

Unit I: Faithful Witnesses Testify to God's Promises

A Forever Bond

DEVOTIONAL READING: Proverbs 27:6, 10-11, 17, 19

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURES: 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42;
2 Samuel 1:17-27; 21:7

PRINT PASSAGES: 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:16-17, 32-34, 42; 2 Samuel 1:26-27; 21:7

KEY VERSE

And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city. (1 Samuel 20:42, KJV)

.....

Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, “The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendaants and my descendants forever.” Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town. (1 Samuel 20:42, NIV)

Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Define how Jonathan and David's loyal love witnesses to God's love.
- Develop a heart of loyalty to God.
- Practice loyalty and love for God through loving their neighbors.

*Key Terms

Armor (1 Samuel 18:4)—Hebrew: *mad* or *med* (*mad*): a measure, cloth garment; “garments” (KJV); “tunic” (NIV).

Covenant (1 Samuel 18:3)—Hebrew: *berith* (*ber-eeth'*): a solemn agreement or contract between two parties. In the biblical context, it often refers to the divine covenants established by God with humanity.

Loved (1 Samuel 18:1)—Hebrew: *ahab* (*aw-hab*): to have had affection for another, including family, friends, and others—a strong brotherly love that speaks of bonding and friendship.

*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)



The Biblical Context

First Samuel recounts Israel's history in Canaan as they transition from judge-led rule to a unified monarchy. Samuel, the figure after whom this book is named, appears as the last judge and God's messenger in anointing Israel's first kings, Saul and David. The events in this book span roughly one hundred years and were written sometime after 950 BC. This period in Israel's history was marked by instability and political unrest caused by ongoing threats from Canaan's inhabitants, whom they failed to eliminate as God commanded. The biblical context of 1 Samuel 18 includes Israel's rejection of God's rulership and demand for a king like the surrounding nations (1 Samuel 8), Saul's anointing and failure as their first king (1 Samuel 9–15), and David's anointing and rise in popularity after killing Goliath (1 Samuel 16–17). First Samuel 18 continues after David's victory over Goliath and his increasing popularity, describing the immediate bond and resulting covenant friendship between David and Jonathan, Saul's son, and heir to the throne.

Introduction

Friendship is a mutual covenant relationship marked by affection, trust, support, shared values, and commitment. At the core of authentic friendship is loyalty—an important trait that reflects God's covenantal loyalty to His people. It embodies His steadfast love, unwavering faithfulness, and enduring commitment. Because God created humans to be social and relational, friendship plays a vital role not only in relationships but also theologically and spiritually. Relationally, humans need loyal friendships to shape character, strengthen faith, and foster a sense of belonging. Theologically and spiritually, covenantal friendships mirror the Trinity—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit existing in eternal harmony and love—and serve as a model for human relationships, especially among believers. Loyal, covenantal friendships, which are sacred bonds beyond ordinary human connections, are deeply rooted in Scripture and vividly illustrated through the lives of biblical figures. Perhaps the strongest example is the covenantal friendship between David and Jonathan. Despite significant personal costs, Jonathan and David entered a mutual covenant built on loyalty, protection, and sacrificial love.

ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

Covenantal Friendship Established (*1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:16-17, 32-34, 42*)

KJV

AND IT came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.
2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.
3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.
4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

.....

16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the LORD even require it at the hand of David's enemies.

17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

.....

32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

.....

42 And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace, forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, The LORD be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

NIV

AFTER DAVID had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.

2 From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family.

3 And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself.

4 Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

.....

16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account."

17 And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

.....

32 "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?" Jonathan asked his father.

33 But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.

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

.....

42 Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'" Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

After David defeats Goliath, he is brought before Saul, and an immediate bond of friendship forms between David and Jonathan, Saul's son, and the heir to Israel's throne. At the same time, Saul welcomes David into his court (verses 1-2). Recognizing God's hand on David, Jonathan quickly makes a covenant with him, likely without delay, because he loved him "as his own soul" (verse 3). Jonathan demonstrates his commitment and loyalty to their friendship by giving David his robe and weapons, symbolically acknowledging David's future as king (verse 4). As another sign of his devotion, Jonathan makes a covenant binding their descendants, calls down God's wrath on David's enemies, and asks David to reaffirm his love for him with an oath (verses 16-17). The ultimate test of Jonathan's covenantal love occurs when he risks his life defending David before Saul (verses 32-34). After narrowly escaping Saul's murderous rage, Jonathan meets David in the field for a final, heartfelt farewell. In this last meeting before David flees, Jonathan once again reminds him of their sworn commitment and entrusts their future, along with the future of their descendants, to the Lord (verse 42). David and Jonathan's "forever bond" of loyal friendship sets a standard for believers to follow in their relationships with others and, most importantly, in their relationship with God, because of His steadfast faithfulness to His covenant promises.

Q WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What does Jonathan's willingness to forfeit his royal privileges teach us about humility and submission to God's will and loyalty in relationships?

Covenantal Friendship Fulfilled (*2 Samuel 1:26-27; 21:7*)

KJV

26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

.....

7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the LORD's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.

NIV

26 "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.

27 "How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!"

.....

7 The king spared Mephibosheth son of Jonathan, the son of Saul, because of the oath before the LORD between David and Jonathan son of Saul.

After David and Jonathan's tearful farewell, Jonathan went home, and David became a

fugitive, constantly fleeing from Saul’s relentless efforts to kill him. Eventually, Saul and his sons—Jonathan, Abinadab, and Melchishua (spelled “Malki-Shua” in the NIV)—died in battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 31:2). Second Samuel 1:26–27 records part of David’s lament for Saul and his dear friend Jonathan, Israel’s fallen heroes, after he learned of their deaths. In verse 26, David speaks directly to Jonathan, expressing deep grief and saying that Jonathan’s love for him was greater than the love of women. In the ancient Near East, bonds of friendship were often more substantial than marriage agreements. Therefore, David’s lament is not about a romantic or sexual relationship but about one based on self-denial, loyalty, and faithfulness, regardless of the cost. In verse 27, David mourns Saul and Jonathan’s deaths as a tragic loss for Israel, symbolizing the nation’s vulnerability and grief over the fall of its leaders. However, just as Jonathan demonstrated his loyalty to David through their covenant, after Jonathan and Saul’s deaths, David had the opportunity to fulfill his vow to protect Jonathan’s descendants. When the Gibeonites demanded justice for Saul’s attempt to destroy them, an act that broke the sacred covenant Joshua made with them, they called for the execution of seven of Saul’s descendants. David remembered his vow to Jonathan and spared his son Mephibosheth because that promise was made before the Lord (see 2 Samuel 21:7). David’s strong commitment to protect Jonathan’s son shows that true covenant friendship goes beyond personal loss and changing circumstances, requires sacrificial obedience, stands as a lasting symbol of integrity and faithfulness to promises made before the Lord, and demonstrates the depth of one’s trust and reverence for Him.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

How do David’s actions toward Mephibosheth demonstrate God’s covenant love for humanity?

A Closing Thought

Jonathan and David’s friendship exemplifies *hesed*, a profound Hebrew word that is hard to translate and is often described with phrases like loving kindness, steadfast love, mercy, grace, or faithful devotion. However, these translations don’t fully capture its true meaning. At its core, *hesed* represents trustworthy, covenantal love that goes beyond mere obligation or emotional attachment. In a biblical context, *hesed* most often refers to God’s unconditional, covenantal love for His people, as well as human relationships rooted in loyalty, demonstrated through acts of sacrificial love—such as Jonathan and David’s “forever bond” of covenantal friendship, one of the most powerful examples in the Bible. Believers are now called to reflect the qualities of this kind of covenantal friendship, characterized by selfless, God-centered loyalty and sacrificial promise-keeping that endures across generations.

Your Life

Jonathan and David’s covenantal friendship reminds us that, at its core, authentic friendship from a biblical perspective is not about what we can get but about what we give in our

relationships with others, especially when sacrifice is necessary. This week, commit to doing a “covenantal friendship inventory” and compare your relationships, using the lessons from Jonathan and David to identify how you can strengthen and maintain friendships that are selflessly loyal and rooted in your relationship with God.

Your World!

We live in a broken, chaotic world where people yearn for loyal, trustworthy friendships. As God’s redemptive agents in the world, it is incumbent upon the faith community to model His covenantal love indiscriminately, especially to those who are hurting. Consequently, this week and in the future, determine how your congregation can intentionally create and maintain an environment where loving kindness, mercy, grace, and faithful devotion to others are the norm and not the exception.

Closing Prayer

Loving God, thank You for Your example of faithful, unconditional love for us. Help us grow in our relationship with You so that we become living examples of covenantal, loyal love that mirrors Yours. Amen.

Conclusion

(Preparing for Next Week’s Lesson)

Next week’s lesson encourages us to boldly stand up to those in power, even if our message is rejected (Amos 1:1; 2:11-12; 3:7-8; 7:10-15).

Home Daily Bible Readings		
MONDAY, June 22	“The Lord Loves Justice”	(Isaiah 61:4-9)
TUESDAY, June 23	“A Shepherd Who Seeks the Lost”	(Luke 15:1-7)
WEDNESDAY, June 24	“The Lord’s Day Is Coming”	(Amos 5:16-20)
THURSDAY, June 25	“Let Justice Roll Down like Water”	(Amos 5:21-27)
FRIDAY, June 26	“Good and Safe Pastures”	(John 10:1-9)
SATURDAY, June 27	“Jesus Is the Good Shepherd”	(John 10:10-18)
SUNDAY, June 28	“Chosen by God”	(Amos 7:10-15)

Notes
