

# brentwood baptist

HUMAN: WHAT IT MEANS TO BE REAL

A REAL FRIENDSHIP

1 SAMUEL 18:1-16

AUGUST 27, 2023

## MAIN POINT

Unselfish concern for the well-being of another is the mark of true friendship.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**How would you react if a good friend at work got a promotion you thought you were going to get?**

**What qualifies someone to be your “best friend”?**

**How many best friends do you have in your life right now?**

**Have you ever had a “BFF” (Best Friend Forever) who became just a “BF,” and then just an “F”? Or did the opposite process ever occur?**

**What were the things that changed in the relationship that caused the deletion or addition of that friend in your life?**

The slaying of the Philistine giant Goliath brought David instant fame. The event provoked in King Saul great conflict. Saul was both sincerely appreciative and insanely jealous of David. He compelled David to live in his house both as a way to honor him and as a way to keep an eye on him. David’s life in Saul’s house alternated between playing his harp to calm Saul’s troubled spirit and dodging Saul’s spears the king threw, trying to kill the hero musician. David would later become a fugitive, fleeing Saul’s wrath.

Saul did not know that David had already been anointed by Samuel to succeed his throne. In the midst of this troubling story, God provided David a Best Friend Forever: Saul’s son and assumed heir Jonathan. Jonathan listened as Saul asked Jesse’s youngest son, still holding Goliath’s severed head, to identify himself.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

READ 1 SAMUEL 18:1-16.

**Was there any significance to the specific items Jonathan gave to David? What was the significance?**

**What is one token of friendship that remains very special to you?**

**The more success David enjoyed in his service to Saul, the more angry and jealous the king became. Why do you think Jonathan did not share his father's negative feelings toward David?**

**How well do you celebrate the accomplishments of your friends?**

The rest of chapter 18 is a colorful account of how David ended up married to one of Saul's daughters, avoided getting married to another, and the unique dowry he was required to pay. Yet Saul became even more afraid of David and more determined to rid himself of his new son-in-law, who was becoming more and more beloved by his daughter, by the military officers, and by the people.

**Have you ever experienced another friend's jealousy? How did you respond?**

**On the other hand, share a time when you were jealous of a friend. Did you overcome the jealousy?**

READ 1 SAMUEL 19:1-10.

**When has a friend taken a stand for you at some risk to his or her own position?**

**Would you have believed Saul when he pledged not to kill David? Why do you think David did believe, or at least behaved as if he did believe?**

**What do you think was going on in David's heart during this time?**

READ 1 SAMUEL 20:1-42.

**Has a friendship ever become a point of conflict in your family? How did you handle it? How might you have handled it differently if you knew about David's experience?**

**What "mixed emotions" do you think Jonathan was feeling as he teetered between his father's anger and his friend's anguish?**

**What can we learn from David's final actions before his friend Jonathan? How does their interaction with one another demonstrate authentic friendship?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**In his book "The Four Loves," C.S. Lewis draws many distinctions between the love shared between lovers and the love shared between friends. One distinction is that while face-to-face is the posture of lovers, side-by-side is the posture of friends. How can**

**you stand side-by-side with a friend this week? What can you do to support him or her?**

**What challenge in your life was made easier because a friend locked arms with you?**

**How have you been strengthened because a friend had been one in spirit with you (1 Samuel 18:1)?**

**How can you be of one spirit, or love your friend as much as you love yourself, this week? What kinds of sacrifices might loving your friend require?**

**What are some ways you can cultivate authentic friendship this week with those closest to you?**

## PRAYER

Praise God for the friends in our lives who lock arms with us. Thank Him for the friends who give us spiritual side hugs, especially those who come alongside us to help. Ask the Lord for grace to deal with ugly family situations. Ask Him for release from painful past circumstances. Confess for when you have failed to be a selfless friend. Ask the Lord to help you love and support your friend, like Jonathan did for David.

## COMMENTARY

### 1 SAMUEL 18:1-16

18:1-5. Immediately after David's conversation with the king, his relationship with the royal family changed forever. This was understandable because David and Jonathan had much in common; they were both courageous and capable young warriors who possessed profound faith in the Lord. Both had initiated faith-motivated attacks against militarily superior Philistines that had resulted in great victories for Israel.

Jonathan, like his father Saul (16:21), "loved" David. That love inspired him to make a covenant with David, one that was expressed with extravagant gifts to the new celebrity. In a single day David had acquired the finest sword in the Philistine army as well as one of the finest swords in Israel's armory; he had been permitted to wear the king's clothing in the time of conflict and was given princely clothing in times of peace. The fact that Jonathan gave David the garb and armaments originally reserved for the heir to Saul's throne clearly possesses symbolic and thematic significance. Not only did David's relationship with Jonathan evolve that day, but so did his relationship with the king. He became a member of the royal household and as such did not prove disappointing.

18:6-9. David's and thus Saul's, phenomenal success was celebrated by all. After the Philistine campaign was concluded and the army was returning, grateful mothers, wives, and daughters met them with expressions of appreciation. The triumphant soldiers were treated to the sights and sounds of women "singing and dancing." In accordance with an ancient Israelite custom (see Ex. 15:21; Judg. 5:1-31), the women composed songs with lyrics that memorialized the men's military successes. The poetry possesses

characteristics typical of ancient Near Eastern poetry: parallelism and the use of a fixed word pair, “thousand and ten thousand. “Saul’s reaction to this couplet was predictable and intense. Even more than angry, it “was evil in his eyes (“galled him”) because he connected the mention of David with Samuel’s prophecy of a previously anonymous neighbor” of Saul to whom the Lord had given the kingdom of Israel (see 15:28). As a result, Saul watched David with jealousy. The writer’s use of the verb translated “kept a jealous eye” probably is intended as a double entendre involving a similar-sounding word meaning “transgressed.” The effect of this subtle wordplay is to inform the reader that from this point on Saul would carefully observe David for the purpose of committing sins against him.

18:10-16. The Hebrew term translated rave literally means “prophecy,” but the word also is used of false prophets (1Ki 18:29; 22:10). In this context it may refer more to Saul’s excited, agitated state. Jeremiah 29:26 may also denote this latter sense. The evil spirit’s influence, combined with Saul’s jealousy, may have led him to hurl his spear. The allusion to David’s twofold escape suggests he remained after Saul’s first throw, perhaps to reason with the king and help him through his tormented state. Saul reassigned David to military duty to get him out of his presence. Saul’s fear of David increased in proportion to David’s successes. The fact that “all Israel and Judah loved David” put Saul in a more difficult position, since the people would not understand why Saul removed someone as effective as David.

#### 1 SAMUEL 19:1-10

Jonathan made sure David knew about Saul’s plan. Ironically, Jonathan, as King Saul’s oldest son, had the most to gain by David’s death. If David did not overhear the conversation between Jonathan and Saul from his hiding place, Jonathan would inform him later. Jonathan spoke well of David and suggested that his father Saul should spare him for three reasons. First, David was innocent of any sin against Saul. Second, the Lord had used David to bring a great victory for all Israel. Third, killing David for no reason would make Saul guilty of shedding innocent blood. The phrase As surely as the Lord lives was a common way of introducing an oath (1Ki 17:1). It is not clear whether the expression served him as he did before denotes David’s lyre-playing or leading the military. Perhaps both are intended since both appear in the immediate context (vv. 8-9). Holding a spear while sitting in his palace may suggest Saul’s extreme paranoia. David was playing the lyre to soothe Saul’s tormented mind (16:23). David eluded Saul... and escaped, perhaps because he was more wary after the previous incident (18:10-11). He did not provide the king a second opportunity to strike him down, but fled to his home.

#### 1 SAMUEL 20:1-42

20:1-11. David came to Jonathan, probably at a secret meeting place because Saul’s men would have been watching for David around Gibeath. Jonathan reassured David that as eldest son and army commander he knew everything, great or small, that his father planned. He did not believe Saul would hide this matter or any other matter from him. David, however, had keener insight into the situation. Saul knew about Jonathan’s and

David's covenant and friendship. David suspected the king did not want Jonathan to be grieved by the struggle between him and David, though in the end Jonathan would be (v. 34). Yet, David knew he was potentially close to death if Saul could capture him. The New Moon refers to a monthly festival (Num 28:11-15) commemorated by the blowing of trumpets (Num 10:10). David knew Saul would expect his presence at the meal, but he did not want to risk his life by coming to the palace until he knew Saul's intentions. Jonathan would tell his father why David was not there if Saul asked about David's absence. The annual sacrifice to which Jonathan referred could have been some kind of offering the whole clan had determined to offer. David trusted that God could reveal Saul's heart through the king's response to Jonathan's words. David reminded Jonathan of the covenant they had made before the Lord. David's passionate request If I have done anything wrong, then kill me yourself revealed the depth of his desire for integrity. The text emphasizes Jonathan's loyalty to his friend David despite the fact that with David dead, Jonathan would most likely succeed Saul as king.

20:12-17. Jonathan swore an oath and invited God's punishment on himself if he did not report to David everything Saul intended to do. Jonathan's words of blessing, May the Lord be with you, affirm what the text has revealed, that God was with David (16:13,18; 18:12,28). Jonathan's words as He was with my father suggest he knew the Lord's Spirit had departed from Saul (16:14). Jonathan asked David never to withdraw his faithful love from his house. Many new kings ordered the death of the former king's family to eliminate contenders for the throne. The Lord might judge every one of David's enemies, but David had nothing to fear from Jonathan. After Jonathan's death, David honored Jonathan's request (2Sam 9). Jonathan now established a covenant with the house of David, not with David alone. God Himself would hold David's enemies accountable for their actions against His chosen servant.

20:18-29. The Hebrew word translated rock also means "stone," but Ezel, though unknown outside this verse, was large enough to be known and to have its own name. Jonathan proposed code language to alert David about Saul's intentions. Calling the young man back toward Jonathan to retrieve the three arrows meant that all was safe. Telling him to seek the arrows beyond him meant David should flee at once. Saul's assumption that David was ceremonially unclean rested on his knowledge of David's faith, which would have prohibited him from partaking of the meal (Lv 7:20-21). Saul became suspicious on the second day, when uncleanness would not have required David's absence.

20:30-42. Saul's words, son of a perverse and rebellious woman, were an insult to Jonathan by defaming the character of his mother Ahinoam (14:50). Saul's reference to your kingship reveals that he intended for Jonathan to succeed him, despite Samuel's pronouncement against his house (13:13-14). Send for him and bring him to me indicated Saul believed Jonathan knew David's whereabouts. Jonathan cared about justice, not about the personal gain his father suggested might be in store for him. He would show loyalty to David, no matter what. Jonathan's words, The arrow is beyond you, signaled trouble for David (v. 22). He knew that David needed to flee as quickly as possible. Though the coded signal had been sent and Jonathan could have departed, perhaps he could not bear to leave without talking with David first, so he sent the young

man away. The yearning for a personal farewell led them to abandon the caution afforded them by their system of signals. David's position shows the stone Ezel probably lay south of Gibeah, so that when Jonathan came out with his servant, they would not immediately see him. David bowed three times as a sign of his respect and admiration for Jonathan, and they kissed each other, a common sign of greeting and farewell among close friends in that culture. Go in the assurance is literally "Go in peace." Jonathan could say this to David because of what they pledged in the name of the Lord, on His authority and with Him as a witness. The two of them would always remain friends, and they would do all they could to ensure their friendship extended to their offspring. David then left, heading southward (21:1), while Jonathan went into the city, where soon he would have to face his father again.