

Good Friends are Hard to Find  
Xenos Summer Institute 2018  
I Samuel 18-20, 23

**Introduction:**  
Loneliness Epidemic

Friendships are in decline

- Using data from the General Social Survey (GSS) a group headed by Duke University researcher Miller McPhearson found that between 1985 and 2004, the number of people with whom the average American discussed "important matters" dropped from three to two. Even more stunning, the number of people who said there was no one with whom they discussed important matters tripled: in 2004, individuals without a single confidant now made up nearly a quarter of those surveyed. Jacqueline Olds & Richard Schwartz, *The Lonely American*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), pg. 2.
- Friendships are failing for many reasons.
- Key reason for failure: we are more concerned with whether "they are being a good friend?" than "am I being a good friend?"

God's perspective: *The quality of friendships is determined not by how my friends are loving me, but by how I am loving my friends.*

- John 13:34,35: A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another....
- John 15:13: Greater love has not one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.
- The "one another" verses addressed to the reader

**Friendship of Jonathan and David**

Cast of characters:

- Saul
- Jonathan
- David:

## How was Jonathan a good friend to David?

**1<sup>st</sup> Scene:** 18:1-4: Now it came about when he (David) had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. <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. <sup>4</sup> 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.

Jonathan chose to be David's friend

- It is not something done in our culture
- It's offensive to think someone must choose to be my friend.
- Similar attitude we have towards God.

Col 1:21&22: This (reconciliation) includes you who were once so far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions, yet now He has brought you back as His friends. He has done this through his death on the cross in his own human body. As a result, He has brought you to the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before Him without a single fault (NLT, 1<sup>st</sup> edition).

- A choice to be a friend is necessary as friendships are costly

Jonathan continually served David

**2<sup>nd</sup> Scene:** 19 Now Saul told Jonathan his son and all his servants to put David to death. But Jonathan, Saul's son, greatly delighted in David. <sup>2</sup> So Jonathan told David saying, "Saul my father is seeking to put you to death. Now therefore, please be on guard in the morning, and stay in a secret place and hide yourself. <sup>3</sup> I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where you are, and I will speak with my father about you; if I find out anything, then I will tell you." <sup>4</sup> Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds *have been* very beneficial to you. <sup>5</sup> For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw *it* and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood by putting David to death without a cause?" <sup>6</sup> Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." <sup>7</sup> Then Jonathan called David, and Jonathan told him all these words. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence as formerly.

- Jonathan warned David of danger.
- Jonathan spoke well of David, without envy or jealousy.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Scene:** I Samuel 20:1-4: Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and went to Jonathan and asked, “What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to kill me?” <sup>2</sup> “Never!” Jonathan replied. “You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn’t do anything, great or small, without letting me know. Why would he hide this from me? It isn’t so!” <sup>3</sup> But David took an oath and said, “Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, ‘Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.’ Yet as surely as the LORD lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death.” <sup>4</sup> Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you.”

<sup>30</sup> Then Saul’s anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, “You son of a perverse, rebellious woman! Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of your mother’s nakedness?” <sup>31</sup> For as long as the son of Jesse lives on the earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Therefore now, send and bring him to me, for he must surely die.” <sup>32</sup> But Jonathan answered Saul his father and said to him, “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?” <sup>33</sup> Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down; so Jonathan knew that his father had decided to put David to death. <sup>34</sup> Then Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did not eat food on the second day of the new moon, for he was grieved over David because his father had dishonored him.

- Jonathan served David by being faithful to his promises.

**Last scene:** 23:15-18 <sup>15</sup> Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. <sup>16</sup> And Jonathan, Saul’s son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged (strengthen his hand) him in God. <sup>17</sup> Thus he said to him, “Do not be afraid, because the hand of Saul my father will not find you, and you will be king over Israel and I will be next to you; and Saul my father knows that also.” <sup>18</sup> So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house.

- Jonathan served David by encouraging him.

### How could Jonathan do this?

- Their friendship was centered on God and advancing God's purposes.
- 18:1: "The soul of Jonathan was knit to David's soul"
- Something bigger than themselves.

### Similar dynamic with Barnabas and Saul/Paul

- Acts 9:27-30: <sup>27</sup> But Barnabas took hold of him (Paul) and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.... <sup>29</sup> And he (Paul) was talking and arguing with the <sup>1a</sup>Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put him to death. <sup>30</sup> But when the brethren learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.
- Acts 11:24-26: <sup>24</sup> for (Barnabas) he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith... <sup>25</sup> And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; <sup>26</sup> and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers....
- Acts 13: Barnabas and Paul set apart...
- Acts 13:13 Paul and his companion put out to sea...

### William Burns and Hudson Taylor.

- "Burns saved Taylor from himself. Rejected by conventional missionaries...he might have grown into an isolated prig, an individualist adventuring in steadily contracting circles, leaving behind nothing but a few converts and an awkward memory. ..Taylor's still impressionable character received from Burns and imprint which never was effaced." J.C. Pollock, *Hudson Taylor and Maria*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), pg. 59.

### Some questions to ask:

- Can you imagine a community characterized by people more concerned with being a good friend instead of complaining about the failure of friends?
- In your friendships, does anyone rely on you?
- Are you a catalyst or a partner for the work of God in your relationships?

- When was the last time it "cost" you to warn, encourage or speak well of a friend?
- When was the last time you communicated emotion/affection towards a friend?
- When was the last time you chose to be a friend?

Practical steps:

- Receive God's love.
- Pray and ask God to show you one step you could take to be a friend. (Pray, encourage, share in their joy, call, and send a note...)
- Ask God to reveal your motives as you try to be a friend.
- Acknowledge hurt but go back to receive God's comfort.
- Judge your thoughts when you see yourself justifying sinful behavior when your friend fails you.