

# Friends

## 1 Samuel 18:1-5; 20:41-42

### Dr. Paul Cannings

#### A. Be Intentional (vs. 18:1-5):

1. Now it came about – David’s meeting with Saul lasted a long time.
  - a) It appears that David spoke with Saul at length, and he may have explained his actions as an expression of his faith in the Lord, thus attracting the love and loyalty of Jonathan (vs. 3; 14:6; 19:5). Their friendship endured even when it became clear that David was replacing him as the successor to his father’s throne.
2. Had finished speaking – David’s, conversation with Saul was continuous. It addressed Saul’s questions relevant to the events surrounding Goliath’s death. Jonathan had to have been with them.
  - a) After David’s conversation with Saul, Jonathan felt *bound* to him both by affection and political loyalty (cf. Ackroyd, VT 25 [1975] 213–14). Jonathan’s love, similarly, was political and personal (cf. 18:16, 22, 28; 20:17; Thompson, VT 24 [1974] 334–38). Though David did not yet get the king’s daughter promised in 17:25, he did get the love of the king’s son. He later remarked that the love of Jonathan was better than a woman’s (2 Sam 1:26). Saul now made David part of his permanent staff although, according to 16:22 he had already done that. Jonathan’s covenant with David was based on his love for him. This gave David the support of Saul’s heir apparent. David referred to Jonathan as his (covenant) brother in lamenting his death (2 Sam 1:26). Later David granted Saul’s lands to Meribaal/Mephibosheth, the lame son of Jonathan, because of this covenant and spared him from the tragedy that befell the other descendants of Saul (2 Sam 9; 21:7).<sup>1</sup>
3. Soul, mind – When Jonathan heard David speak to his father, he personally identified with David and was utterly impressed by the person David demonstrated himself to be. Jonathan became deeply committed to sharing his life with David because David proved to be a man of faith, committed to God, willing to put his life on the line for God’s people.
  - a) Jonathan and David became close friends after David killed Goliath in 1 Samuel 18:1-5; 19:1-7.
4. Soul, mind – A friend is someone whose character represents a commitment to the Lord’s agenda and for the Lord’s people. When a person chooses to be a friend of God, there is no way they would not be a friend to anyone else (John 13:34-35) because they would be a person of character. This is why light and darkness have no fellowship:

<sup>1</sup> Klein, R. W. (1983). [1 Samuel](#) (Vol. 10, p. 182). Word, Incorporated.

- a) The same Holy Spirit that is in them is in you (John 14:16-17).
- b) A person who is a friend of Christ is committed to the scriptures (John 15:1-5, 8-10).
- c) Their spiritual growth would establish the same attitude that was in Christ to be in you (Phil. 2:1-5).
- d) A person who is committed to being disciplined by Christ would have the love of Christ (John 13:34-35).

This is Biblically a true soulmate.

5. Was knit, bind – Jonathan set his mind to dedicate the rest of his life to becoming intertwined with David in the same way Ruth was towards Naomi.

- a) Each found in the other the affection that he did not find in his own family.<sup>2</sup>

6. Was knit, bind – When a person is fully committed to sustaining a relationship with another person, it does not mean there will not be differences. Because they are fully committed to the relationship, they stick with the other person until it is sorted out (1 Sam. 19-21). They trust the person's character as the person trusts in theirs.

- a) Their friendship is one of the deepest and closest recorded in the Bible: (1) They based their friendship on commitment to God, not just each other; (2) they let nothing come between them, not even career or family problems; (3) they drew closer together when their friendship was tested; (4) they remained friends to the end.<sup>3</sup>

7. Love - The love spoken here originates from the person's mind, not their emotions. This is why nothing gets in the way of two people, who are committed to the Lord (disciples abiding in Christ; friendship with Christ and true disciples; John 15:1-10, 13; 13:34-35), working together cohesively. It is not that they will not be compassionate towards one another; this love grows because it begins with a commitment to love God first (Matthew 22:36-40). This is why two individuals who are Christ and the church, washing in the Word (Ephesians 5:25) grows to being caring and nurturing to each other (Ephesians 5:28-31). Satan flips this concept around, like he did with Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:1-7), and that is why so many people are damaged today.

8. Saul took him – David's value became so significant to Saul that he intentionally made sure that David would never return home.

9. Let him return; given – Saul made plans for David to become a permanent fixture in his army. He planned to put David in a significant position and demand that all those around him respect him.

10. Then Jonathan made – Jonathan, on his own initiative, solidified his relationship with David by ratifying an agreement that would last forever.

- a) Jonathan had a close relationship with his father 20:2, 19:6.

11. Because he loved him – Jonathan decided to care for David as he would for himself. Jonathan wanted David to have access to all that was available to him as the king's son. Now David is loved as a brother.

<sup>2</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament* (1 Sa 18:1). Moody Press.

<sup>3</sup> *Life Application Bible Notes* (p. 440). (2007). Tyndale.

- a) It was quite common in the ancient world for the first ruler of a new dynasty to secure his position by murdering all potential claimants to the throne from the preceding dynasty (1 Kings 15:29; 16:11; 2 Kings 1:7; 11:1). Jonathan so trusted David, he did not worry about this.
  - b) Jonathan would much rather lose the throne of Israel than lose his closest friend.<sup>4</sup>
12. Jonathan stripped himself of his robe and gave it to David - Because Jonathan desired for David to be cared just as he was, especially with David now having a significant role in the military, Jonathan generously, and permanently gave David his robe (presents that David now says in the kingdom of Saul), and all of his armor (David now experiences the same protection he has in battle).
- a) The exchange of armor between Glaucus and Diomedes when they met before Troy and thus confirmed the pledge of old family friendship (Homer *The Iliad* VI. 230). Jonathan, the son of the king, gave all the material gifts; David, the poor man's son, gave but love and respect. One is reminded of the gift of God's Son to poverty-stricken humanity. Perhaps this accounts for Paul's designation of himself as the slave of Christ.<sup>5</sup>
  - b) To receive any part of the dress which had been *worn* by a sovereign, or his eldest son and heir, is deemed in the East the *highest* honour which can be conferred on a subject (see on Esth. 6:8). The girdle, being connected with the sword and the bow, may be considered as being part of the military dress, and great value is attached to it in the East.<sup>6</sup>
  - c) Took of the robe.... And gave it to David – Jonathan ratifies the covenant in an act that symbolizes giving himself to David. His act may even signify his recognition that David was to assume his place as successor to Saul (20:14-15, 31; 23:17) – a possibility that seems the more likely in that he also gave David “even his sword, his bow and his belt” (13:22).
13. To go forth wherever Saul sent him – With Saul's blessing and Jonathan's love, David departed from their presence and remained steadfast in faithfully carrying out all of Saul's commands.
- a) David's office. The group of armed men over which David is given control here is the standing army made up of the professional military men. It is possible that this is not a field post but more of an administrative position (“secretary of the army”). The position is to be contrasted with the post given to David in 1 Samuel 18:13, which suggests a field command with active duty.<sup>7</sup>
14. Prospered; Insight – In all of David's engagements he effectively and continuously demonstrated wisdom, excellent decision making that led to productive results each time. He vividly demonstrated that the Lord was with him.
15. It was pleasing in sight of the people; acceptable – When Saul promoted David, because of all that David accomplished for the nation, the people viewed this advancement as beneficial for the nation.
16. In the sight of Saul's servants – All those who ministered in Saul's household felt the same as the rest of the nation. David was well appreciated and accepted.
17. In the sight of Saul's servants – When we choose to be a friend of God, we are better equipped to have productive relationships with others.

<sup>4</sup> [Life Application Bible Notes](#) (p. 440). (2007). Tyndale.

<sup>5</sup> Pfeiffer, C. F. (1962). [The Wycliffe Bible Commentary: Old Testament](#) (1 Sa 18:1). Moody Press.

<sup>6</sup> Jamieson, R. (n.d.). [A Commentary, Critical, Experimental, and Practical, on the Old and New Testaments: Joshua–Esther: Vol. II](#) (p. 183). William Collins, Sons, & Company, Limited.

<sup>7</sup> Matthews, V. H., Chavalas, M. W., & Walton, J. H. (2000). [The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament](#) (electronic ed., 1 Sa 18:5). InterVarsity Press.

## B. Be Kind (20:41-42):

1. Fells – David threw himself on Jonathan with no plans to stop. He knew he was safe with Jonathan because Jonathan didn't give him up to his father. David knew how much it cost Jonathan to protect him.
  - a) No ancient writer has set before us so noble an example of a heart-felt, unselfish, and thoroughly human state of feeling, and none has described friendship with such entire truth in all its relations, and with such complete and profound knowledge of the human heart.”<sup>8</sup>
2. Bowed; Worship – Even though David had been anointed king and Jonathan accepted his future rule, David still bowed in respect to Jonathan, honoring their friendship and Jonathan's status
  - a) Expressions of respect and mutual commitment marked their encounter. In the gravity of the moment David initially spoke no words. Instead, he silently displayed subservience and utmost respect for his friend by bowing before Jonathan three times—the greatest number of times anyone in the Bible is depicted as performing this act in a single encounter.<sup>9</sup>
3. Bowed; Worship – David viewed Jonathan to be above him and a person whose leadership he must honor.
4. Kissed and wept - They both knew that this was the last time they were going to see each other. As a result, they displayed a powerful display of distress and sorrow. David displayed this more than Jonathan.
  - a) In this case kisses were exchanged because they also functioned as expressions of farewell (cf. Gen 31:55; Acts 20:37). The pathos of the moment is evident in the fact that they also “wept together.” The observation “David wept the most” emphasizes David's loyalty and commitment to the heir-apparent of the Saulide dynasty and thus blunts implied accusations that King David tried to exterminate his predecessors.<sup>10</sup>
5. Go in safety – Jonathan bids David peace and that there will be no strife between them.
  - a) David he urged him to “go in peace”—an expression of goodwill used elsewhere in the Old Testament in situations involving extended or permanent separations (cf. Exod 4:18; 2 Kgs 5:19). Though David and Jonathan would be physically separated from one another, they would remain inseparably joined by the oath they swore in the Lord's name (v. 42). Furthermore, their commitment would be intergenerational, continuing between their “descendants forever.” Having affirmed that commitment, the two friends left each others' presence for the next-to-last time.<sup>11</sup>

**6. In the name** – The oath and pledges that they made to each other was based on the reputation and fame of the Lord God. When God rules our lives, kindness is a fruit of the Spirit.

<sup>8</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). *1 Samuel* (p. 388). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

<sup>9</sup> Bergen, R. D. (1996). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 7, p. 219). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>10</sup> Bergen, R. D. (1996). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 7, p. 219). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>11</sup> Bergen, R. D. (1996). *1, 2 Samuel* (Vol. 7, p. 219). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

7. Departed – Notice that David did not go into the city as Jonathan did. David was going to remain on the run from Saul, while Jonathan was going back to fulfill this role.
  - a) Broke down, and was completely mastered by his grief. And so they parted, David to begin a life of danger and wandering, while Jonathan returned to the city to be a dutiful son to Saul.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Ed.). (1909). *1 Samuel* (p. 388). London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company.

