

THE GOSPEL PROJECT – CHRONOLOGICAL
A KINGDOM *established*
GOD THE KING
The King Who Befriends

Today's lesson takes us to Jonathan, the oldest son of King Saul, who is perhaps best known for his friendship with David reminding us that our friendships should point to something bigger than ourselves. Our lives are filled with acquaintances but today our lesson focuses on genuine friendship. The friendship between Jonathan and David pictures Jesus, the Savior King who is known for being the Friend of Sinners. As we progress through our study of the friendship of Jonathan and David, we will see picture after picture reminding us of Jesus!

Even before Jonathan met David, the prophet Samuel had told Jonathan's father, King Saul, that because of his disobedience the kingdom would not be passed on to Saul's descendants. Samuel later told Saul that he would be removed as king and his kingship given to a neighbor. A young shepherd boy with no kingly experience was destined to be that neighbor. The Bible does not reveal whether Jonathan was privy to those specific conversations between Saul and Samuel but scripture does reveal that Jonathan's love for David surpassed any desire that he might have for himself to be king.

True friendship is grounded in covenant commitment.

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4 (ESV) ¹ As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ² And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. ³ Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴ And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.

There are some people that we are just instantly drawn to – you can't really explain it – you just 'know' you are connected. I love the way the Bible describes their friendship: *the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David*. Modern terminology sometimes uses the expression of 'soul ties'. A soul tie can serve many functions, but in its simplest form, it ties two souls together in the spiritual realm. Soul ties between married couples draw them together like magnets. On the other hand, souls can be knit or tied together for evil. Sometimes people speak of a 'soul link.' Be aware that this is a New Age belief that finds its roots in Hindu mysticism and Greek mythology. There is no evil in regards to Jonathan and David's relationship. They did not have a homosexual union. They were godly men who loved each other as brothers.

Jonathan was a typical warrior – very unlike his own father. While Saul pitched his tent under a tree, Jonathan with his armor-bearer secretly attacked the Philistines. In the first attack, the two men killed 20

enemies. The whole camp panicked. The Bible described what happened as a trembling of God and the Philistines were on the run! We get a picture of Jonathan's heart when he told his armor-bearer that *nothing constrains the LORD from saving by many or by few.* (**1 Samuel 14:6**) Considering their shared faith in God and their willingness to be warriors in the LORD's army, it is no surprise that David and Jonathan would bond so quickly! Throughout their friendship, they would allow nothing to come between them.

Because of Jonathan's godly heart, one might wonder why the LORD would choose David over Jonathan as king. There are probably many reasons but the simplest answer is that David was from the tribe of Judah – the line through which the Messiah had been prophesied to come. Jonathan was from the tribe of Benjamin. The LORD has a different plan for each of His children. David was called to be king of Israel. Jonathan was called to be his friend who would stick closer than a brother. **Proverbs 18:24 (ESV)** ²⁴ *A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.* Jonathan's faithfulness to his friend, David, is a wonderful picture of Jesus. Jonathan, of course, at the time had no clue that his friendship with David would become a picture of the Messiah's friendship with His people – reminding me of a chorus we sing – I am a friend of God – He calls me friend.

David and Jonathan made or cut a covenant. This solemn ritual involved the death of animals and the binding of people to a promise. The persons making the covenant would sacrifice several animals and divide the bodies, placing the halves opposite each other on the ground. Then the parties would walk between the pieces declaring if they failed to keep their word, they deserved the same fate as the animals. Scripture does not specifically reveal if the two men did this but scripture does tell us that Jonathan stripped himself of his robe, armor, sword, bow, and belt. His covenant of love involved a sacrifice – he was willing to give up his position as the heir to the throne. That is how much Jonathan loved David. Jonathan's love for David is a picture of the sacrifice Jesus made when He left the throne of heaven to give His life so we can become heirs to God's kingdom.

King Saul was a tormented man. **1 Samuel 16:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ *Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a harmful spirit from the LORD tormented him.* It was David's musical ability that first brought him to the court of Saul to soothe Saul's mental anguish – not the slaying of Goliath. **1 Samuel 16:23** *Whenever the spirit from God came upon Saul, David would take his harp and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him.* From musical talent to giant slaying, David had been 'gifted' by the LORD for the purpose of accomplishing the LORD's work.

Even though David's music soothed Saul, it did not take long for Saul to become jealous of David. Saul had set David over his men of war enabling David to slaughter many of Israel's Philistine enemies. David's music had soothed the harmful spirit with Saul and yet it was a song that also sparked Saul's insane jealousy. **1 Samuel 18:7 (ESV)** ⁷ *And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands."* And those words grated on Saul – to think that women would say Saul killed thousands and in the same breath say David killed ten thousands.

True friendship risks one's welfare for another.

Read 1 Samuel 19:1-7 (ESV) ¹ And Saul spoke to Jonathan his son and to all his servants, that they should kill David. But Jonathan, Saul's son, delighted much in David. ² And Jonathan told David, "Saul my father seeks to kill you. Therefore be on your guard in the morning. Stay in a secret place and hide yourself. ³ And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak to my father about you. And if I learn anything I will tell you." ⁴ And Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king sin against his servant David, because he has not sinned against you, and because his deeds have brought good to you. ⁵ For he took his life in his hand and he struck down the Philistine, and the LORD worked a great salvation for all Israel. You saw it, and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by killing David without cause?" ⁶ And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan. Saul swore, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." ⁷ And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan reported to him all these things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as before.

It is remarkable that such a magnificent son should belong to such a wicked father. Had Jonathan been a selfish man like his father, Jonathan could have helped Saul eliminate David and secure the crown for himself, but he submitted to the will of God and assisted David. Jonathan was able to discern the differences in the spirits of the two men even although one was his own father. It took courage for Jonathan to speak so plainly about David to his father the king. Often it takes courage for us to speak up for the right and remain completely loyal. Jonathan's intercession for David pictures the intercession of Jesus on our behalf. **Romans 8:34 (ESV)** ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.

David was being tested and trained by the LORD. Many of the wonderful Psalms of David were written during this trying period in his life. Although several times King Saul briefly repents of his murderous intent, David's life was in jeopardy until Saul's death. During these days of exile -- possibly a period of ten years -- David would be hunted like a wild animal but he found a friend in Jonathan who remained true and protective of David as long as Jonathan lived. David would remain true to Jonathan as well even beyond Jonathan's lifetime.

On this particular occasion David was restored to fellowship with King Saul through the mediation of Jonathan. Jonathan's actions once again give us a picture of the work of Jesus, our friend. **1 Timothy 2:5 (ESV)** ⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus. Even when we feel friendless, when we have Jesus we have a friend like no other.

Saul had promised that whoever killed Goliath would be given his daughter in marriage. Saul eventually did give David his younger daughter Michal to wed. One of those times when Saul became enraged with David, Michal helped to save his life. Let's fast forward to a moment after David was king of Israel and see how their marriage turned out.

David and Michal's union never become spiritual where their souls 'knit together' in the LORD. After David reigned as king over all Israel, the Ark of the Covenant was brought to Jerusalem. The return of the Ark filled David's heart with joy. **2 Samuel 6:14 (ESV)** ¹⁴ *And David danced before the LORD with all his might. And David was wearing a linen ephod.* We read of Michal's reaction in **2 Samuel 6:16 (ESV)** ¹⁶ *As the ark of the LORD came into the city of David, Michal the daughter of Saul looked out of the window and saw King David leaping and dancing before the LORD, and she despised him in her heart.* For some reason I have always thought that Michal despised David because he was dancing 'nearly naked' before the LORD. I was mistaken. The same event is described in more detail in **1 Chronicles 15:27 (ESV)** ²⁷ *David was clothed with a robe of fine linen...And David wore a linen ephod.* Yes, David was wearing something that looked similar to an apron or loincloth but it was over a priestly robe. He was assuming the role of both priest and king unknowingly picturing for future generations his own descendant who would be our High Priest and king. David was dancing humbly before the LORD in priestly attire. He was not being sinful or shameful or dancing ecstatically out of his mind. His actions were joyful. Michal did not share her husband's joy over the return of the Ark. She only saw David dancing in a way she considered to be beneath his station in life. Their hearts were not knit. Now back to Jonathan and David.

Saul continued to seek David's life time after time. All the while, Jonathan remained loyal to David. Let's look into Jonathan and David's heart rending meeting at Ramah. True friendship strengthens us in our faith.

Read 1 Samuel 23:15-18 (ESV) ¹⁵ *David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh.* ¹⁶ *And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh, and strengthened his hand in God.* ¹⁷ *And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Saul my father also knows this."* ¹⁸ *And the two of them made a covenant before the LORD. David remained at Horesh, and Jonathan went home.*

This was the last recorded meeting between Jonathan and David. Jonathan's presence strengthened David. Even though David had a strong personal faith in God, he still needed, like all of us do, the help of his friends to remind him not to fear because the promises of God are true. Jonathan isn't mentioned again until **1 Samuel 31:2** where we're told he died on the battlefield. Jonathan had no idea that he would be killed before David became king. In this passage I am reminded of the attitude of John the Baptist toward the ministry of Jesus when he said in **John 3:30 (ESV)** ³⁰ *He must increase, but I must decrease.* "

The LORD often 'refines' His children in the fiery furnaces of life. Jonathan's dedicated support of David reminds us of the need to walk with friends through their times of being in the furnace! God called David to be a King. God called Jonathan to be a friend like no other. God does not call many to be rulers and kings. However, He does call all of us to be friends to others. Is God calling you to be such a friend as Jonathan today?