

“You’ve Got a Friend in Me” // 1 Samuel 18–20 // *The Life of David* #7¹

Introduction

1 Samuel 18, if you have your Bibles... **As you are turning there...**

Back in 2010, **Burger King** ran a FaceBook ad campaign in which they offered a coupon for a free Whopper to anyone who would “unfriend” 10 of their Facebook friends. *(The marketing scheme was when you unfriended the person, Burger King would send them a FB notification that they had been unfriended for a delicious hamburger, which was supposed to make you say, “Wow, this burger must really be something if I got booted as a friend over it.” Brilliant, right? Thank you, BK, for making our world a little brighter place to live in). Well, the NYT reported that the stunt worked too well--within the 1st week, 233,906 friendships had been terminated and BK was on the hook for 23K free Whoppers. They immediately discontinued the ad.*²

Now, I know that FaceBook friends are not real friends, but I do think the success of that ad highlights a genuine issue in our culture: friendship is not that much of a highly valued commodity anymore. A **recent survey asked respondents**, “In the last 6 months, with how many people outside of your family have you deeply discussed an important personal matter?” Over **half** couldn’t come up with a single person.

¹ Works Consulted: Tim Chester, *1 Samuel For You: For reading, for feeding, for leading (God’s Word for You)*, The Good Book Company, September 15, 2014; John Sailhammer. *NIV Compact Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994); Timothy Keller, “The Friends,” sermon was preached at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on February 8, 2004; Beth Moore, “Tragic Ends and Faithful Friends,” session taught with LifeWay, published in 2010;

This seems to be an especially serious problem for men. Most men stop making friends after they get married. Think about it: Can you name your dad’s close friends? Not “people he worked with” but “close friends.” Most men don’t have these relationships, particularly as they get older. **When men are connected at all**, it’s on superficial things--work, sports, poker, hunting. Only 1 in 10 men in this survey had someone outside his family with whom he discusses issues related to money or life or marriage. Only 1 in 20 had a friendship in which they disclosed information about how they were feeling.

1 Samuel 18 is all about friendship, and in this message I’m going to make some pointed applications specifically toward men—if you’re a man in here today, raise your hand so I know where to aim. I’m applying this to men for two reasons: 1. The story is about the friendship of two men. 2. Men, we are especially bad at this. Ladies, I promise, there’s plenty of good stuff for you in here, too; but you’re a little better at this, and if we could get the men in here straight on this, we’d all be better off. Amen?

Listen: I hope that all of our messages are important, but some messages define who we are as a church. This is a core Summit message for us, because one of the things we really desire our church to be is a community of friends. We say church shouldn’t be an event you attend, but a community, a family, that you belong to. Now, I want to acknowledge: Making deep friendships in a church our size can be difficult, because it’s possible to slip in and out of here for years and remain anonymous. But we want to be a community you belong to and not an event you attend, so one of our goals is to help this church grow bigger and smaller at the same time--bigger in that

Charlie Dates, “Die Another Day | 1 Samuel 19 | Pastor Charlie Dates,” sermon streamed live from Progressive Baptist Church Chicago on Nov. 8, 2020; Crawford Loritts, “The Power of Friendship,” sermon streamed live from Fellowship Bible Church on June 2, 2019. Tim Keller, “Marriage as Priority and Friendship.” Message on Eph 5:22–32.

² <http://bits.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/01/15/whopper-sacrifice-de-friended-on-facebook/>

we reach more people; smaller in that we make it easier for you to connect and be known. But to do that takes some initiative on your part.

Question: How many of you have been at our church less than a year? Raise your hand. Welcome! We are glad that you're here. Those of you with your hands raised--they say that unless you know 7 people by name here (I don't count ... unless you can spell my last name) after a year, the likelihood is that you won't be around for a 2nd year. So, we'll do our best to make it easier for you, but it's going to take some initiative on your part. So, consider today my biblical motivation for you doing that.

1 Samuel 18 is one of the greatest friendship stories of all time--it shows us not only WHY friendships are important but HOW to go about developing them. And it weaves these beautiful lessons along the threadline of the main point of these David stories: how God used David to prepare Israel for the Messiah. **Let's get to work:**

1 ...and the soul of Jonathan (the son of Saul) was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul (literally, in Hebrew, "knit together in spirit") ...3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, 4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, even his sword his bow and his belt... (These were his princely garments that he's giving to David. Here's what's remarkable about this: In normal circumstances, who would have been King after Saul? Jonathan. We know how it works. Queen Elizabeth, the beloved queen of England--when she passed away, Prince Charles, her son, became King. But Jonathan recognizes that God has chosen David to be the next King, and without the slightest hint of jealousy or resentment Jonathan divests himself of his garments and gives them to David.

5 And David was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. 6 As they were coming home, when David

returned from striking down the Philistine [Goliath], the women came out... singing and dancing, 7 And the women sang,

"Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands."

Now, this was not supposed to favor David over Saul. In Hebrew poetry, it is common to have 2 statements that basically say the same thing, where the second one reiterates and intensifies the first. For example, "Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking guile." This is not meant to contrast the tongue and the lips in their capabilities for evil, the second phrase is just intensifying the first. In the same way, these women are not trying to say David is so much better than Saul; this is a song giving thanks to God for them both, and they mention Saul first because Saul had been king first. But Saul didn't like that his name was associated with the lower number, and so He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed (mere) thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" A little bit of a jump, if you ask me. 9 And Saul (gave David the stink-eye) eyed David from that day on.

Jump forward to chapter 19: 8 And there was war again. And David went out and fought with the Philistines and struck them with a great blow, so that they fled before him. 9 Then a harmful spirit from the Lord came upon Saul, as he sat in his house with his spear in his hand. And David was playing the lyre. 10 And Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear. But David (with his cat-like reflexes) eluded Saul, and the spear stuck directly into the wall. And David fled and escaped that night.

Eventually Saul cools down and David comes back, but in the next couple of chapters Saul tries 4 more times to kill David. Saul vacillates back and forth--up on David one day; trying to turn him into a dartboard the next.

When Saul goes on one of his murderous rages, Jonathan pleads David's case with his dad, saying, "Dad, what has David ever done to you? You've had no better friend in your kingdom than David." And that calms Saul down for a while, and they bring David back, and everything goes well for a fine, but then Saul flips again. This happens 5 times.

After that 5th time, when David ran away, it seemed like Saul has cooled down, but nobody knows for sure--btw, you think your job is hard? You probably didn't go to work this week saying, "I wonder if my boss will try to kill me with a javelin this week?" That's David's life. Nobody knows for sure if Saul has calmed down, so David and Jonathan come up with a plan to test Saul to see what's in his heart.

Here's the plan: David will skip the monthly banquet that Saul has with all his generals, and when Saul asks Jonathan where David is, Jonathan will tell him that David had a family issue, and they figure if Saul gets furious, then that shows he had plans to kill David.

Well, sure enough, when Jonathan relays the message, Saul becomes furious, and when Jonathan pushes back on his dad *just a bit*, Saul takes a spear and throws it at him, his son. So, they have their answer. Saul wants to kill David.

So Jonathan goes out to David, who is hiding in the woods about 30 miles away. They have this little prearranged signal--Jonathan shoots some arrows out into a field and tells his servant boy to go and retrieve them. If he tells the boy, "The arrows are beyond you!" that means that David is in danger. If he says, "The arrows are in front of you," that means David is safe. So he shoots the arrows and says, "The arrows are way beyond you." So David knows he's in mortal

³ David bowed several times to show respect for Jonathan's status. Moreover, Jonathan's words "go in peace" are words usually spoken to an inferior. There is no doubt that Jonathan is the older, wiser prince and should

danger. Later, he finds David hiding out there: 20:41 And David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times.³ And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most. 42 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.

There is so much good stuff about friendship in this story, but before we unpack that, I want us to make sure we don't lose the **larger threads** in this story.

First, we are witnessing the complete unraveling of Saul. Saul is literally going insane. I know that mental health often has multiple causes, but Saul's insanity had a spiritual root. Disconnecting himself from God caused deep feelings of insecurity in him--no longer could he depend on God to be his shield and his sufficiency and to fight his battles; Saul now carried the weight of all of those things. And that brought all kinds of anxiety. How could it not? I mean, you're always worried about what tomorrow brings and if you'll be sufficient for it. Will you be able to make ends meet?

Being out of the will of God also made Saul jealous, because now everybody is a potential threat. He has to maintain his image by always being successful and other people who might be more successful are a threat to his self-image. So that makes him act insane.

Proverbs 28:1 says, "The wicked flee when no one pursues, but the righteous are bold as a lion."

be honored. That said, although both men understand the status situation, Jonathan is overwhelmingly supportive of the fact that their statuses will soon change. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Abridged, Barker and Kohlenberger III)

“The wicked flee when no one pursues.” Doesn’t that sound like an insane person? This is Saul—he sees everyone as a threat, and it gives us a picture of every person out of the will of God. When you are the one responsible to maintain your identity, security and happiness, you’ll live with a constant undercurrent of anxiety and envy. Again, how could you not? You might experience it as a low-grade hum in the back of your life—only popping out from time to time in the occasional sleepless night or panic attack, or the envy only coming out in the occasional cutting, jealous comment—or it could get really intense like Saul’s. Many of you live with this anxiety and jealousy.

St. Augustine said that anxiety and envy and hatefulness toward others are like smoke from a fire that you can trace back to the idolatrous altars you’ve built in defiance of God. Anxiety and envy are not the primary problem; they are the fruits of the problem. The real problem is, like Saul, you’ve gotten disconnected from God and have taken on the weight of maintaining your identity, security and happiness, which you were never designed to do. Trying to play the role of God in your life will make you insane. So don’t just try to correct the fruits of this problem—that is, come up with strategies to reduce your anxiety and stress. You have to address this problem at the roots—you’ve got to surrender to him and lean on him in trust. **So that’s the first thing. We’re seeing the unraveling of Saul.**

Here’s the second thing to note about this passage: The author uses the stories of Saul and Jonathan to illustrate the two ways we might respond to God’s appointed King. Saul rejects God’s King, and tries to kill David to keep David off of Saul’s throne. Jonathan, however, gladly bows his knee to David, even though to do so had to give up all

⁴ Interestingly, David and Jonathan were NOT similar ages (although everyone thinks they were). David was thirty when he became king. Saul reigned for forty years. So David must have been born in the tenth year of Saul’s reign. Jonathan was already fighting with Saul during the third year of

his claims to the throne and even though it caused a lot of strain in his family. Jonathan is a picture of what it means to surrender to Jesus as King. Jesus said to come to him we have to walk away from our claim to the throne, and be willing to forsake even our father and mother if we want to be his disciples. Which is it going to be for you? Are you going to resist Jesus or are you going to abdicate the throne of your heart to him? There are only two choices: you either bow before him in surrender, or you call out for his crucifixion.

Those are the two big threads from this story. But I want to spend the rest of our time focusing on the third thread: **the importance of friendship.**

We’re going to look at **1. The character of friendship; 2. The importance of friendship, 3. The power behind friendship**

1. The character of friendship

Maybe more so than anyone else in the Bible, Jonathan demonstrates the character of a true friend. Several things I could comment on here, let me focus on only 3:⁴

A. Selfless love: Jonathan loved David as his own soul, even though David inherited what in other circumstances would have come to Jonathan.

- How easy would it have been for Jonathan to have gotten jealous? Every indication is that Jonathan hadn’t done anything wrong; his family lost the throne because his dad sinned, not him. This is how I would’ve responded: It would have been so tempting

his father’s reign, and an Israelite soldier needed to be at least 20. So, in the tenth year of Saul’s reign, when David was born, Jonathan was at least 27 (maybe older). In short, Jonathan was old enough to be David’s father. So when David was a teen, Jonathan was in his forties. Yet, Jonathan loved David like a little brother.

for me to say, "This is not fair, God!" And then to resent David because David got blessings that he wanted.

- But that wasn't Jonathan. Jonathan respected what God had appointed and genuinely loved David.

So, let me ask you: How jealous are you of those you call your friends? Are you secretly resentful when some blessing comes into their lives? When they get the boyfriend; when they get the starting position? When they get the good grade or the recognition or the promotion that you wanted.

- **Are you resentful about how fabulous they look as they age?** Why do they have so much money? Why are their kids excelling at school and getting scholarships while yours are struggling? And all you can do is look at them and think, "God, why not me? They're not better than me!"
- True friendship is selfless. It rejoices in the blessings your friends get, even when those are blessings you'd like to have had for yourself.

Second characteristic:

B. Intentionality: Jonathan and David were not two companions brought together by the happenstances of life: Work colleagues. Golf buddies. Pregnant at the same time (if they were women).

- Nor did they spend time together just because they made each other laugh or they enjoyed each other's company, though I'm sure they did.
- They made a covenant (Did you notice that word in 18:3? It's an extremely weighty Hebrew word). They made a covenant to look after each other, and to do that even when it was terribly inconvenient.
- And that means more than just being around each other, btw; it means choosing to get involved in the things that matter and talking about them. We men have perfected this category of friendship where all we do is golf or hunt or play poker or watch

sports together. And that's it. Women tend to be better at this, but guys can be together for HOURS and never talk about anything substantive. The best guy I've ever heard talk about this was the comedian Brian Regan. He does this bit recounting a conversation he had with his wife. He says, "*I have this friend who got divorced. I went golfing with him recently, and it's the first time I'd seen him since the divorce. So when I got home, my wife's like, 'How's Gary coping with the divorce?' 'Fine, I think.' 'I thought you went golfing with Gary today' 'I did' 'And you don't know how he's doing with the divorce?' 'It never came up.' 'Is he dating anyone?' 'I don't know.' 'Were you two in the same golf cart?' 'Yeah.' 'You were in the same golf cart for 4 hours and you don't if he's dating anyone?' 'I know he's got a great new driver.' 'How is that possible that how Gary's doing wouldn't come up?' 'He says, 'How is that possible it would come up?' 'The hundred and fifty marker's there, it's probably about a hundred and thirty-five. Are you dating anyone?'*"

Biblical friendship takes intentionality. A choice to be involved in each other's lives and to get into the things that matter.

Third thing we see. A...

C. Commitment to speaking truth: Jonathan told David hard things, things that were awkward; things David didn't want to hear. And that's because Jonathan wasn't trying just to keep the peace or make David feel good; he was trying to save David's life.

A true friend thinks about your safety and your flourishing more than they do their comfort. They are committed to telling you the truth even when it hurts.

Proverbs 27:6 By the way, we know Proverbs was written, mostly, by King Solomon, David's son. And many scholars say he was passing along wisdom he learned from his own father. I think that's the case

here. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy." Kisses always feel better than wounds; and if you only have people around you who give you kisses, life will feel mostly good, for a while. But it's the faithful wounds of a friend that save your life.

Those 3 things stand out in this friendship: *selfless love; intentionality; and a commitment to speaking truth.* These are the things that characterize all biblical friendship.

Now, I wish I didn't have to say this next part, but I do, because this is the world we live in: **Some have tried to say that David and Jonathan must have been gay, so close and intimate and committed was this friendship.** It is sad to me that some people go there, because what that tells me is that our culture is so impoverished of friendlessness that we can't imagine a loyal, loving connection with somebody without there being some sexual component to it. But the Bible frequently points to friendships that are loving and supportive and life-giving that are not sexual in any way.

You say, "Well, how do you know it wasn't sexual?" Two reasons: first, the writer presents David as someone zealous to honor God's laws, and Jewish law could not be clearer on this. The writer would never present David as a man who upheld the law if he had this glaring inconsistency. Plus, we'll see later that the writer of 1-2 Samuel pulls no punches when David deviates from those laws. The idea that the writer is hinting around him being gay is pretty ridiculous; and a prime example of reading the Bible with an agenda rather than on its own terms. There are references to same sex relationships in ancient texts, and they never read like this.

Maybe more convincingly, however, is that David **contrasts** his love for Jonathan with sexual love. After Jonathan dies, he says: "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." 2 Samuel 1:26 (Now, at first you read that and you are like, "Woah,

that's intense." And it is. But notice that David is contrasting his love for Jonathan with sexual love. He's saying this is a different kind of love and commitment than sexual love, but it is real and it is significant.

So, again: the temptation of some to read this story sexually reveals how impoverished our culture is of the biblical concept of friendship; we don't even have a category for this anymore. And that's a tragedy. We need this category of relationships. Both heterosexual people and those with same-sex attraction need a category of relationship consisting of genuine love and commitment that is not sexual in nature. That category is called "biblical friendship."

Which leads me to...

2. The importance of friendship

There are several things that this friendship provided for David... (that all true friendship does for us)

A. It shielded him

- Jonathan alerted David to danger that he was unaware of. He saw things that David could not see.
- I love this verse in Ecclesiastes: **Ecc 4:9** Two are better than one... 10 If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls alone and has no one to help them up. 11 If two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? 12 Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. And a cord of three strands--that is not easily broken. There is part of that verse that DOESN'T speak to me (I'm not lying down with another dude to keep warm unless we are in the tundra and it's a matter of life and death--I have a strict no-spooning rule with my friends). But still, the central point is solid: **Together is better.**

- And that's partially because our friends see danger in our lives before we do. The definition of a blind spot is something you can't see because you are blind to it. If you knew about it, it wouldn't be a blind spot. You can't see it, but quite often your friends can. Often that blind spot is in our own hearts: **Prov 18:1, "An isolated man seeks his own desire and rages against all sound judgment."** When you get isolated, selfish heart deformities begin to grow unchecked. Think of it like the yard of a blind person. They wouldn't know where to pull up the weeds. That's what happens to an isolated man. The late David Powlison, a Christian counselor, used to paraphrase Prov 18:1 like this: **"Things that grow in a secret garden always grow mutant."**
- **I've told you this before, but it bears repeating. I was speaking at a conference with Paul Tripp and we were backstage** and news had just broken on another one of these **megapastors**, a good guy, **who had fallen**. I can't remember what it was exactly--abusing power or an inappropriate relationship, and I just asked Dr. Tripp, why? Why were these spiritual giants--or those who seemed to me like spiritual giants--so easy to fall? I'll never forget what he said. He sat back and thought for a second, stroked his mustache, because you remember it's a doozy, and he said: Two things...
- One of the best decisions I've ever made: moving into a neighborhood together with a group of friends... people who can see into my life. They notice the weeds in my heart, ask about them, and help me pull them up.
- Now, that kind of thing might not be possible for you. That's just one way to apply it. The point is that there are things you can do to open your life up to other people. For example, I know of one single guy who was struggling with a porn addiction, and his friend said, "You know what? I'm moving into your apartment for a month." Pretty radical, but it helped.
- Are people close enough to you to speak into your life? Be honest: *When is the last time you a friend told you, "That is a stupid decision. If you do this, it will hurt your relationships; or your*

marriage, or your testimony. Or, "This doesn't seem like wise use of your money—not sure it's immoral, but is that the best thing to do?" Or "This doesn't seem like a wise relationship"? When is the last time someone told you something like that? If you can't think of a time, there are two possible explanations: You are just so perfect you don't need that kind of critique anymore; the other possibility is that you haven't let people in close enough to see what's going on or given them permission to speak. (My money's on that latter one.)

This friendship shielded David. Here's the second thing it did:

B. It strengthened him

- Jonathan spoke courage into David's life when David was ready to give up. He reminded David that God had great plans for his life even when David's world seemed to be collapsing around him.
- True friends multiply your strength. God designed our hearts to work that way.
- **This is fascinating: I was reading this book called *Locking Arms* by Stu Weber, and he points out that when geese fly in a V-formation, they add at least 71% flying range than when they fly on their own. 71%! That's because the wings of the bird in front of them create an updraft that makes flying easier. So all the birds in the V benefit from the one in front of them. You say, "What about that poor sap at the front? Yeah, that one meets all the wind resistance, but each one only does it for a little distance, and when he gets tired, it simply rotates to the back in the formation and another flies point for a while.**
- You say, "Well that's just birds. Come on, man. Birds aren't real." OK, here's an example from the animal world: **The strongest horse in the world can pull a sled weighing about 5,000 pounds. If you harness two horses *together*, however, as a team they pull over 14,000 pounds. Putting two horses together doesn't just double their strength; it multiplies it.**
- God made us so that our strength multiplies when we pull together with a friend. I don't know about you, but knowing someone else is

grieving my problem--and that's rare to have a friend that grieves your problem with you--but when I know a friend is grieved about my problem with me, worrying about it with me, that makes my soul feel so much lighter, right? Have you experienced that? It's one of the greatest experiences of my life when somebody looks at me and genuinely says, "You've got a friend in me. *If you got troubles, I've got 'em too--There isn't anything I wouldn't do for you. We stick together and see it through, cause you got a friend in me.*" I think that's an old hymn, right? Just kidding. It's Woody from *Toy Story*. But it's true!

- **Close friendships sustain and strengthen us:** Interesting: I was re-reading something Tim Keller said the other day about marriage. Fascinating: He said in times of distress, it's not the romantic parts of the marriage relationship that helps, but the friendship part. He talked about going through one of the most difficult seasons of his life, and says in the middle of it that it dawned on him: His wife helped sustain him but not because she was *his wife*—because she was his *friend*. What I needed, he said, wasn't sex, or a roommate, or someone I shared my bank account with. It was a true soul friend.
- *And so he says to married people, or those looking to get married: "You must do everything possible, you must pay any price, to be best friends with your spouse."* Good marriages, he says, are not basically romance garnished with friendship. They are friendships garnished with romance."
- *And for those of you not married, it means that the most sustaining parts of marriage are available to you.* It's not sex or sharing a bed. It's friendship.
- Listen: God said it was "not good for man to be alone," but, you understand marriage is not the only way we stop being alone.

- In fact, in some ways, friendship—eschatologically—is more important than marriage, because while marriage is only temporary, friendship is eternal.

So, this friendship shielded him, and strengthened him. Lastly: C. It shaped him: Later on we'll see David show extreme generosity and selflessness with others. After tragedy had struck Saul and Jonathan's house, David asked if there was any of Jonathan's descendants he could show kindness to. And David found Jonathan had one living relative, a boy named Mephibosheth, but he was crippled. David said, "Bring him to my table. He'll never lack anything" and for the rest of his life David treated him like a son. That's a generosity of spirit he learned, at least in part, from Jonathan.

- **Jonathan's character shaped David's character.** That's what Proverbs says will happen: **Prov 13:20**, "He that walks with wise men shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall be destroyed."
- I've heard Craig Groeschel, a pastor, say that this verse means there is one place in your lives I can look right now to accurately predict our future. Not your New Year's resolutions. **It's who your close friends are.**
- Craig says, "You show me your friends and I'll show you your future." He says, "You become the average of your 5 closest friends." Look at your 5 closest companions. You'll become the average of them in the days to come.
- You say, "That's depressing." The good news in that is that if you want to change your future and are not sure where to start, you have a very actionable step: change your close friendships.
 - (I often say it's **not the dreams you dream** that determine your destiny; it's the small decisions you make. One of those important decisions is who you do life with; who you walk closely with.
 - When I am preaching at a student camp, like I did this summer—and on that last night all of them are making decisions to follow Jesus--it's always an emotional night, they

haven't slept all week, the worship band plays extra long, and you give an invitation to come forward and they call come saying, I tell them that the difference in those who continue on with the decision and those who will falter in it is who changes their friendships. Everybody at camp is on a spiritual high--they are all like, "Let's be missionaries, not date until college, memorize the whole Bible!" The difference in those who make it and those who don't has nothing to do with the intensity of emotion at camp; it's who follows up that emotion by changing their friendships. If you don't change your friendships, you won't change, I don't care how much you cried. You become the average of your 5 closest friends.

- Craig Groeschel says, "**We all have something we'd like to become... a better parent. A better student/worker. A more solid Christian.** What if the decision to become THAT was really a decision about what friends you chose? *You are one friend away from changing the course of your destiny. You are one friend away from being a better parent, better spouse... or one friend away from being a worse one!*"

You say, "Well, are you saying I should kick all my bad and mediocre friends to the curb? Are you asking me to go home and unfriend a bunch of people on FB? Will you at least buy me a Whopper if I do that?" No, of course I'm not saying that. Don't send me a screenshot with a bunch of "unfriend" notifications and ask me for a burger.

Here's A little graph I've used over the years that I borrow from Andy Stanley (I changed the words a little bit) (Diagram PIC: Core [those are your "Jonathans" - all of these should be Christians], Community [12-15 people you're doing life with - mostly Christians], Concern) (You don't officially tell someone when they move to a different circle)

Friendships are important because they shield us, strengthen us, and shape us. That's how God designed us.

And so I'll say again: it should disturb us how little value we seem to place on friendship in our culture, and how few friends we have, even in the church, particularly as we get older

- Remember **Prov 18:1**, "An isolated man seeks his own desire and rages against all sound judgment." It's a tragedy so many men have no real friendships in their later years, and it's why a lot of them go wrong: they get apathetic, selfish, self-absorbed, bitter, controlling. After a good life, squandering their best years in selfishness or darkness. Because of a lack of friends. You're not too good for it to happen to you-

Finally,

3. The power behind friendship

Friendship is inspired by Jesus.

Think about it: Jonathan served us even at great personal cost to himself.

- When David was in need, Jonathan walked 30 miles to warn him. Jesus, of course, came much farther than that. He crossed the gap between eternity and earth, between deity and humanity.
- Jonathan gave up his right to the palace to put David in; Jesus purchased our place in the palace at the cost of his blood.
- Jonathan was not the rightful heir to the throne; Jesus was, and he gave it up for us anyway.
- **Like Jonathan, Jesus laid aside his royal robe and took off the belt of his rights and the sword of his judgment and gave them all to us, even though he was the rightful heir.**
- And then, when we turned our back on him and betrayed him, he **refused to walk away from us**, even when he had every right to..
- What a friend...

(VAMP)

Jesus' friendship enables you to be this kind of friend. I love how Crawford Loritts, daddy of our own Bryan Loritts, said it: *"How can you be this kind of friend (we see here in 1 Samuel)? You must be overwhelmed with the friendship of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave his own life, his own sword, his own robe so that you could be saved. And in doing so, he transformed you."*

Or how about this: what about when your friends disappoint you?

When you feel the need of a friend but they just let you down. We all feel this sometimes. In the Psalms, David reveals multiple times when a friend or close family member disappointed him. In Psalm 55 he lamented a deep betrayal he had experienced, and he said, **"It is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it... 13 But it is you, my companion, my familiar friend."** It was a friend who betrayed me! Maybe you've been through that. Few things hurt worse. Or maybe it wasn't even a full betrayal--maybe they were just unaware of, or not paying attention to your needs. They didn't call when they should have. They didn't reach out. They were so preoccupied with themselves or their families that they didn't seem to notice when you were hurting. We all experience that. Every earthly friend disappoints—even the good ones, even the "Jonathans." And see, that's where you can lean on Jesus not as your example of a friend, but as your actual friend.

"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother." Prov 18:24. *A friend who sticks CLOSER than a brother.* It's hard to get closer than a brother. Brothers are obligated to be there. It's part of the family code. But there is a friend who sticks *closer* than a brother--because this friend was not only there for us, sympathizing with our pain, he took it in our place. He's a friend that will always shield, strengthen, sustain and shape us when others fail.

Experiencing friendship with him enables us to be healthy, complete, non-needy, and forgiving as friends. Some of you can't forgive a friend who has hurt you because you are so needy. You're always nursing how others let you down. It's why you can't be a good friend--**HURT PEOPLE HURT PEOPLE.** Your woundedness from past relationships makes you a bad friend to others. **But see, when you find completeness and healing in Jesus,** and experience him as your faithful friend, you won't be so needy and you'll probably be able to more easily forgive those who hurt you. And you'll probably realize that you've hurt them, too. As with all things in the Christian life, healthy friendships start with Jesus.

Summit: Today is the day for you to make an intentional choice to pursue biblical friendships. You say, "Where do I even start?"

- Two connection points: serving and small group. Both are important, but I will tell you, our surveys show that the people who feel most connected here are the ones who serve. So, start there.
- Go talk to someone at your campus today, either your campus pastor or at Next Steps. Or, go to the front page of our website or app and you'll see an invitation to all the ways you can connect here at The Summit. It's summitchurch.com/connect, but it's on the front of our website and app right now.

As I close, let me come back to the bigger point of this passage, the longer arc. David is the rightful King. Saul opposes him--and tries to kill him. Jonathan surrenders to him, at great personal cost to himself. For us, Jesus is God's chosen King. For him to be King, however, you

have to give up your claim to the throne. Only one of you can be King. Who will it be?⁵

Have you done that? I'd hate for you to leave here thinking about how to make better friends but still disconnected from Jesus--which is the main point of this whole story. **Jesus is God's rightful King. Have you submitted to him?**

Bow heads:

- You can do right now...
- What should we change?

⁵ Saul soon hurls a spear at Jonathan. He sees David and Jonathan as one and hates them both. Jonathan has lost his relationship with his father over his loyalty to the true king.

