

"Closer than a Brother"

1 Samuel 17:50 Thus David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and a stone, and he struck the Philistine and killed him; but there was no sword in David's hand. ⁵¹ Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him, and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. ⁵² The men of Israel and Judah arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines as far as the valley, and to the gates of Ekron. And the slain Philistines lay along the way to Shaaraim, even to Gath and Ekron. ⁵³ The sons of Israel returned from chasing the Philistines and plundered their camps. ⁵⁴ Then David took the Philistine's head and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his weapons in his tent.

⁵⁵ Now when Saul saw David going out against the Philistine, he said to Abner the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this young man?" And Abner said, "By your life, O king, I do not know." ⁵⁶ The king said, "You inquire whose son the youth is." ⁵⁷ So when David returned from killing the Philistine, Abner took him and brought him before Saul with the Philistine's head in his hand. ⁵⁸ Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."

Last week, we looked at David's heart and how God supernaturally set up the circumstances for him to be able to confront the giant. We looked at our own lives and examined what giants we live with as well. Today, we will take a last glance back and see how the Goliath incident concluded, look at a few details we didn't discuss. Then we will move forward to the next chapter and learn something about God's plan for our relationships.

David kills the giant with a sling. Notice here, I have a stone, about the size that David would have used. A tiny pebble is what we think of, because we are familiar with slingshots that are really forked sticks with elastic. David didn't use such a weapon. He used a sling which was whipped around his head and one end released, with the release timing determining the accuracy of the object. He would have picked some decent sized rounded, smooth rocks for his task. And Goliath would have been nearing him, David is said to have run toward him. That would be consistent for a slinger. I don't doubt that David has some trepidation about meeting this Giant...but his faith ruled his conduct.

I can imagine what he must have felt like as the first stone left his sling and hit the giant. It must have seemed like an eternity, silence on both sides as they watched the stone strike the head of the giant and as the giant stopped, teetered and fell. He may not even have teetered. He may simply have fallen. And David, still running, must have wanted to shout 'YES!' He is still facing an armor bearer who is likely heading for the rear, so he picks up Goliath's sword and cuts off his head. We know that he keeps the sword (which the passage says he put into his tent) but he kept the head and strolled around with it. Some trophy!

Not only does he walk around with it, but he carries this head that weighs more than a bowling ball into Saul's presence. That is crude. Look at what happens next:

1 Samuel 18:1-5

Jonathan and David

Friend closer than a brother:

¹ Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. ² Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. ³ Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. ⁴ Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt. ⁵ So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and prospered; and Saul set him over the men of war. And it was pleasing in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

Before we examine this passage, we need to realize that verse 5 is a summary statement, and is not about a single moment, but rather a description of a process of time. David prospered over time. Saul set him over the men of war (not the entire army) over time. And it was pleasing in the sight of the people...over time. Whether it be months, or years.

The beginning of one of the most interesting and powerful human relationships occurs here. I don't know what it means for the soul of Jonathan to be knit to David. Perhaps God drew him to David. Maybe it was that giant's head in his hand, maybe it was his faith in God, maybe the fact that he stood up to Saul and told him he wouldn't wear his armor...

Perhaps he saw in David, the courage and faith that he himself had and desired to use, except that his father was blocking him in at every turn. Some intrinsic character in David drew Jonathan to David. We find that the initiator of this friendship is Jonathan. He is the subject in both verses 3 and 4.

What is it about this friendship we find so intriguing?

Let me give you just a bit of background about Jonathan and David.

1. Jonathan

- a. Is the product of Saul – his name means “God – Given” meaning Saul saw him as a gift from God.
- b. Is probably 19 or 20 at this time
- c. Loved his father Saul.
- d. Had a good background, one of wealth, one of trusting in God, and one of popularity with the people.
- e. Was a natural leader with a good sense of self worth, who could see his father's faults and acknowledge them without demeaning himself.
- f. Is uniquely qualified for being the successor to King Saul.
- g. Should actually have become the ENEMY of David instead of his friend. (1 Sa 20:42).

2. When Jonathan meets David, we can infer that he observes several things:

- a. He likely hears David's brother Eliab's scathing criticism of David as well as David's response which is indicative of someone who is getting tired of being the family scapegoat, “What have I done? I only asked a question?”

Friend closer than a brother:

- b. Some of the psalms indicate that his family life was not a happy time and that he was not well treated by either his father or his brothers.
 - i. Consider that David was an “afterthought” when Samuel went to call the sons of Jesse to see which would be anointed King of Israel!
 - ii. We can see that from his brother’s disdain for him on the battlefield.
- c. Jonathan sees that David is a man of faith, like himself, although probably 3-5 years younger than himself. David is likely 14-17 years old at this time.
- d. I think that Jonathan is drawn to David as an older brother is. It is hard to understand just how men can forge friendships that start off as big brother relationships, but there is an organization that has been using this dynamic power of male friendships as a tool to change lives. It is Big-Brothers, Big Sisters of Anytown, USA. Here is a testimony written by a mother of a teen who was befriended by a Big Brother:
 - i. *Keith, I can't believe that you and Martin have known each other for only two years. It is impossible to believe that your relationship could have developed in that amount of time. You're the person Martin can depend on to drive when he has a date. You're the person I can depend on to bring him home from school when he misses his ride. You're the person who takes Martin shopping and doesn't give up until he finds just the right tie to go with his shirt and jacket. You're the person he calls to share his day with and the person who takes him fishing, and out to eat, and to your house to play with your dogs, and help with yard work, and to watch. I also know that you are Martin's friend, his role model, even his hero. You're here tonight to be recognized as an outstanding volunteer, but I don't think of you as a volunteer. To me, and more importantly to Martin, you're just Martin's wonderful Big Brother."*
 - ii. There is a magnetism that God puts in men’s hearts for a kindred spirit and for friendship that cannot be clearly explained. But I believe it is illustrated in this relationship between David and Jonathan.

3. Friendship Blossoms:

- a. I can understand why David became Jonathan’s friend, but it is harder to understand why Jonathan befriended David; David would be a threat to the throne, and would be vying for the throne against the son of the king!
 - i. I think that Jonathan did not share his father’s prejudices and ambitions.
 - ii. I also think that as a son, Jonathan challenged his father’s conclusions about the world –
 - 1. Because as Saul looks at Jonathan (especially later) he sees a son that has rejected everything that Saul has built his life upon. Jonathan reject’s Saul’s idols of power and self-sufficiency, he rejects Saul’s bigotry and hatred, he rejects Saul’s demons. And to Saul, that feels like rejection of himself.

Friend closer than a brother:

2. And Saul ends up cursing Jonathan for protecting David by saying, *“You son of a perverse rebellious woman! Do I not know that you have chosen the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother’s nakedness!”* (1 Sam 20:30)
3. And then Saul’s anger goes so far as to try to kill Jonathan: *“But Saul threw his spear at Jonathan to strike him; so Jonathan knew that it was the decision of his father to put David to death. Jonathan rose from the table in fierce anger and ate no food on the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David, and because his father had disgraced him.”* (1 Sam 20:33-34)
4. Jonathan risked his own inheritance and his father’s affections to be David’s friends.
 - a. He gave of himself to invest in David’s future.
 - b. I think that Jonathan represents all those people who help us become what and who we are.
 - i. Those who believe in us against all of the other voices that don’t;
 - ii. Those who give us a second and third chance when others want to toss us aside;
 - iii. Those who see in us the potential to be something great when the naysayers only see our failures.
 - c. Most of our current societal definitions tell us that friendships must be mutual arrangements, we give and we get.
 - i. : Jonathan embodies the friend who isn’t about mutuality.
 - ii. But a friend is someone who goes beyond take and gives. What is Jonathan going to get out of this friendship?
 1. Nothing but heartache and a struggle with his father whose sole purpose is to preserve his dynasty.
 - iii. **Friendship is not about having your needs met, but about meeting the needs of another person.**
 - iv. No one can form a friendship until he/she realizes that the basis of being friends is meeting the needs of the other person. **One must be a friend to have one.**
- iii. Differences between simple and true friends:
 1. A simple friend identifies himself when he calls. A real friend doesn't have to.
 2. A simple friend opens a conversation with a full news bulletin on his life. A real friend says, "What's new with you?"
 3. A simple friend has never seen you cry. A real friend has shoulders soggy from your tears.
 4. A simple friend brings a bag of chips to your party. A real friend comes early to help you cook and stays late to help you clean.

5. A simple friend hates it when you call after he has gone to bed. A real friend asks you why you took so long to call.
 6. A simple friend wonders about your romantic history. A real friend could blackmail you with it.
 7. A simple friend, when visiting, acts like a guest. A real friend opens your refrigerator and helps himself.
 8. A simple friend thinks the friendship is over when you have an argument. A real friend knows that it's not a friendship until after you've had a fight.
 9. A simple friend expects you to always be there for them. A real friend expects to always be there for you!
- iv. Friendship isn't easy to find, is it? In fact, most of us find that it is more and more difficult to find as we grow older. (We will talk about the why of that next week).
- b. Look at the beginnings of the friendship and you might begin to see what is occurring between these two young men:
- i. Did you notice that Saul liked David because of what David could do for him...like kill Giants and play the harp?
 1. But Jonathan loved David not for anything David could do for him.
 - ii. Saul refuses to accept David into his family
 1. But Jonathan accepts him completely.
 - iii. Saul dishonors David publicly (as occurs in subsequent chapters)
 1. But Jonathan honors David publicly, here in these verses 1-4
 - iv. Jonathan gives David his royal cloak, as David is probably clothed in common goatskin. Not only that, but he also give his armor, his sword, his belt and his bow to David. This passage is rich in meaning and it is where we need to look deeper.
 1. *When Jonathan gives David his royal cloak*, he is preparing David for service in the royal court. He is equipping David for where his life is going next. He can leave the past behind and move forward without shame.
 2. *Jonathan gives David his armor, and his weapons*: This is an act that is highly symbolic – it is saying, “I am letting go of my defenses to be your friend.”
 3. *Jonathan made a covenant with David that day*. Again, we find a solid basis of friendship, one that will grow and grow and grow.
- c. **Friendship is one of the most underrated means of exercising our spirituality.** One author has claimed that “It is as critical to our souls as prayer and Bible study.”
- i. Friendship takes what is common in human experience and turns it into something holy.
 - ii. Think about what Jesus meant when he said, “wherever two or three are gathered in my name, I will be in the midst of them.”
 - iii. It is as if God fills a space between friends and draws us upward toward himself.

Friend closer than a brother:

1. Anonymous worship on Sundays, among strangers is not what God called us to. He called us to something deeper, to a place where our soul is knitted to someone else and where we experience God together.
2. It is why we have Shepherd Ministry Groups on Sunday evenings...to create the opportunity for you to self-disclose, to minister and be drawn closer to other people in the church so that they and you might experience biblical friendship.
 - a. If you aren't coming on Sunday nights, think about the reasons why.
 - i. "I'm too tired. I'm too busy. I don't like self-disclosing".
 - ii. Are those also some of the reasons why you aren't making new friends?
- iv. One author I read said that when he was younger, he would pray that God would bring him a friend like Jonathan. Then he grew older and realized that what he ought to be praying is that God help him BECOME a friend like Jonathan.
 1. Won't you BECOME a friend like Jonathan? Give your life away. Be a friend and find a friend. You can start with our Shepherd Ministry on Sundays.
 2. Dale Carnegie said, "*You can make more friends in two months by becoming really interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interest in you.*"
 3. William Gladstone, one of the most brilliant statesmen of the 19th century escorted a young lady to a dinner. The next evening, Benjamin Disraeli, a novelist and twice the prime minister of England took her to dinner. When asked her impressions of the two great men she said: "After an evening with Gladstone, I thought he was the most brilliant man I had ever met. But after an evening with Disraeli, I thought myself to be the most fascinating woman in the world."
- d. As I ask people why they struggle with friendships...
 - i. Some tell me that they have been burned once, and find it difficult to get close to anyone again.
 - ii. Others say the problem is they don't really know how to make friends.
 1. It has been said that men are much better at making money than making friends.
 - iii. Still others say that they are too busy
 - iv. And yet others will say that our society is so mobile it is hard to invest in people who float in and out of our lives every few years.
- e. Let me give you a few principles from this passage about friends:
 - i. **True friendship demands a commitment**, one that includes a commitment to remaining friends.

- ii. **True friends take time.** David and Jonathan appear to have spent a great deal of time together while they were teens. Isn't that the way it is, some of our best memories of friends occur from our childhood and teenage years, when we just "hung out" with our friends and spent time together. Yet that is one of the major ingredients to friendship. It is also the way that LOVE is spelled... T-I-M-E.
- iii. **True friends risk vulnerability.** We saw that in Jonathan's removal of his armor and weapons and giving them to David.
- iv. **True friends are equally yoked.** By equally yoked, this means emotionally, spiritually, morally, and in your maturity. If you are not well matched, you will be unhealthy to each other.
 - 1. Biblically we are encouraged to apply this truth; and we see it between David and Jonathan in the terms of their faith.
 - 2. A spiritual friend will have a similar faith as you, a love for God that your friendship will foster and grow.
- v. **True friends advocate for one another behind their backs.** Jonathan spoke up for David in front of him as well as when he was absent. The entire 20th chapter of 1st Samuel is about Jonathan defending David to his father.
 - 1. I heard someone say that if all men knew what others say behind their backs, there would not be 4 friends in the whole world. Jonathan could have remained silent when his father was verbally abusing David, but instead he spoke for him, even at the risk of his own life (his father threw a spear at him).
 - 2. Are you such an advocate for the imperfect people in your life?
- vi. **Friends admonish friends when danger is near.** Jonathan's last meeting with David is in 1 Samuel 23:15-18, while hiding in the desert of Ziph. He fulfilled proverbs 17:17 which said, "A friend loves at all times and a brother is born for adversity"
 - 1. While in the rocks, Jonathan comes up and encourages David again. Listen to Jonathan's words!
 - 2. "And Saul's son, Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. "Don't be afraid, he said, my father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this.' The two of them make a covenant before the Lord. Then Jonathan went home but David remained at Horesh."
 - 3. Did you hear that? Jonathan puts aside even his own claim to the throne to support David and what he knows about the Lord's will. I am certain that David has told Jonathan about the anointing by Samuel years before. I am certain that Jonathan has seen God's hand on David. I am even more certain that Jonathan is totally supportive of David. Which I believe supports the last point:
- vii. **Friends aspire for the success of their friend, even when the cost is personal.**
- viii.

Friend closer than a brother:

ix. Yes, friendships end.

1. David's friendship with Jonathan ended on a battlefield, and David mourned greatly for his friend. (2 Samuel 1). David spoke of his love as more wonderful than he knew from his wives

2. *And friends are friends forever
If the Lord's the Lord of them
And a friend will not say "Never"
'Cause the welcome will not end
Though it's hard to let you go
In the Father's hands we know
That a lifetime's not too long
To live as friends*

f. Will you allow God to draw you as someone's friend today?

Closing:

4. Have you ever had a friend so close that it matches what the bible says about a friend that is closer than a brother? Proverbs 18:24 ***there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.***

God has a plan for you to become a person of influence. Part of that influence in another's life is to become a friend. Don't look for reciprocity. Don't look for what you will get. Look for what you can give. I believe that Christians ought to become the best friends to others because we know what a great friend we have in Jesus, who loved us so much that he laid down his life for us. Jesus said, "no greater love has a man than to lay down his life for his friends."

Won't you receive Jesus' gift of his friendship today? Don't push him away. You may wish to receive it today, and you can. You can slide out of your seat and come forward and I will pray with you and walk you through a prayer that will be the assurance of God's friendship forever.

And won't you take a step toward becoming a friend by risking some time and some energy to come to Sunday evenings and invest yourself in someone else's life? Let us pray.

Lord God, you came as our friend, and you laid down your life for us. Thank you for the illustration of Jonathan's great friendship for David. Some of us which we had friends like Jonathan. But Lord, today we have realized that we must BECOME friends like Jonathan. Lead us to people who we can befriend. In Jesus Name Amen.

- a. There are indeed **roadblocks** to friendships...time, fear, pain, a mobile world, but I don't believe that they are our number one problem to finding and developing friends. I think that we have to look all of the way back to our human struggle with intimacy to understand why friendships are so hard to build. Next week we will look at our wiring for intimacy. We will also look at how friendships demand a great deal from us, which we view as a cost instead of a reward.

5.