

Good Friends are hard to Find: Friendships Directed by the Word
Xenos Summer Institute 2017
I Samuel 18-20, 23

Introduction:

The Current State of Friendships

- 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.
- "You can go on without marriage, or justice, or honor, but friendship is indispensable to life." Brooks, David. "Startling Adult Friendships." Editorial. *New York Times* Sept.-Oct. 2014:A23. Print.
- Friendships are failing for many reasons.
- Key reason for failure: we are more concerned with whether "they are being a good friend?" vs. "am I being a good friend?"

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

What made Jonathan such a good friend?

- He chose to David's friend
- He loved his friend.
- Their friendship centered on God and advancing God's purposes.

Cast of characters:

- Saul
- Jonathan

- David:

Jonathan chose to be David's friend.

1st 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. ² Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. ³ Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 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.

- This is not how friendships are formed 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, 1st edition).

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

Jonathan loved his friend.

2nd 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. ² 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. ³ 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." ⁴ 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. ⁵ 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?" ⁶ Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, "As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death." ⁷ 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.

- He warned David of danger.
- He spoke well of his friend, without envy or jealousy.

3rd 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?” ²“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!” ³But 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.” ⁴Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you.”

- He was faithful to his promises.

4th Scene: I Samuel 20: 41: When the lad was gone, David rose from the south side and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, but David wept the more.

- He was emotionally impacted by their friendship.

Last scene: 23:15-18 ¹⁵Now David became aware that Saul had come out to seek his life while David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. ¹⁶And Jonathan, Saul’s son, arose and went to David at Horesh, and encouraged (strengthen his hand) him in God. ¹⁷Thus 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.” ¹⁸So the two of them made a covenant before the LORD; and David stayed at Horesh while Jonathan went to his house.

- He encouraged his friend.

Their friendship was centered on God and advancing God's purposes.

- 18:1: "The soul of Jonathan was knit to David's soul"
- Jonathan knew that God intended David to be king.
- Something bigger than themselves.

Similar dynamic with Barnabas and Saul/Paul

- Acts 9:27-30: ²⁷But 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.... ²⁹And he (Paul) was talking and arguing with the ^[a]Hellenistic *Jews*; but they were attempting to put him to death. ³⁰But when the brethren learned *of it*, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.
- Acts 11:24-26: ²⁴for (Barnabas) he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith... ²⁵And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul; ²⁶and 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 and be a friend.
- Acknowledge hurt but go back to receive God's comfort.
- Judge your thoughts when you see yourself justify sinful behavior when your friend fails you.