

LIFE LESSONS – 1 SAMUEL: The Best of Friends! 1 Samuel 18:17-20:42

INTRODUCTION:

Good morning, Church Family! It is so good to see you this morning, as always. I do want to take the opportunity to welcome those of you that are guests. Thanks for trusting us with your Sunday. It is my prayer that our church already feels like home to you.

We would like to connect with you. There are a couple of ways you can help us do that. One, feel free to text, anytime, the keyword TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mt. Pleasant to the number 94-000. When you do, you'll be sent a link where you can share with us basic contact information. I will then look forward to following up with you this coming week. Or another way you can connect with us is by stopping by our information center located in the main lobby area under the banner "Hope is Here." We have a gift there for you to say thanks for joining us today. It is the highlight of my week to visit with those of you that are our guests. We are thrilled to have you with us today.

SERIES OVERVIEW:

We are in the middle of part two of a teaching series we've called Life Lessons. We are working our way through the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. So far in part two of our study we have studied the epic story of David and Goliath, the deep friendship of Jonathan and David, and last week Pastor Jeff preached a great message on the dangers of jealousy. Today we continue our study by looking at chapters 18 through 20 in a message I've entitled, "The Best of Friends." So, I want to invite you to grab your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Samuel, chapter 18, beginning in verse 17.

Now, I know what some of you are thinking. Did Pastor Chris say we were going to cover chapters 18 through 20?! You heard correctly. You're thinking, oh man, I wanted to get to lunch today. I promise we will not exceed our time this morning. In all seriousness, these chapters contain one long story. So, I am going to quickly cover the story and then look at two life lessons we learn from this portion of 1 Samuel. Okay? Here we go.

BACKGROUND:

After David's great victory over the giant named Goliath, David and Jonathan become great friends. Their friendship is a model for biblical friendships. God

knew that David was going to need a friend like Jonathan because he was going to go from obscure shepherd boy to a national hero. And as we saw last week, people started singing praises about David and this made king Saul very envious. So, in the remainder of chapter 18 on through 20, Saul seeks to eliminate David. This story makes Days of our Lives seem tame. So, allow me to go through it and you can follow along in your copy of God's Word.

With all the celebrating of victories, King Saul kept hearing about David's successes, and he feared David's popularity. His approval ratings were soaring, and he was more popular than the king. David was clearly becoming a threat to Saul's throne. Which we know that David was chosen by God and anointed to be the next king of Israel. But Saul doesn't like it and so he tries to take matters into his own hands. He devises a plan to have David killed.

If you remember, one of the rewards of killing Goliath was getting to marry the king's daughter. So, Saul offers his oldest daughter to David for marriage. But this offer was manipulation because Saul placed another condition on the offer. David had to continue the battle against the Philistines. Now, we see Saul's motive in chapter 18 verse 17, which says, *"17Then Saul said to David, 'Here is my elder daughter Merab. I will give her to you for a wife. **Only** [here's the condition] **be valiant for me and fight the Lord's battles.'** For **Saul thought** [his real motive], **'Let not my hand be against him, but let the hand of the Philistines be against him.'**"* In other words, I'm not going to kill him, I'm going to let him die in battle. But Saul changes his mind and gives Merab to another man.

But Saul's other daughter, Michal [Ma-kale] loved David. So, Saul shifted his plan. Same motive, but he gave Michal to David as a wife. But Saul told David, "I'll give you Michal in marriage if and only if you do something for me." A very odd request, that David bring him 100 foreskins of the Philistines. Now, there's not a lot beneath me, but this is a deal breaker. Know what I mean?!

But Saul asked this specific task believing that attempting it would result in him being killed. But that did not happen. David was an overachiever and brought back 200. He must have really love Michal. And David's success created even more fear in Saul. And Saul's jealousy and envy ultimately led to a mental breakdown. That led him down a very dark path; attempted murder.

That's the end of chapter 18. Chapter 19 begins with Saul laying out a plan to kill David and divulged it to his son Jonathan. Remember, David and Jonathan

are good friends. So, Jonathan told David about the plot. And he asked David to hide and let him talk with his dad. Jonathan pleaded to his dad to let it go. "David has done great things for our nation. You need to set your pride aside." So, Saul agreed to let it go and not kill David. Jonathan then shared that good news with David and brought him back into the service of the kingdom.

All was well until more war broke out. David goes to battle and is even more successful against the Philistines. Then the green-eyed monster of envy roared its ugly head again. Saul broke down mentally and David was trying to soothe him by playing music. David had it all; he was famous, good looking, and good at everything, even music. Ever know anyone like that? Well, this only infuriated Saul. So, he took his spear and hurled it at David. David dodged it.

The next morning, Michal, David's wife, told him about a new plan to have him killed. So, she helped David crawl out of the window and then put pillows under the covers to make it look like David was sleeping. When Saul's soldiers came into the house, they realized it wasn't David. And Saul was upset with his daughter because she spoiled the plan.

David is running for his life, and he ran to Ramah to meet up with Samuel. Saul found out that David was there, so he heads to Ramah. King Saul finds David with Samuel, so David took off again. That's the end of Chapter 19.

In chapter 20, David meets up with his good buddy, Jonathan, and tells him that his dad is trying to kill him. This was a surprise to Jonathan because Saul promised he was over it. So, David tries to convince Jonathan that it's true and they devise a plan to test the theory. Jonathan promises David, "Whatever goes down, I'm staying true to the covenant we made."

The following day was the beginning of the New Moon Festival. There were certain festivities that would have required David's attendance. But, David, fearful of what Saul might do, was absent. Jonathan covers for him by saying that he granted David's a vacation to go back home and celebrate there. It was a cover because David was hiding in the wilderness. If Saul was still attempting to kill David, he would be upset that David wasn't there and show that he is still trying to kill him. This is the case and proves David is right about Saul.

Jonathan agrees to the plan and tells David to hide in the same spot as before. Based upon Saul's response to David's absence, Jonathan would shoot 3

arrows at a particular target. We would then send a boy to collect the arrows and relay a message to David. Told you, Days of our Lives.

If the boy says the arrows are by you, that was code for it being safe for David. But if Jonathan shouts to the boy and says, "The arrows are beyond you," then David needs to flee so Saul doesn't get him. And so, that's what they did.

The first day, Saul didn't say anything because he thought maybe something happened to David. But the next day, when David didn't show up, Saul asked why. Jonathan did his part and told his dad that he had given David vacation to be with his family. And that made Saul extremely mad. And in his anger, he spews his plan for David. Chapter 20, verses 31 through 33. Saul says, *"³¹For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom shall be established. Therefore send and bring him to me, for **he shall surely die.**" ³²Then Jonathan answered Saul his father, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done? ³³But Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him. So Jonathan knew that his father was determined to put David to death.*

The question becomes what Jonathan is going to do. Does he remain true to his promise to David? Or is he obedient to his father? If he tells David the truth, then he will potentially never see David again. If he is obedient to his father, he keeps his job as prince, but betrays David and David is most likely killed. It's a tough spot. What do you do?

The next morning, Jonathan gets up and shoots arrows like planned. He shot the arrows beyond the boy and shouts out, "The arrow is beyond you!" That's the code word that David was in trouble and needed to flee.

When the boy collects the arrows and brings them back, Jonathan asks him to return them to the city. He then went and visited with David. It was a sad moment as they said goodbye. Dreams of working together, hanging out together, and being therefore each other all came to an end. But in the background, Michael W. Smith was singing, "Friends are friends forever." Just kidding. Some of you are like, "What in the world is he talking about?" I just dated myself. Google it. Friends are friends forever. You'll laugh this afternoon.

Now, this begins what will be decades of David fleeing Saul. And we are going to examine all that in our study, but we are going to end here for today.

LIFE LESSONS:

I want to share with you what I believe to be two life lessons we learn from this tragic story. Two things that I believe speak to us today. First, ...

1) Trust God's sovereignty.

One thing we see played out in this story is God's sovereignty. When I say God is sovereign, I'm talking about how God rules all aspects of the universe.ⁱⁱ Because He is all-powerful and all-knowing, He enacts His will. Sovereignty.

In 1 Samuel, we see the evidence of God working His will despite king Saul's attempts to thwart it. David is God's anointed king. And as that becomes clear to Saul, he tries to circumvent that anointing. Saul employs manipulation, trickery, bribery, and even attempted murder. But all of those attempts fail. Why? Because of God's sovereign plan.

Now, David used common sense. But ultimately, we see the hand of God on this whole situation. God forms a friendship between Jonathan and David. God arranged the circumstances that led to David marrying Michal. Those relationships played a huge factor in David seeing what was going on.

The point is that it was God's sovereign plan that David become the next king, and there's nothing Saul could do to change that. David trusted the plan by waiting on God's timing. Jonathan trusted God's plan by recognizing failed attempts at reconciliation. And ultimately, they trusted God's plan by being willing to depart ways and allow God's plan to develop.

This had to be hard for David. "God, You've anointed me the next king, but I have to risk that in battle?" Trust God's sovereign plan. "Lord, being in close proximity of Saul makes it extremely dangerous for me." Trust God's sovereign plan. "God, I'm hiding and, on the run, I don't understand. What am I to do next?" Trust God's plan. "But God, how long?" Trust God's sovereign plan.

That's hard for us, isn't. Waiting on God's plan is hard for me. I want to take matters into my own hands and make it happen. And what I've learned is that when I do that, I always make matters worse. Plus, waiting on God makes it seem like everyone else around me is receiving blessings, but what about me? I'm trying to do things right, but I keep running into roadblocks. This story tells us that we can trust God's sovereign plan and His timing.

God has proven Himself faithful. We see a principle played out in this story that is often repeated throughout Scripture and in our lives today. It is the principle of reverse returns.ⁱⁱⁱ It is important to understand this biblical principle.

King Saul's attempts to get rid of David only served to further David's success.^{iv} Reverse returns. Why? Because David is God's anointed and God was working to accomplish His sovereign plan.

King Saul thought, I'm going to put David in battle. The probability is high that he will be killed. But instead, David was victorious gaining even more fame. Saul thought, "I'll give my daughter in marriage in exchange for a dangerous mission. He'll die in the line of duty." But David was successful. Saul thought, "My daughter will help me." But she helped David escape. My son will help me get David, but he helped him escape. Do you see it? The more Saul tried to dodge God's plan; the more successful David was. Reverse returns.

There are more biblical examples of this principle.^v Joseph's brothers intended to harm him, but God was using it to accomplish His plan. Joseph was sold into slavery only to become the second in command of Egypt providing a way to make sure the nation of Israel was taken care of in a famine. Reverse returns.

Pharaoh hardened his heart against Moses and refused to let God's people go to their promised land. The more Pharaoh resisted; the more God worked to deliver Israel. Reverse returns.

Daniel insisted that he and his Jewish friends not eat the food sacrificed to idols. The commander was afraid that they'd look unhealthy. But they wound up being stronger and better than all the rest. Reverse returns.

The ultimate display of reverse returns is Jesus. Though He was innocent, He was opposed by many which led to his crucifixion. But it is by way of His death on the cross that He demonstrated power over sin, death and the grave by rising again. Instead of preventing Jesus from accomplishing His mission, they provided the means by which He fulfilled His mission. Reverse returns.

Another great display of reverse returns is the Church. When persecution hit the early believers, they had to flee. But they took the gospel with them and started more churches. Christianity spread like wildfire. See, it was the persecution of the Church that led to its advancement. Reverse returns.

Beloved, we live in a day where we get discouraged by the downward spiral of our culture, even the hostility to our faith. The wicked seem to prosper and the godly are cancelled. But listen, God is working His sovereign plan. The ultimate plan of God is for Christ to return, make all things new, and rid the earth of sin once and for all! We can trust that plan. Anything we might face will only serve to advance the Kingdom of God and His purposes. That's encouraging.

Reverse returns work to accomplish God's sovereign plan. You can trust that. The second life lesson that I want to point is that...

2) **Biblical friendships are a blessing.**

We talked a couple weeks ago about how God wires us for relationships, and those relationships either help us grow in our walk with The Lord or they lead us away. Biblical friendships are important because they wind up being tremendous blessings in our lives when we need it. That was David's case.

David developed biblical friendships with Jonathan and his wife Michal. And we see in the relationships of 1 Samuel a contrast between biblical and non-biblical relationships. Jonathan & Michal were good friends for David, but Saul was not.

I want to show you a comparison and contrast between godly friendships and relationships that seek to destroy us. For David, Jonathan and Michal looked out for him. Jonathan wanted the relationship between his dad, the king, and David to be reconciled. Jonathan demonstrated integrity by remaining true to his commitment to David, even when it cost him a relationship with his dad. And when they were forced to depart from one another, Jonathan felt very deeply for David. That's the blessing of biblical relationships.

But contrast that with Saul. King Saul was deceptive and tried to manipulate people. He demonstrated a lack of integrity by going back on his word. As a result, he was an isolated and perplexed person.

Do you know people that fit these two categories? We must seek, find, and develop godly relationships. You'll be blessed by them. People that look out for us, challenge us, people that have integrity, and genuinely feel deeply for you. The world is full of Sauls. We need biblical friendships.

The relationship you build between your spouse and your kids needs to mirror David and Michal and David and Jonathan.^{vi} We are to build families that are so

committed to one another that we develop unbreakable relationships, even when external pressures attack. Our society today longs for these relationships. I know I'm preaching to the choir here, but this is why we desperately need the church. It's in the church we develop relationships that are modeled for us in 1 Samuel. And church family, we have to put in the hard work to develop these kinds of friendships. They don't just happen. We have to be intentional here.

So, two life lessons: 1) trust God's sovereign plan, and 2) biblical friendships are a blessing.

CONCLUSION:

As we come to a time of response, I think it is important to realize that a relationship with Jesus affords us the opportunity to experience friendship with others like what we've studied today. Like I said a couple weeks ago, "Our vertical relationship with God affects our horizontal relationships with others."

Perhaps you are here today, and you've never begun a vertical relationship with God. Let me share with you how to do that. The Bible says we all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory because of our sin. And there is nothing we can do, as sinners, to have a relationship with a Holy, Righteous, and Perfect God. But God loved us so much that He made a relationship with Him possible. We can be forgiven of our sin by trusting Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Jesus lived a perfect life, becoming the perfect sacrifice and ultimately paid the penalty of our sin on the cross. On the third day, Jesus rose from the grave conquering our sin. And by faith in Him as our Lord, our sin is forgiven. It is when we are forgiven by Jesus that we can have a relationship with God.

If you're here today and you've never trusted Jesus as Lord, I want to invite you to come during our time of response. Our elders will be here at the front and excited to visit with you about what it means to make Jesus your Lord today.

Maybe others of you are here today and you have a prayer concern. Would you allow us to be a support to you as you walk through difficult days? We would love the opportunity to pray with you and over you this morning.

I'm going to pray. We will stand and sing. But let's all respond to what the Lord is speaking to our hearts this morning. [PRAY].

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ Works consulted in preparation for this message: Robert D. Bergen, *The New American Commentary: 1, 2 Samuel, Vol. 7*, B&H Publishing: Nashville, 1996; Heath Thomas and J.D. Greear, *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Samuel*, Holman: Nashville, 2016; Bill T. Arnold, *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 & 2 Samuel*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003; Troy Rackliffe, *Life Lessons Message 13 & 14*, sermon preached at Glad Community Church in Daniels, WV; Ray Fowler, various sermons, published by Ray Fowler Ministries, accessed online: <https://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/1-samuel/>; David Guzik, "1 Samuel 18-20," published by Enduring Word Commentary, accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-samuel-18/>; J.D. Greear, "You've Got A Friend In Me," sermon preached at Summit Church, September 11, 2022, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/youve-got-a-friend-in-me>; Skip Heitzig, *The Green Eyed Monster of Envy*, message taught at Calvary Church, July 17, 2002, accessed online: <https://calvarynm.church/connectwithskip/teachings/#/series/66/sermon/1000>.

ⁱⁱ Got questions, "What does it mean that God is sovereign?," article published by Got Questions, accessed online: <https://www.gotquestions.org/God-is-sovereign.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bill T. Arnold, page 277.

^{iv} Ibid.

^v Examples taken for Arnold's commentary.

^{vi} Ibid, 303.