

LIFE LESSONS – 1 SAMUEL: The Role of Friendship¹

1 Samuel 17:55-18:5

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:

Last week we resumed our teaching series called Life Lessons. We are studying the Old Testament book of 1 Samuel. Last week we studied the epic story of David and Goliath. Today, we turn to the conclusion of that story and begin chapter 18 in a message I have entitled, "The Role of Friendship."

I want to invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to 1 Samuel. We are going to start in verse 55 of chapter 17 and work our way through verse 5 of chapter 18.

By way of review, 1 Samuel is a book about one of the darkest times in Israel's history and how God was at work in those evil days. All the people were doing what was right in their own eyes and morality was at an all-time low. But God had raised up a man by the name of Samuel to lead the nation of Israel. The people wanted to abandon the theocracy of government and they demanded an earthly king. So, God gave them king Saul.

The people were pleased with Saul's selection because he looked the part. He was head and shoulders above everyone else. He was a good-looking guy and had some leadership abilities. But he turned out to be only concerned about

personal gain. As a result, God rejected Saul's kingship and that led Samuel to anoint David as the next king of Israel. While the anointing happened right away, David would have to wait decades to assume the throne.

It is at this point in the book of 1 Samuel that it begins to focus on David and how God was using him. Chapter 17 is about his faith filled victory over the giant name Goliath in the most unlikely of ways. And we are going to see that David's life completely changed following this victory as he goes from an obscure shepherd boy to a national hero. And God knows that David is going to need support to face what will be his biggest battle. So, he provides David with an incredible friend.

OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Friends

You know, in our world saturated by social media, the term friend has come to mean a lot of different things. Our lives seem to be built around who has friended us or followed our online profiles. For example, Facebook tells me that I have thousands of friends, yet I celebrated the New Year with 12.

We seem to have lost the definition of true friendship. Truth be told, we are over connected, yet incredibly shallow. This is not from a lack of people to choose from, but from the lack of developing true, authentic friendships. We have grown use to people coming and going from our lives.ⁱⁱ And this has even worked its way into the church setting. We are happy to come to church, hear a message, and leave having had zero meaningful conversations.

But the truth is that we all need friends, true friends. The people we surround ourselves with has a profound impact on the quality and direction of our lives. Our friends often have influence on the choices we make and the convictions we hold. And the Bible warns us of the need to develop wise friendships. Proverbs 13:20 says, *"**Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.**"*

So, this morning, I want to share with you 4 Life Lessons on the Role of Friendship. We are going to see in our study today that true friendship is needed, true friendship is rooted in Christ, true friendship produces unity, and true friendship involves sacrifice. And my prayer for this morning is that what we see here will not only shape the people we surround ourselves with but would come to define the way our church operates. Because here's the deal, being the church God has called us to requires our focus on relationships.

MESSAGE:

Let's begin by reading our passage and then looking at these Life Lessons. You follow along in your copy of God's Word. 1 Samuel, chapter 17, beginning in verse 55. *55As soon as Saul saw David go out against the Philistine* [so the story here has a flashback.ⁱⁱⁱ While David was going toward the battle with Goliath, Saul leaned over and], *he said to Abner, the commander of the army, "Abner, whose son is this youth?" And Abner said, "As your soul lives, O king, I do not know."* *56And the king said, "Inquire whose son the boy is."* *57And as soon as David returned from the striking down of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.* *58And Saul said to him, "Whose son are you, young man?" And David answered, "I am the son of your servant Jesse the Bethlehemite."* Now, this was important information for a couple of reasons. Remember that the reward for taking out the giant was riches, marriage to the king's daughter, and no taxes for the family for life. Saul needed to know who David was because he needed to write a check, give his daughter in marriage, and he needed to know his father's name so that he could draw up an edict.^{iv}

Now, chapter 18. *18:1As 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.* *2And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house.* *3Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.* *4And 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.* *5And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants.* 4 life lessons on true friendship.

1) True friendship is needed.

Verse 1 of chapter 18 says that as soon as David had finished speaking to king Saul, Jonathan and David became friends, the best of friends. Now, Jonathan was king Saul's firstborn son, the crown prince.^v So, he not only witnessed the battle between David and Goliath, Jonathan was also in earshot of David's conversation with king Saul.

I want to point out something here that I think is key to this passage. God knew that David was going to need a true friend and need one quickly. Without spoiling next week's message, God's plan to install David as the next king of

Israel was being initiated. And because of the great victory over Goliath, a couple of things were at play. First, David gets thrust into the limelight as a national hero. And, number 2, that is going to cause the current king, king Saul to become extremely jealous and envious of David.^{vi} More on that relationship next week. But what we see here is that God, in His sovereignty, knew David needed a true friend to help him get through what was coming. So, God orchestrated the events in such a way that Jonathan and David became the best of friends.

You know, there comes a time when we all need a true friend. Whether it be a crisis that hits, or challenge that comes, or advice that is needed, we all need someone we can turn to. And it is God's desire that we not only turn to Him in those times, but that we also surround ourselves with others that can support us. Friendships like that are developed. And God orchestrates the events in our lives to place us in a place that we can develop those friendships.

In fact, God has hard-wired us for relationships. From the beginning of God's creation, the only thing that was not good was that Adam was alone. Adam lived in paradise. No sickness, no death, perfect peace and absolute beauty. But Adam needed a helper. Something was missing for him, a human connection. And while that was ultimately fulfilled in Eve, my point is that we see the longing in the human heart for relationships. God designed it that way.

Remember, we are made in the image of God. God is a relational God. Not only does He desire a relationship with us, but the Trinity exists in perfect relationship. And our desire for relationship with others comes as a result of God creating that in us.^{vii} You and I need true friends. And not only for times of trouble, but also for times of spiritual growth.

I know for some of us here today, relationships are hard. For some of us in the room, you are introverted. That's great, that's not a bad thing. But developing relationships with others is a challenge for you. For others of us, we're extroverts. We make friends easily. But the downside for extroverts is that the vast majority of our relationships really don't make it past the superficial.

But the truth is that regardless of your personality type, God has created you for relationships, for meaningful relationships. True friendship is needed. Secondly, ...

2) True friendship is rooted in Christ.

Look again at the second part of verse 1. It says, “*and Jonathan loved him [David] as his own soul.*” It’s remarkable that these two became friends. They really were very different types of people. Jonathan was older than David because he was of age to be in the Israeli army and David was not. Jonathan was the son of a king; David was the runt of a farmer. Jonathan was a prince; David was a lowly shepherd boy. Jonathan was the heir apparent to the throne, David was the anointed one of God.^{viii} From the outside looking in, these men didn’t have a lot in common. So, how would they become such great friends?

Well, their friendship was based on something greater. This is not the first time in 1 Samuel that we read about Jonathan. Back in chapters 13 and 14, we see Jonathan’s faith on display when he led an attack on the Philistines.^{ix} And Jonathan just witnessed the faith of David in his victory over the giant. And while their friendship wasn’t based on personal interest, affinity, or work environment, what they shared in common was far greater, faith.

There must have been something about the conversation between Saul and David that caused Jonathan to have an instant respect for him. From the clues we have in the story of David and Goliath, David’s humility and obviously his faith were on display. You know, there is something about humility, authenticity, and faith that draw us to others. And I think that’s what we have here. David was quick to demonstrate his faith in The Lord and not himself. David’s words were about how Goliath had defied God himself and that it would be The Lord God that would deliver the victory. Faith and humility. Jonathan was made of the same stuff. Their true friendship was rooted in a relationship with God, not commonalities. Their genuine love came from their faith in The Lord.

Now, I wish I didn’t have to mention this, but I do because of how our culture has taken this friendship, David and Jonathan, to mean something else. Some have tried to say that David and Jonathan must have been engaged in a homosexual relationship. Now, to me, that demonstrates the perversion of our culture. Our society has so digressed that we can’t imagine a loving friendship between two men without it being a homosexual thing.^x

But the text couldn’t be clearer that this is not the kind of relationship that David and Jonathan had. And I want to share this with you so that you can encounter a culture that has tried to pervert this story. The love that David and Jonathan

had for one another was not sexual for two very specific reasons. First, the word used here is the word, “love.” Sexual relationships in the Old Testament use the word, “know.” For example, Genesis 4:1, “*Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain.*” Secondly, David clearly differentiates his love for Jonathan with sexual love at his death.^{xi} When Jonathan died, David said, “*26 I am distressed [grieving] for you, my brother Jonathan; very pleasant have you been to me; your love to me was extraordinary, surpassing the love of women.*” It’s a different love.

What knitted these two men’s hearts to one another was their faith in The Lord. True friendship is needed, and true friendship is rooted in Christ. Thirdly, ...

3) True friendship produces unity.

We can know that our friendships are true friendships when they produce a sense of unity. Look at verse 3 of 1 Samuel 18. *3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul.* Covenant is a big deal in the Scriptures. Let me mention a few examples.

There’s the Noachic covenant where God put a rainbow in the sky. The Abrahamic covenant about God’s promise to make him into a great nation. The Mosaic covenant of the promised land. The Davidic covenant of establishing his throne forever. And the New Covenant in Christ’s death, burial and resurrection.^{xii} The Bible is filled with covenant language.

Covenants differ from contracts. A contract is an agreement where parties agree on terms based on meeting those terms. For example, we pay an agreed upon price for a service based upon the completion of that service. A contract states, “I’ll do x, y, and z, if and only if you do a, b, and c.” That’s a contract.

Covenant is different. They are just as binding, but they’re not based on terms except a commitment to one another. Covenant says, “I’ll do x, y and z, whether you do a, b, or c or not.” Covenants are stronger than contracts.

Great relationships are based upon covenants, not contracts. But truth be told, most of our relationships fit contractual agreements. I’ll scratch your back if you scratch mine. I’ll put in a word for promotion for you if you do something for me.

But a covenant doesn’t work that way. A covenant is rooted in mutual love, and sometimes not even mutual love. Because God loves us, He gave us Jesus.

Not because we did anything to earn it, nor because we do anything for Him, but simply because God loves us.

Marriage is designed to be a covenant. Where marriages get into trouble is when they become contracts. We say things like, "Well, I've fallen out of love with her because she doesn't meet my needs." That's a contract. Whereas a covenant says, "She's not meeting my needs so I'm going to love her through this season." See, contracts are conditional. Covenants are unconditional.

David and Jonathan forge a friendship based on covenant here. And that resulted in a sense of unity that is unparalleled. And this must be the basis of true friendship. They were not the same by any stretch of the imagination, but there was a unity that superseded their differences.

This is exactly how God designed the Church to operate. A love for and a relationship with Jesus results in a radical love that unites on a level beyond commonalities. We see this is the case throughout the New Testament early Church. Jesus united a people that were as divided as you can get.

I read a quote this week that said it this way, "The church is... made up of natural enemies. What binds us together is not common education, common race, common income levels, common politics, common nationality, common accents, common jobs, or anything else of that sort. Christians come together... because they have all been saved by Jesus Christ. They are a band of natural enemies who love one another for Jesus' sake."^{xiii}

This is why we use the term covenant in our church intentionally. We are made up of active covenant members. We desire to be a family of believers on a covenant level. We are not all uniform, but we are all unified. There's a difference there. We come from different backgrounds, ethnicities, political viewpoints, income levels, and life experiences, but we are all unified in the person and work of Jesus Christ. In many ways, we have more in common with the believer in Jesus on the other side of the world than we do with our unsaved neighbor across the street that votes the same way we do.

We are united, based upon a relationship with Christ, and that opens the door for us to experience true friendship with one another on a level that surpasses superficiality. Fourthly, ...

4) True friendship involves sacrifice.

Look at verse 4 of 1 Samuel 18. ***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.*** Consider the sacrifice Jonathan makes here. The crown prince of Israel, Jonathan, gives his things to a shepherd boy, David. Jonathan sealed his covenant with David by giving him everything.

See, when Jonathan gave David the robe and armor, he gave him more than clothing and weapons. It was symbolically giving up his right to the throne and acknowledging that David was the anointed king of Israel.^{xiv} He literally gave away his inheritance.^{xv} He was saying, "You should be dressed and armed like a prince. These rightfully belong to you, David." And Jonathan, because of his close walk with The Lord, knew David was the anointed king and he was willing to set aside his ambition to honor The Lord's choice. Talk about sacrifice.

And you know what else? David didn't lord it over Jonathan either. When David received Jonathan's robe and armor, it would still be some 20 years before he was enthroned as the king of Israel.^{xvi} David sacrificed, too. Jonathan was ready to recognize David as the next king, but David was willing to wait on The Lord's timing. And what we see in this true friendship is mutual sacrifice.

So much we learn here. True friendship is needed, it is rooted in a relationship with Christ, it produces unity, and it involves sacrifice.

Listen, I hope you see all of our messages here at Trinity as important, but some messages are meant to define us as a church. This is one of those messages. We must do the hard and intentional work of developing friendships with one another that results in the definition of a true friend as what we've studied today. We desire our church to be a community of true friends. Church isn't an event you attend, it's a people in which you belong.^{xvii}

Let me talk real practical here for just a moment. The way you develop true friendships in our church is through small groups. Our Adult Bible Study Groups are designed to develop meaningful relationships with others. It is all about studying the Bible, yes, but it is also about doing life with one another. If you are not involved in a group, you need to be. If all we experience is this environment in here, then we are missing out on what could be the most transformative experience in small groups. I want you and your family to find a friendship here that's like David and Jonathan's friendship.

CONCLUSION:

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

Perhaps you are here today and you have never established a vertical relationship with God. You might be wondering how to have a relationship with God. Well, the Bible says that we all have sinned and fallen short because of our sin. And that falling short means that there is nothing we can do, as sinners, to have a relationship with a Holy and Righteous God. But, God loved us so much that He made a way. We can be forgiven of our sin by trusting Jesus as Lord and Savior.

See, Jesus came, lived a perfect life, and ultimately paid the penalty of our sin by dying on the cross. And on the third day, Jesus rose from the grave conquering sin, death, and the grave. And by faith in Him as our Lord, our sin is forgiven.

If you are here today and you've never trusted Jesus as Lord, I want to invite you to come forward 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. 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,” sermon preached at Glad Community Church in Daniels, WV; Ray Fowler, “Love, Jealousy and Fear,” published by Ray Fowler Ministries, accessed online: <https://www.rayfowler.org/sermons/1-samuel/love-jealousy-and-fear/>; David Guzik, “1 Samuel 18 – Conflict Between Saul and David,” published by Enduring Word Commentary, accessed online: <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/1-samuel-18/>; Darryl Dash, “Spiritual Friendship,” published by DashHouse, June 25, 2017, accessed online: <https://www.dashhouse.com/spiritual-friendship-1-samuel-181-5/>; Jason Gaston, “Friendship,” message preached at Summit Church, November 28, 2010, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/friendship-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 Adapted from Jason Gaston’s sermon.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bergen, 198.

^{iv} Ibid, 199.

^v Guzik.

^{vi} Rackliffe.

^{vii} Dash.

^{viii} Adapted from Darryl Dash’s article.

^{ix} Pointed out by Ray Fowler.

^x Adapted from J.D. Greear.

^{xi} Pointed out by J.D. Greear.

^{xii} <https://curiouschristian.blog/2010/05/15/dispensational-covenant-and-christocentric-theology/>.

^{xiii} D.A. Carson cited by Darryl Dash.

^{xiv} Guzik.

^{xv} Gaston.

^{xvi} Guzik.

^{xvii} Taken from J.D. Greear.