

## SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

— March 18, 2018 —

*Pastor Les Smith*

**SERIES: Friendship – The Tie That Bonds**

**SERMON: David and Jonathan: Portrait of True Friendship**

**TEXT: I Samuel 18:1-4**

### Central Message:

Over the next several weeks, we will be considering Old Testament characters who modelled for us what authentic community looks like and how to experience it in our own lives. Our name, Amity Bible Church, literally means *friendship*. As we examine friendship from a biblical perspective, we will look at two unusual friendships...one between two men, David and Jonathan, and the other between two women, Ruth and Naomi, to see if we can determine the essential aspects of authentic friendship.

The story of Jonathan and David is a great story on so many levels. 1 Samuel chapter 18 introduces us to the story of David's life. David is a shepherd boy, the eighth son of Jesse. Three of David's brothers have joined the Israelite army to do battle against the Philistines and their champion, a giant by the name of Goliath. The Israelites are afraid of Goliath, and the whole army is paralyzed with fear.

God had already prepared David for this moment, and even though he was just a boy, he took five smooth stones, slew the giant, and became the national hero. After becoming the nation's hero, he demonstrated that he was also a gifted musician. Saul, who was Israel's first king, asked David, "Who is your dad?" David told him, "My dad's name is Jesse." Saul invited David to stay in the palace with him and his family.

Chapter 18 also introduces us to Saul’s son, a young prince by the name of Jonathan. David and Jonathan could not be more different. David grew up far from palace luxury and Jonathan was a prince accustomed to the finer things in life.

In this unusual relationship, one man had power and the other had none. One had had the best education imaginable...the other maybe couldn’t even read? One slept in the palace...the other slept in the fields. One came from the “right” kind of family and the other did not. One was the son of the king and the other was a usurper who replaced the king on the throne. They should have been enemies. What were they doing being friends?

Under normal circumstances, Jonathan, as Saul’s oldest Son, would have been the next to take the throne. But God had other plans. He anointed David, a “man after God’s own heart”, to sit on the throne and rule the people.

Saul tried repeatedly to kill David and secure his own position. But what about Jonathan, the heir apparent, who was passed over by God? Was he jealous? No, he was not jealous. Jonathan loved David as his own soul, swore to him friendship and loyalty unto death, and repeatedly defied his father to save David, *even though David was taking Jonathan’s throne.*

The friendship between Jonathan and David is strange on so many levels. For one thing, their friendship crosses all kinds of boundaries. Theirs is a friendship that flatly ignores the normal divisions that separate people from each other in society. The world divides people along lines of social status, income levels, race, gender, nationality, and politics; and generally, people are expected to stay in their places.

If you have a real heart-hunger for relationship within the context of community (small groups), the friendship of Jonathan and David gives three key essentials for building strong relationships. If you, in your heart, really want to get connected...if you want to have deep friendships...if you want to go beyond the superficial, these very practical lessons will start you on your way.

**Essential #1: True friends are actively engaged in doing life together. *Connection.***

(1 Samuel 18:1)

*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.*

When we think of soul, we generally think of our inner, personal lives, with our thoughts and emotions. The soul is the part of us that will live on into eternity. It is the life in us. Samuel describes the relationship between David and Jonathan as having their “souls knit together”. This was the most intimate of relationships because it speaks to the strength of their bond of friendship. It is as if they were two bodies but one heart and one soul. Jonathan is also said to have loved David “as himself”. This is perhaps the most beautiful portrait of a man loving another man...no perversion, no apologies.

In our culture today, we are reluctant to even contemplate such a love between two people of the same gender, but we can be encouraged because Scripture helps us to understand that “to the pure, all things are pure”. Amen

**Essential #2: True friends have a bond that even death cannot break.**

**Commitment.** (1 Samuel 18:2-3)

<sup>2</sup> Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father’s house. <sup>3</sup> Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Loyalty is one of life’s most costly qualities. It may be the most selfless part of love. In order to be loyal, you cannot live only for yourself. Loyal people not only stand by their commitments...they are willing to suffer for them. Jonathan is a shining example of loyalty. Sometimes he was forced to deal with conflicting loyalties. He had an obligation of loyalty to his father, Saul, and to his friend David. His solution to that conflict teaches us both how to be loyal and what must guide our loyalty. In Jonathan, truth always guided loyalty. Jonathan realized that the source of truth was God, who demanded his ultimate

loyalty. It was his relationship with God that gave Jonathan the ability to deal effectively with the complicated situations in his life. He was loyal to Saul because Saul was his father and the king. He was loyal to David because David was his friend. His loyalty to God guided him through the conflicting demands of his human relationships.

The conflicting demands of our relationships challenge us as well. If we attempt to settle these conflicts only at the human level, we will be constantly dealing with a sense of betrayal. But, if we communicate to our friends that our ultimate loyalty is to God and his truth, many of our choices will be much clearer. The truth in his Word, the Bible, will bring light to our decisions. Do those closest to you know who has your greatest loyalty?

**Essential #3: True friends value the friendship more than their position or their possessions.** (1 Samuel 18:4)

“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.”

Even though David is considered a “man after God’s own heart” and is destined to rule over all of Israel, the protagonist in this story is not David but Jonathan. It is *his* soul that is ‘knit’ or bound to the soul of David, just as Ruth ‘clung’ to Naomi. ‘Jonathan loved him as his own soul’. Then, Jonathan instigated a covenant of loyalty with David, and, as a mark of his love, stripped himself of his robe and delivered it to David, together with his armor, his sword, his bow, and his belt. You could say that Jonathan was acknowledging David’s ascent to the thrones and was saying, ‘he must increase, but I must decrease’.

It is one of the most intimate and touching scenes in the entire Bible. But, the story has a larger political end in view. Symbolically, the king's son is renouncing his own claim to the throne in order to give place to David. He is pledging his

allegiance to the one he knows will inherit the kingdom. Giving away his robe and regalia to his friend identifies David as the heir from this point onward.

So once the story has taken us out of this intimate and private place back into the public highway of history, events leap forward with irrepressible energy of the young warrior who could do anything because he had won the heart of the king's son and the hearts of all the people. David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him.