

Case Study: David and Jonathan

by Jonathan Ruehs

Godly Relationships

Focus:

The goal of this study is to examine what a friendship in Christ is all about. David and Jonathan provide an interesting case study in godly friendships, as an unlikely pair given David's destiny to serve as the "Anointed King" of Israel in place of Prince Jonathan whose father hates David. The "soap opera-esque" dynamics provide an interesting look at how a friendship that is founded in Jesus can overcome all kinds of worldly obstacles.

Opening Activity: Unlikely buddies

Show an appropriate video clip or two from a film that shows two unlikely friends (Lethal Weapon, Shawshank Redemption, I Love You, Man, Toy Story, etc.).

Follow-up Questions:

- Why do you think that many people are friends with those who share similar characteristics, interests, personalities, etc.?
- What differences in the film, that you notice, seem to suggest that their friendship is an unlikely one?

Friendship Context

Briefly look at 1 Samuel 17 and read 18:1-5.

- How did Jonathan and David's friendship begin?
- What does the term "soul mate" mean? How does 1 Sam. 18:1 provide a different meaning to this term?
- What do you think was the significance behind Jonathan giving David his robe and weapons? How might that contrast to David refusing to use Saul's armor and weapons when he fought Goliath?

(Note: In ancient times covenants were sometimes made with the giving of physical objects that were of great importance to the one giving them. In this case Jonathan was not just giving any old robe and extra weapons he had lying around. He was giving to David his royal robe and his personal weapons. Evidence indicates that weapons were scarce during that time so for Jonathan to give these up to David was indeed a big deal. Although David's refusal of Saul's armor and weapons was due to the heaviness of these objects one wonders if there was also a foreshadowing of God's refusal of Saul in favor of David. We can also see that while David's relationship with Jonathan deepens, his relationship with Saul, on the other hand, turns deadly.)

The Plot Thickens: 1 Samuel 19:1-10

- Based on verse one what makes this friendship between David and Jonathan an unlikely friendship?
- Read 1 Samuel 16:11-13. Given this passage, what new information could further complicate the friendship between David and Jonathan? Why?
- Think about the status/role that Jonathan plays. How does this information also have a potential to complicate their friendship?

Text Message Drama

(Based on 1 Samuel 20:1-4) – Have two students read this drama as if they are texting one another.

David: What have I done? What is my guilt? What sin did I do 2 ur dad, that he wants me dead?!? :-(

Jonathan: Far from it! You will not die. My dad doesn't do anything big or little w/o telling me!!! :o

David: Ur dad knows that we r BFFs and he probably thinks it is best not 2 let you in on his plans to kill me. But as God is my witness I am one step closer 2 dying!!! :-(

Jonathan: I believe U! How can I help u??? :-)

Questions:

- What new information does Jonathan receive that adds a new twist to their friendship?
- The name Jonathan means “gift of God”. Based on this fact, where is the source of their friendship to be found?
- How does this help us understand why all the “unlikely” factors of their relationship don’t change the nature of their friendship?

Ancient to Contemporary Relationships: Application to Life

Teaching Moment: The phrase “Anointed One” means messiah. David was anointed to be king, which means that David served as a type of “Messiah-King”. But he was only a foreshadow of the true “Messiah-King” to come, who was/is Jesus. In Jesus’ life He referred to many people as friends. It is interesting to note that when Judas came to betray Him in the garden that Jesus still referred to Judas as a friend (see Matthew 26:50). Jesus helps us to see the true nature of friendship rooted in God’s grace. The cross stands as a reminder that through the restoration of our vertical relationship with God (think of the vertical piece of the cross) our horizontal friendships with one another are given a firm foundation (think of the cross piece) no matter the “unlikely” factors that seem to indicate otherwise.

- What factors in today’s world might make friendships with other people unlikely? Why do you think that is?
- When two people have faith in Jesus how might that faith play a big factor in their friendship?
- Read Ephesians 2:13-14. How might we understand these words in light of how we view others in the church and the building of godly relationships with unlikely people?

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, We thank you for the gift of friendship. We thank you David and Jonathan and the friendship that was formed and rooted in you. Most importantly we thank you for the “friend that we have in Jesus” who through the cross creates and restores unlikely friendships. Amen.