say about Jonathan as a friend is that he is a godly friend.

So we're kind of thinking about Christian friendship here. Again, another book that I found really helpful is Catherine Park's book, Real. And she makes the point that Christian friendship is a good thing, but it's not the ultimate goal of our lives.

[27 : 35] The ultimate goal of a Christian life is to follow Jesus. But as Christian friends, we are to help each other towards that goal. We are to help one another to pursue Jesus.

So how do we see Jonathan as a model of this? Stay with me in chapter 23 and at verse 16 and 17. Saul's son Jonathan went to David.

And what did he do? He helped him to find strength in God. Don't be afraid, he said. My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You shall be king over Israel.

What strength, what help did Jonathan bring? It wasn't military force. It wasn't simply sitting beside him, which is a good thing to do. He does something more.

He helped him to find strength in God. He put David's hand into God's hand and encouraged him to look up to the source of true strength.

[28 : 32] And not just that, he also brought encouragement from the word of God. Because what is it that Jonathan says to David? You're going to be the next king. Who had told him that? Well, it was the word of God delivered by Samuel in 1 Samuel 16.

So he's saying to him, take heart. Remember the promise of God. God will be with you. And so Jonathan leaves, having directed David to find faith in God and to trust in the word of God.

That says something to us as Christians who live in Christian communities, whether it's here or whether it's somewhere else. It reminds us that persevering in faith is a community project.

There are going to be times where we are weak and we need someone to point us back to God and speak the word of life to us. And there are other times where we're going to need to do that for somebody else. God gives us each other, gives us fellowship as a means of grace to keep us going.

And so as we read an example like Jonathan, let's determine with God's help to be this kind of friend. You know, in our conversation to encourage someone to look to God and trust in God's word.

[29 : 51] When we write, whether it's a letter, whether it's an email, whether it's a text, can we think of how to bring God's word, God's truth to bed in someone's life to encourage them in their faith?

When we spend time together in one another's homes or on a Sunday after the service, can we find a way to speak God's word to one another in a way that will help us to find strength in God?

It's remarkable that the Bible is very honest. David, King David, the man after God's own heart, he needed this kind of friend. Therefore, it seems obvious that so do we.

So it's something for us to pray for, that we would find these kind of friendships. And then it's something for us to pursue, to seek to build friendships with those who can help us to walk with God.

It's what Jesus did for his disciples. He often found them fearful and confused, especially when he began to talk to them about the cross.

[30 : 52] And so he would say to them time and again, my death, my resurrection, it's part of God's plan. It's part of God's plan. He strengthens their faith in God and in his word, strengthens their faith in him as their source of life and salvation.

So we find in Jonathan a model friend, one who loved well, one who was loyal, one who was humble, one who learned to empathize, and one who was godly.

Let me just encourage all of us to ask God to find that kind of friend for ourselves and to desire to be that kind of friend for somebody else. And most of all, that we would be pursuing that kind of friendship with Jesus, who is the perfect friend.