

1 Samuel 17:54-18:5: Friendship

We're going to spend some time this morning talking about the issue of friendship. What is Christian friendship? The Bible actually has a lot to say about friendship and we would do well to take note of this topic. Whether you have a lot of friends, or maybe just a couple of friends, maybe you're lonely and just want friends, I hope this will encourage you this morning and help you to think biblically about friendship.

Let me say at the outset that God wants us to have friends. He wants us to be friends with others. He wants us to know what friendship looks like that brings him glory. Maybe that sounds a little silly to you, but friendship is not silly to God. He talks about friends a lot - 110 times in the Bible in all kinds of different situations. From how to recognize a friend to how to be a friend to how to cope when a close friend betrays you. How to walk in faithfulness when you have no friends.

God was a friend to Moses (**Ex. 33:11**). Jesus was called a friend to tax collectors and sinners (**Matt 11:19**). He calls his disciples friends in **Luke 12:4**. Lazarus was a close friend of Jesus (**John 11:11**). You and I are Jesus' friends if we do what he commands us (**John 15:14**). **3 John 15**: the church is filled with friends who send greetings to their friends in another church.

This is not a side note in Scripture, this is a constant reality that's talked about all the time and even to some extent assumed. So what does friendship look like? That's what we're talking about this morning. What does it mean to be friends in the body of Christ? Should we all have best friends? Is it okay that it's harder to mesh with some people? Are churches filled with cliques? What if you're here and you don't have any friends? What do you do then? We'll answer those questions.

As you know, last week we looked at how David slaughtered Goliath. And in the aftermath of that victory there is a friendship that is forged between Jonathan - Saul's son - and David, the newly minted hero of Israel. It is a friendship like no other in the Bible. It is strong and deep. It is a friendship of peers - David and Jonathan are both powerful warriors in their own right. It is a friendship of family members - Jonathan and David will become brothers-in-law. And it is a friendship that, in a sense, will last beyond death as David never forgets his friend who dies in battle.

What I want to do this morning is talk about this transition in David's life, then talk about his friendship with Jonathan, and then really springboard into something of a theology of friendship. We have this amazing friendship between these two, but what does the Bible say about friendship? I think that will prove helpful.

Read 17:54-58

Now this probably strikes us as a little unusual because we already know who David is. He's the anointed shepherd boy from Bethlehem, the son of Jesse. And David even serves in Saul's house and Saul loves him. So why is he asking these questions? Doesn't Saul know David?

Now, you have to remember: although David has been in Saul's household and David has ministered to Saul through music, Saul might not know a lot about who David is or what his background is. I've worked a lot of jobs with a lot of people. But for the most part I never knew their parents' names or what their family situation was growing up. Even for the ones I really liked. I think this is probably the situation here.

But a lot has changed now that David killed Goliath. David isn't just going to be the harp-player. Saul promised the one who killed Goliath would be rich, have their father's debt paid - the family would be wealthy - and he would marry his daughter. David is going to become the son-in-law of the king. He will become royalty.

And now that his teenager is going to marry one of his daughters, Saul wants to know where this guy comes from and who's debts he now needs to pay off. Over and over in this little paragraph, the issue is not "who is David." The issue is whose son is this - who is his father? Where do they come from? What's their story? And so this serves to elevate David in the eyes of Saul to a soon-to-be son-in-law.

David's killing of Goliath also serves as the budding of a new friendship with Jonathan, Saul's son. **Read 1**

Jonathan probably knew about David prior to this event because David had been in his own home playing the lyre. But they didn't have camaraderie until this point.

It's only when David proves himself to be a mighty warrior who loves Yahweh that Jonathan sees what an amazing guy he is. Remember it was Jonathan back in **14:1-23** who decides to take his armor-bearer and go take out a Philistine garrison. **Look** back at **14:6-7,13-15**. **Read**

It's actually remarkably similar to David's slaughter of Goliath. None of the other Israelites are engaged in battle, Saul isn't leading the men into battle. So Jonathan says, "Hey, let's go take out Philistines - these *uncircumcised*." That's what David said right before he killed Goliath. David goes to Saul's tent, Jonathan is probably there when David shows up asking permission to go kill the giant. And God works through David like he worked through Jonathan.

Jonathan finally has someone in Israel who has the skill in battle and desire of the heart that God be praised. Their hearts are knit together instantly. **Read 2-3**

However much he was loved before, David is now a permanent fixture in Saul's household. We'll look at the covenant that they made together in just a bit. But look at some of the other elements of their friendship.

There was an intense love between Jonathan and David. **Vs. 1** says their souls were knit together. **Vs. 3** says Jonathan loved David as his own soul. It says that again in **20:17**. They were the best of friends, brothers-in-law who were as close as any two men could be. Deep, personal, loving friendship are not contrary to being men of God. All on its own it's healthy and right and good.

And as an expression of love Jonathan gives David all of his armor. That should sound familiar to us. What did Saul do just last chapter? He gave David all of his armor. When the king of Israel gave David all of his armor, what was he basically saying? "Here go be king." I think Saul did it unwittingly. When Jonathan, the next in line to the throne gives David his armor, you know what he's signifying? The exact same thing. But I don't think he's doing it unwittingly. He's doing it out of love. He knows one day David will be king. But Jonathan isn't acting politically, he's acting out of love.

True love rejoices when their friends have success. Do you love it when your friends have success? When they get a raise or a new house or car or a better job or something cool?

When Paul talks about genuine love in **Rom. 12:15** he says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep." If our friends have success and blessing and we don't rejoice with them, it's probably an indication that our hearts are sinful. Jonathan rejoiced with David.

And David goes on to have great military success in Israel. He is a child-prodigy warrior.

What about this covenant between Jonathan and David in **Vs. 3**? What does that mean? It was a covenant of loyalty and brotherhood and familial protection. **Look** at **20:41-42** for a moment.

This is where David eventually flees Saul's household because Saul keeps trying to kill him. Jonathan warns David to flee and mentions the covenant. **Read 41-42**

This is a binding of permanent friendship. Whatever may come, David will take care of Jonathan's children. And if David should die, Jonathan will take care for David's. And Yahweh is witness between them.

Look over at **2 Samuel 9**. This is was not a light covenant. In **2 Sam. 9** Saul and Jonathan are dead and David is king. But the reality is that anyone - any descendant from Saul's lineage - could be a credible threat to David as king. That's why ancient kings destroyed the entire family of the last king. That way there was no opposition. It was just more convenient to slaughter them than deal with the hassle of rivalry. But look what David does.

Read 1

You know what he wants to do? He wants an opportunity to honor the covenant he made with Jonathan, his best friend. The word for kindness in **Vs. 1** is chesed - it is covenant keeping lovingkindness. He wants to show covenant love to someone in Jonathan's house. **Read 2-6**

Mephibosheth is scared because he knows what kings do to surviving relatives of the last king. He's dead meat. **Read 7-8**

Why did he regard Mephibosheth as a son and he eat at David's table always? Because he was his son by covenant. And the love that he poured out on Jonathan was poured out on Mephibosheth even though he should have been his enemy. **Read 9-13**

Amazing. And I can't help myself here, but this is again a picture - a type - of the gospel. We're all like Mephibosheth. We are enemies of the king, who are dead dogs who deserve nothing but death. But through covenant keeping love, King Jesus brings us into his household, treats us as sons, bestows us with riches and honor and blessing, and we will eat at his table always. This is the covenant love between David and Jonathan.

Look back at 2 Samuel 1:25-26. You know that at the end of 1 Samuel Saul and Jonathan die in battle. Here's David's song of lament for them. **Read**

The love between David and Jonathan was amazing. They were brothers. We call each other brother, they were closer than brothers. And just to be clear, they weren't homosexual. David says his love for Jonathan surpassed the love of women but not in any sort of unseemly way. You know that if there were sinful aspects to their relationship the Bible is not shy at all about dealing with that. But we don't get any hint of anything like that. Instead, we see this as a virtuous friendship.

Which really does beg the question: what does the Bible say about friendship? We live in a society where a third of the planet is on Facebook. And on Facebook what are we called? Friends. But that's not real friendship and everyone knows that. I'm friends with people I don't even know. And sometimes I decide to not be friends with people I do know.

There's also this idea that people are BFFs with so and so. And basically means that they are connected at the hip, they are inseparable. The world says that for a friendship to work it's got to be the 3 Cs: convenient, compatible, and common purpose. It's convenient: you go to school or work or church or live close by. You're compatible: your personalities match, you have the same sense of humor. And you have a common purpose: you like the same things, have similar goals. That's not a bad thing, those are keen observations. But I think we can do better. I think Bible gives us an idea of what friendship is.

I don't usually do the "let's apply all of this at the end" thing, so bear with me. I'm going to make 10 observations on friendship. The first 3 things have to do with the passages we've seen, then a few on friendship in general, the rest are about friendship within the church.

1) Deep friendship is hard to come by - most people only have one or two or maybe a handful of deep friendships in their lifetime. One of the reasons David and Jonathan's friendship is so striking is because it is so rare. For two people to love the Lord, to have the same interests, to have the same availability, families that get along, children get along, so on is a hard thing. Except for maybe Paul and Timothy's friendship - which was really more of a father/son relationship - we don't see this kind of tight friendship in the Bible.

If you're longing for a deep, deep friendship just know you may not ever have something like that. And if you have that, praise the Lord that you do.

2) Even deep friendships don't last forever - From the time David kills Goliath - let's guess that he's 18 - to the time Jonathan dies is maybe 18 years. Jonathan is killed in battle and David never has another friend like Jonathan. There's no one else he's ever this close to. His military leaders and other guys are good but they're not like Jonathan.

Sometimes God gives us a once-in-a-lifetime friendship for just a season. And then that person is gone never to be replaced, or never replaced in the same way. I had 2 best friends in middle school and high school; we were inseparable for 5 years. One I haven't talked to in 10 years. The other in 12. Same thing with college friends and various friends throughout life. A lot of times your closest friends are just for a season.

3) **Look** again at **1:26**. **Read** Husbands and wives should be friends.

Why is that such a striking statement? It's striking because we might expect him to say as strong as women. Or close to women. The love he has in mind here is the love between a husband and a wife. He says women - David did have several wives - but I think the idea here is actually just that the love between men and women, husbands and wives, is the most intense love there is. His love for Jonathan surpassed that.

But the truth remains: husbands and wives should be friends. Not just roommates. We've had times in our marriage where we were basically business partners, there was very little friendship. Every marriage goes through those seasons. And, we all know that that's not God's design.

Song 5:15-16: His arms are rods of gold, set with jewels. His body is polished ivory, bedecked with sapphires. His legs are alabaster columns, set on bases of gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars. His mouth is most sweet, and he is altogether desirable. This is my beloved and this is my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

Prov. 2:16: If you listen to the wisdom of Solomon "you will be delivered from the [the adulteress] with her smooth words who forsakes the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.

Yes, adultery is a violation of your covenant with God, but part of what makes adultery so bad is you betray your friend. That's not small. Biblical marriage assumes we are striving to be friends with our spouse.

I took a biblical counseling class at Faith Bible years ago and when people were doing marriage counseling inevitably one part of the homework assignments were date nights. One week, the guy planned it all; he tried to plan a night that was just for his wife. He could get input, but it was for her. The next week, she planned it. They couldn't talk about kids or money and they couldn't go to a movie. If they were poor, they went on a walk or to a park. If they had money, their favorite restaurant or whatever.

And we're all big into theology and Bible and truth and that's good. But God designed our spouses for enjoyment and friendship. That's not trivial. Maybe those of you who are married don't have that, but it should be something you're pursuing.

4) Christians can have strong friendships with unbelievers - something we as believers need to keep in mind is that unbelievers are not charity cases where we have to act better than them or that we have all our lives together. We can be their friends.

We should be striving for holiness - and they should see that. And we should be looking for opportunities to talk to them about the gospel. But you can be friends with unbelievers. In fact, the more friendly you are with unbelievers, the more you should desire and pray for their salvation.

Parents it's okay if your kids have friendships with unbelieving kids. I was that unbelieving kid no Christian parent wanted their kid around. And my friend invited me to church camp where I heard the gospel. It sounds really obvious: but you have to be around unbelievers and love them in order to tell them the gospel.

5) **Turn** to **Proverbs 14:20**. Just because someone is nice to you, doesn't mean they're your friend. **Read**

Why do the rich have friends? Because they want a piece of the action. I was reading through James with my son and we got to the part in **Jas. 2:1-7** where people are invited over and you say to the rich guy "Hey sit over here by me" and to the poor guy, "Hey there's a spot on the floor over there." Why would we do that? Because we love the praise of rich people. We want their riches. We have to guard our hearts.

Proverbs talks about this over and over.

Prov. 19:4, 6: Wealth brings many new friends, but a poor man is deserted by his friend...Many seek the favor of a generous man, and everyone is a friend to a man who gives gifts.

So guard your heart for why you might want to be friends with someone. And if you are well-off, or attractive, well-connected just know not everyone who is nice to you is truly your friend.

6) **Turn to 16:28.** Lies can kill friendships.

One of the most devastating things to any friendship is gossip and lies and misinformation. Here it's a dishonest man doing this intentionally, and that happens. But sometimes people spread misinformation and they don't even know it. We owe it to our friends to ask them directly when issues come up that seem problematic.

7) **Turn to Prov. 17:17.** Friendship walks through tough times. **Read**

You know who your friends are? The ones who stick with you through the tough times. I like the NET for the second part: a brother is born to **help** in adversity. That's the idea. There's no such thing as a fair weathered friend. Fair-weathered and friend are contradictory words. The people I consider my closest friends are those who I know I can call or ask during a hard time and they're there to help me through.

8) A true friend wants you to grow. **Prov. 27:17:** As iron sharpens iron, so what? One man sharpens another.

You know one of the ways the world defines friendship is that we just accept people for how they are and we don't ever expect any change or any improvement. "Just love me for me."

That's not biblical. You know who your true friends in Christ are? They're the ones who don't want you to stay in the same place you've been. I'm not talking about likes and dislikes or preferences or optional things. I'm talking about people who want you to grow in Christ. Not manipulate you, not burden you or make you feel guilty. But people who fan the flame of your walk with Jesus by calling you to grow in Christ.

What about friendship in the church, among believers? Let me say a few things on that.

9) We don't have to be the church of best friends. **Turn to 1 John 1:3**

Some of you come to church and it's just exhausting to be here. You're introverted so crowds overwhelm you. You don't know what to say or how to start a conversation. "How are you?" "Fine. You?" "Fine." Well isn't that great? We're all fine and our weeks were all good. Couldn't we just send out a group text every Sunday morning "I'm fine and it was good." That would save a lot of the exhaustion of just being around people.

Others of you have baggage. You have life situations or difficulties that you just don't want other people to know about. It takes too long to explain, it's pretty messy and vulnerable. Maybe you have sin in your life and, frankly, you don't want to be judged. It's okay if you're

Maybe you'll find a good friend here, maybe you won't. I just want to remind you that what brings us together is not that we're all best friends. What brings us together is that we're all wretched sinners who love Jesus and want to serve one another. The more we talk about the weather and sports and Trump the less we have in common. The more we talk about sin and grace and mercy and truth and Scripture the more we have in common. **Read 1 John 1:3**

John proclaims the gospel so that people can have fellowship with one another. Fellowship includes camaraderie, enjoyment, common purpose, meeting together. It means more than that, but it doesn't mean less than that. 1 Cor. 12 talks about all these different parts of the body. Some work well together, others not so much. Someone is going to be the hand. Someone is going to be the arm/pit. You know what Paul says? We need 'em all.

10) What God does require of us is to love. **Read 1 John 2:10-11, 3:14, 3:16.**

Two things we've seen here. First, when we interact with people in the congregation, what does John call us? Brothers. For those who are in Christ we are brothers and sisters. As a parent I know that not all of my kids are going to get along with every other child like best friends. But I still want them to love each other.

Second, the brothers love each other. When he talks to us he calls us children. He's not being condescending like he's above us. But he has this pastor's heart. And the pastor's heart is that this congregation would be like a mini-family where all the kids get along and love each other. For some of you, this is the closest thing you have to family. Every Sunday is a mini family reunion.

For others of you, you're thinking, "Yeah, I'm not sure I want to hit the reunion this week." We're not called to be best friends, but we are called to love. To sacrifice. To care for one another. To encourage one another, to gently call out sin, and walk side-by-side for the sake of the gospel and the glory of the Lord Jesus.

Pray