

## The Threads of True Friendship pt. 2

Several years ago, Burger King decided to rip apart friendships in the name of free Whoppers. **It was an ad campaign called Whopper Sacrifice.** Here's how it worked. You unfriend 10 people in on Facebook, and they gave you a coupon for a free Whopper.

Not only that, Burger King would notify those ten people that you had ditched their virtual friendship in pursuit of a free Whopper. The campaign was very successful. In just a few days 234,000 people were defriended and 23,400 Whoppers were given away. Facebook shut the promotion down because they said the defriending notifications violated their users privacy.

As you might imagine, it was also controversial. Some people didn't like being told they are only worth 1/10<sup>th</sup> of a hamburger. Boyfriends got dumped. Old college friendships were torn apart. Others laughed about it. Some were thankful to be dumped. Others volunteered to become your friend only to be dumped for flame broiled goodness.

I think we all know that Facebook friends aren't all real friends. Shoot, some of you have 10 Facebook friends that you don't even know who they are. But this highlights a genuine issue in our culture – friendships aren't what they used to be. Even Matt Walsh, one of the marketing brains behind the Whopper Sacrifice marketing campaign admitted that a core element of the campaign's popularity, "was the fact that it tapped into a real 'tension' in digital culture— how social networking has changed our ideas of what friendship means."

**(Next Slide)** We don't appreciate the value of true friendship. One recent survey asked the question, "In the last 6 months, with how many people outside of your family have you deeply discussed an important personal matter?" More than half of the respondents couldn't come up with a single person.

At the same time, we are starved for human connection. On May 3 of this year, the Surgeon General released a General Advisory calling attention to what he called "the public health crisis of loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection in our country. This is something much more than bad feelings. Our lack of friendship has been correlated to a 29% increased risk of heart disease, a 32% increase in stroke, 50% greater risk of dementia in older adults, and premature death goes up by 60%. It truly is a public health crisis.

I will also tell you this morning that it's a spiritual health crisis. Our frayed faith leads to fractured relationships, because the most intimate of human connections take place at the soul level. 1 Sam 18:1 describes the friendship of David and Jonathan this way, **"the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself?"** One church father described this kind of friendship as "two bodies with a single spirit."

Last week, we began looking at what knit their two souls together. Most importantly, they had a deeply shared faith. There was a spiritual core to their friendship. Their relationship was a

giving, selfless one. Neither was in the relationship just for what they could get out of it. Thirdly, their friendship was built on encouragement. They supported and sustained each other.

This morning we will look at three more threads of soul friendship that tied David and Jonathan together at the deepest level.

### I. A Soul Friend Goes the Extra Mile

The next thread of friendship we see is that a soul friend goes the extra mile. A soul friend will be there in both the good times and bad times. A soul friend isn't afraid to stay involved in your life, even when it gets messy. Good friends are people who might go to the ballgame with, spend the day shopping with, go fishing with, spend a spa day together.

But soul friends are the ones who are with you on moving day. They're the ones who are there when you've lost your parent. They are the ones you take you out to dinner when you've lost your job. They're by your side on the worst day of your life. They're not afraid to roll up their sleeves and get a little messy with you. Listen to this little verse written by Peter Marshall.

We have the nicest garbage man.  
He empties out our garbage can.  
He's just as nice as he can be.  
He always stops and talks to me.  
My mother doesn't like his smell,  
But mother doesn't know him well.

A true friend is one who isn't afraid to get involved in the stink of your life. In 1 Sam. 20:1-4 we see a powerful story that shows that Jonathan wasn't afraid to get involved in the stink of David's life. He had a loyalty and devotion based on truth and love. It was stronger than blind loyalty to his father. It is a loving devotion that leads Jonathan to go the extra mile for his friend.

*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 take my life?"*

*"Never!" Jonathan replied. "You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn't do anything, great or small, without confiding in me. Why would he hide this from me? It's not so!"*

*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." Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."*

Saul's jealousy of David had grown to deadly proportions. He betrayed David by giving his promised bride to another man. Then, as David wanted to marry another of Saul's daughters,

Saul demanded a dowry from David designed to get him killed. When that didn't work, Saul tried to kill David himself, and enlisted his aids to help him. When the hit men arrived at David's home, he narrowly escaped with his life. Where does David go? To his friend, Jonathan.

A soul friend is one that you know you can go to in hard times. It didn't matter that Jonathan was Saul's son, David knew that he could count on him.

David and Jonathan then developed a plan for Jonathan to determine Saul's intentions and then secretly report his findings to David. Jonathan was willing to help his friend, even though it could put him at odds with his father. Jonathan went the extra mile.

Fair weather friends will only be there when things are going well, but a soul friend draws closer during the roughest times. To Jonathan, a friendship meant it was okay to be inconvenienced. It was okay to put himself at risk to bear the burdens of his friend. In 1 Sam 20:30-34, we see just how far Jonathan was willing to go.

Saul's anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, "You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? 31 As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he must die!"

"Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him.

Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the month he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David.

Jonathan never got to a point in his friendship with David where he said, "You know David, it's been great knowing you, but this is just getting to be too much. It's more than I can handle. It's just too much trouble and work. I wish you well, but I need to go in another direction."

Jackie Robinson was the first black to play major league baseball. While breaking baseball's color barrier, he faced jeering, racist crowds in every stadium. While playing one day in his home stadium in Brooklyn, he committed an error. His own fans began to ridicule him. He stood at second base while the fans jeered.

Then shortstop "Pee Wee" Reese came over and stood next to him. He put his arm around Jackie Robinson and faced the crowd. The fans grew quiet, Robinson later said that arm around his shoulder saved his career. That's going the extra mile.

Before we move on, I need to point out that there's a difference between a friend that finds themselves in a mess, and a friend who purposefully wallows in their own mess. Friendships where you have a friend that continually seeks out a mess or repeatedly makes their own mess without ever making a genuine effort to clean it up are not healthy friendships. Being a friend a

means you will get dirty to help your friend out of a mess, but it doesn't require that you wallow in their mess with them. That's not friendship. That's foolishness. That's what the Bible is talking about when it says, "Bad company corrupts good character."

## II. A Soul Friend Lets You Be Completely Open

A soul friend lets you be you. You can be yourself. You don't have to pretend to be something you are not or keep up false appearances. You can tell a soul friend what you really think. You can let them know how you really feel, and they listen. They support. They understand.

A soul friend can also speak truth into your no matter how hard it is to hear it. You're open not just in what you express to them, but you are also open to receive from them. Proverbs 27:5-6 says, "*Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.*" We need friends who are able to wound us in love when needed.

Someone who befriends you based upon what they want you to be, or what they think they can make you become, is not a true friend. Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying that a friend indulges your sin, or that they tolerate evil in your life. A true friend will confront you and hold you accountable for these things. But more on that later.

However, a soul friend will let you hurt and will feel your pain along with you. A soul friend will let you rejoice and they will be filled with joy. A soul friend will let you cry and their tears will mingle with your own. A soul friend will let you laugh, and they will cackle with you. You talk, they listen. You doubt, they wonder. You ask, they question. In your joy, they rejoice with you, and your joy is doubled. In your sorrow, they comfort you, and your sadness is cut in half. That's soul friendship!

This is what David and Jonathan had. We see a very touching scene in 1 Sam. 20:41. Things have completely fallen apart between David and King Saul. Saul has tried repeatedly and in various ways to kill David. Jonathan has interceded on David's behalf, and Saul has tried to kill his own Son.

David now knew he was no longer safe in his own land. David is about to go into hiding, and he must part ways with his dear friend. This was a difficult time for both David and Jonathan. The text says, "*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 more.*"

These weren't two guys trying to impress each other. There were no false fronts here. These were just two guys being themselves and expressing their friendship and emotions. Neither one was trying to make the other think they were something they were not. It was genuine. It was real. It was soul friendship.

This is probably the best place to address something I wish I didn't have to say, but it's the world in which we live, so I have to say something. There are some who have tried to make the

relationship of Jonathan and David a sexual or romantic relationship. They use this relationship to defend the idea that being gay is perfectly okay in God's eyes, because here's David and Jonathan and they have such intimacy and affection and their souls are knit as one, they must have been gay.

It's really sad that some people go here, but here's what this tells us about our culture. Our culture is so impoverished of true friendship that we can't conceive of a loyal loving connection, especially between two men, without their being a sexual aspect to it. But the Bible frequently points to friendships that are supportive and loving and life-giving without being sexual in any way.

How do we know David and Jonathan's relationship wasn't sexual. First, the Bible presents David as someone intent on following God's law, and Jewish law was very clear on this issue. Samuel would never have presented David as a man after God's own heart, if he had such a glaring inconsistency in his life.

Plus, as we will see later on in David's sin with Bathsheba that Samuel pulls no punches when David violates those laws. It is open and honest about David's sin, so the idea that the author was hinting around him being gay makes no sense.

Making this a gay relationship is a prime example of reading the Bible with an agenda, rather than an open heart and an open mind.

Secondly, David specifically contrasts his love for Jonathan with sexual love. In 2 Samuel 1:26, he says, "I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women." Now that sounds intense, and it is. But notice David isn't comparing his relationship with Jonathan to a heterosexual relationship. He's contrasting it. He's saying it's not like that. It's a different kind of love and commitment than sexual love, but it is real and it is important.

But our culture, for the most part, has lost this category of relationship. I think this is one of the reasons our country is so confused on this issue, and it's tragic, because we need these kinds of relationships filled with loyalty, commitment, affection, and intimacy that is not sexual in nature. But we make everything about sex, and we have lost something very dear in the process.

There is a third thread we see that knit David and Jonathan to each other.

### **III. A Soul Friend is One Who Defends You**

A soul friend sticks up for you, even when you're not around. We've all had those friends that were nice when they were around us, but when they were with others that were putting us down, they remained silent. That's not a soul friend. One of the marks of true friend is they

stick up for you. They seek to protect you. A true friend does not want to see you vulnerable, open, and exposed to attack.

Jonathan displayed this protective nature to its greatest extent. Remember, Jonathan's father, King Saul, wanted David dead. Initially, he tried several subtle, back-door ways to get David killed, but when that failed to work, Saul made his murderous intent known to everyone around him, including Jonathan, and he wanted their help in murder. In I Sam 19:1, "*Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David.*"

What would Jonathan do? Would he reluctantly go along with the king's order? Would he ignore the request? Would he pretend to go along with it? No. He stuck up for his friend:

*19:1 Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David, but Jonathan was very fond of David 2 and warned him, "My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning: go into hiding and stay there. 3 I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I'll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out."*

*4 Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, "Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. 5 He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?" 6 Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: "As surely as the LORD lives. David will not be put to death." – 1 Samuel 19:1-6*

Jonathan would never stab his friend in the back, and he wouldn't let anyone else take a swipe at him either. How do your closest friends stick up for you?" Do they protect and defend you? How do they talk about you when you're not around?

Now, look in the mirror. How do you treat your friends? Do you stick up for them"? Do you put them clown when they're not around? A true friend is not just a friend to your face, but behind your back as well.

Conclusion:

Let's wrap up the story of David and Jonathan by looking at the bigger picture for a moment. It doesn't matter what Bible story you're reading, there is the story, and then there is always the story behind the story. There is always the bigger picture of what God is doing to save humanity and restore our relationship with Him.

How does David and Jonathan and Saul fit into that larger story? In Biblical terms, David was the first king in a dynasty that would eventually lead to Jesus. Jesus was a descendant of David. A key component of Biblical prophecy is that Jesus is a rightful heir to the throne of David. So David himself becomes a sort of prophetic road sign pointing the way to Jesus.

David was a great king, but even in the Old Testament, there were prophecies that an even greater king would come from David and sit on the throne. His throne would be an everlasting throne. His kingdom would last forever. The New Testament affirms that Jesus is that king.

One of the things 1 Samuel does in the bigger picture is illustrate the two ways we might respond to God's chosen king. Saul rejects God's king, and tries to kill David and keep him off the throne.

Jonathan, however, humbly submits to David and acknowledges his right to the throne, even though that means he had to surrender all claims to the throne himself.

Jonathan is a picture of what it means to surrender to Jesus as king of our lives. To come to Jesus, you have to walk away from any claim you have to the throne.

Your other response is to be like Saul, to try to keep God's king off the throne. You can spend your life fighting against God, working against Jesus' purposes in your life, and trying to keep the throne for yourself.

What is your response? Are you going to resist Jesus, or are you going to surrender the throne of your life to him? There are only two choices: you either bow before him in surrender, or you call out for his crucifixion. Which do you choose?