



What does the
Bible Say about...

Friendship?

Think

Ask

Bible

There was once a friendship formed between two very unlikely young men. One was a shepherd, the other was the son of a king. The shepherd boy was the youngest of a large God-fearing family and the prince was the son of a kingdom's first-ever king. One boy was hidden away from the public eye, tending to his father's sheep; the other was raised in pomp and ceremony, in training to one day succeed his father's throne. It seems an unlikely connection, doesn't it? How would two such young men even meet?

Well, their meeting was in fact very memorable. I wonder if you have already guessed who these lads are? One more clue, just in case. Think: giant and slingshot. Yes! You've got it; we are talking about David and Jonathan. Not only was their first meeting memorable but it formed the beginning of a beautiful and perhaps unique friendship. Why would I say unique? Well, I think that how the Bible describes this wonderful friendship is a lot different from how the world would describe friendship. So let's have a look at the three main characters whose lives unfold before us in the book of 1 Samuel. This will help us to see exactly what made this friendship so amazing, and how God used this friendship to achieve His purposes.

David

David was the shepherd-boy-turned-soldier-turned king! He was the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite. One of the neat things that we know about Jesse is that he was the grandson of Ruth and Boaz (see the book of Ruth in the Old Testament). In fact, were you to read the genealogy (family tree) in the gospel of Matthew, chapter 1, you would see that David is in Jesus' family tree. Isn't that amazing!

Anyway, as we know, David worked in the family business looking after his father's sheep. In New Zealand where I live, a shepherd's task isn't too dangerous compared to being a shepherd in Israel. In Israel, in

Bible times, there were wild animals like lions, bears and wolves, who would happily pick off one or two sheep for their dinner! This meant David had to be very skilled in protecting the sheep. In David's day, there were no rifles to kill wild animals, but he did have a slingshot. Can you see already how God was using David's role as a shepherd to train him for being a soldier in the future?

But there is something else about David. David was chosen by God to replace Saul as king. As you will soon see, Saul was not a king who obeyed God, so God chose a man who loved Him to be the next king: that man was David. David did not know when or even how he would be crowned king, but he trusted God and continued to serve right where he was, as a shepherd, until God made him king.

Just one more thing about David: he was a man who loved God. In fact, God even calls David 'a man after my own heart' (Acts 13:22). David loved to worship God by writing songs and playing the harp. Many of the songs he wrote are recorded for us in the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament. Why don't you take some time to read Psalm 23, written by David the shepherd. He uses his life as a shepherd as a picture of God's care for His people, referring to God as his Shepherd and the people as His sheep. Isn't that beautiful?

But back to the king thing ... why would God want David to be king? Was King Saul really doing such a bad job? Read on and see...

Did You Know ...?

A theocracy is a system of government where God is the head of State and His Word is law. Israel was under a theocracy from the time of Moses to the time of Samuel, when Saul was made king.

Saul

Before the kingdom of Israel had a king, they had judges who spoke to the people on behalf of God and helped to govern and lead the people. The people were governed under a theocracy.

A prophet called Samuel was the Judge of Israel when Saul was a young man. You might remember Samuel as the much-wanted child of the woman Hannah, who for many years was unable to have a baby. The Lord answered Hannah's prayer for a child and in return she gave Samuel to the Lord for His service, allowing the child to live with and be an assistant to the judge of the time, Eli. Sadly, Eli's sons did not follow the Lord, so God raised up Samuel to take over from Eli after Eli's death. Samuel was a good judge over Israel, but when he became old and his sons became judges, they did not fear the Lord either. Instead of allowing God to deal with these men His way, the Israelite people decided they just wanted a human king instead so they could be like the other nations. This meant they were rejecting God as their king. God warned the people against having a human king to rule over them (you can read this warning in 1 Samuel 8:10-22). However, the people were insistent so God gave them their king. Enter stage right: Saul.

Saul was known as a very handsome man and in fact he was also a very tall man, being at least a head taller than anyone else (1 Samuel 9:2). Sadly, we do not read anything about Saul being a God-fearing man, but we do read in 1 Samuel 10:9 that God gave Saul another heart, equipping him for the very sacred role ahead. Saul was not devoted to the Lord. And sadly it was not long before Saul was dishonouring the Lord by following his own ways instead of God's ways. God was patient with Saul but even so, Saul's consistent sin meant that God eventually rejected him as king and chose David for the job instead.

And Samuel said to Saul, 'I will not return with you. For you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel.' As Samuel turned to go away, Saul seized the skirt of his robe, and it tore. And Samuel said to him, 'The LORD has torn the kingdom of Israel from you this day and has given it to a neighbour of yours, who is better than you.'

—1 Samuel 15:26-28

Saul did not know who the man was or when this new king would reign, but it soon became apparent that David was a threat to him. Saul, consumed with jealousy and hatred, made many attempts to take David's life. Saul in his sin was trying to protect his role as king. However, Satan was also at work, trying to get rid of David in order to keep Israel without a God-fearing king, and to stop David's line of descendants, which would eventually lead to Jesus. Satan was using Saul's sin of selfishness to try to stop Jesus being born! Sin is serious!

Jonathan

From our first glimpse of Jonathan in 1 Samuel 14 we see that Jonathan believed in the Lord. In fact, the Lord used Jonathan's simple and genuine faith in Him to save Israel from the Philistines. Jonathan was a stark contrast to his father, Saul. While Saul was making rash decisions, Jonathan was working in the background, being used by God often to thwart his father's foolish behaviour. Jonathan even stepped aside from his rightful succession to his father's throne and submitted willingly to God's plan for David. Jonathan was a selfless young man. But don't be tempted to think this young man was a sissy. He was a mighty warrior and athlete. Don't forget that he was next in line to the throne and much of his life would have been in training for this role, which includes being

a mighty and skilled warrior. Jonathan was loved and respected by the people. We see this in 1 Samuel 14 when Jonathan and his armour-bearer were near the Philistine camp. Jonathan believed that the Lord would give him victory over the Philistines that day and so he told his armour bearer to come with him to fight. Now think about this: There were many Philistines. There were two Israelites. But the armour-bearer's response to Jonathan tells us of his great love for his master. He said, 'Do all that is in your heart. Do as you wish. Behold, I am with you heart and soul.' (1 Samuel 14:7). Jonathan was brave and courageous and his love for the people of Israel was evident in his willingness to put his life on the line for their protection.

So now we know a little more about the three characters we'll be looking at in our study of Jonathan and David's friendship. And where did Jonathan and David meet? At the battle line, where, for many days, the Israelites had been tormented by a huge Philistine called Goliath. Not one man was prepared to fight this giant man. Until, that is, David came from the fields to deliver food to his soldier brothers. That's when he ended up killing Goliath with his slingshot and a stone.

Jonathan, of course, had watched this situation unfold.

The Philistine said to David, 'Come to me and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and to the beasts of the field.' Then David said to the Philistine, 'You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and

that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD's, and he will give you into our hand.'

—1 Samuel 17:44-47

After David had succeeded in killing Goliath, you can imagine the shout of celebration and victory that came from the Israelites. They had been freed from the hold of this Philistine!

What happened next? When David was summoned to speak with the king, what would the king's son have felt? Jealousy? Admiration? Let's see ...

As soon as he was finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

—1 Samuel 18:1

Jonathan loved David. This is the key to their amazing friendship – selfless love. Jonathan saw David come and defeat the enemy that neither he nor his father nor the rest of the Israelite army could defeat, and yet, instead of feeling intimidated, envious or even a little annoyed that a mere shepherd did better than any mighty warrior, Jonathan loved him. Jonathan also gave David his robe, his armour, his belt, his sword – all that he himself would wear as a mighty warrior. And you can bet that it wasn't the common armour that every other soldier would have had. No, it was the armour of a prince. What Jonathan was doing was clothing David as a prince, allowing David the highest honour that anyone could have in the king's court. Remembering that the eldest prince was the one who was heir to the throne, Jonathan unknowingly clothed David correctly because it would in fact be David and not Jonathan who would one day become king. Jonathan put David above himself by de-robing himself for David.

As we read through Samuel, the plot of jealous hatred unfolds with numerous accounts of David serving Saul in his army, playing the harp to ease Saul's troubled mind and then fleeing from Saul in order to preserve his life. All the while, Jonathan is in the background, watching his father become murderous towards his dearest friend. What a terrible position that Jonathan is placed in, having to slyly help David in hiding, while still serving on the battlefield with his father. But Jonathan loved David. Can you see some opposites here? Love caused Jonathan to work hard for David's best interests, while jealous hatred caused Saul to work hard for his own best interests.

But wait, there's more!

What other Principles can we Learn from Scripture?



We can all try our hardest, even with the Lord's help to be the kind of friend that Jonathan was to David, but I promise you that there will be times we fail. Sometimes we will say or do things that we regret; sometimes we will act selfishly or unkindly. Sometimes our friends will not treat us the way we want to be treated. This is all because of sin. But Jesus can help us to be the kind of friend that Jonathan was to David. If we are truly saved, if we believe that Jesus is our Saviour, the Holy Spirit will live within us and He will begin to transform us so that we become more like Jesus.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

—Galatians 5:22-23

▼ [more...](#)

The fruit of the Spirit, as described in the previous verse, is what we should see in the lives of all Christians because the Holy Spirit lives within all believers and transforms them.

What did we Learn about Friendship?

1. Selfless love in a friendship crosses cultural and social barriers.
2. Selfless love in a friendship leads us to rejoice with each other instead of becoming jealous.
3. Selfless love in a friendship is built on a common bond in the Lord.
4. Selfless love in a friendship leads us to encourage one another in the Lord.
5. Selfless love in a friendship leads us to want the best for our friend.
6. Selfless love leads to friends who have a lasting influence on us.
7. Selfless love in friendship is an opportunity for us to show the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.



Study Questions



1. How do you think the fruit of the Spirit would impact or change friendships?
2. Write out each 'fruit' and next to it, write a description of this fruit as it would look in friendship.
3. If you are a Christian, you and others should be able to see the fruit of the Spirit fairly consistently in your life. Are there any areas of your life that you need the Lord's help to develop more? We all need help with our lives. Sometimes we need different sorts of help depending on who we might be with.
4. How did Jesus show the fruit of the Spirit in His relationships with people? Give examples.
5. Can you think of other verses in the Bible that talk about the fruit mentioned in Galatians 5? If not, look some up from the concordance in the back of your Bible.
5. What are some practical ways that you can apply the fruit of the Spirit to some of your friendships this week?

Let's Pray Together

Dear God, thank you for Jonathan and David's friendship and the work you did in their hearts. Please enable me to be a friend who loves selflessly, preferring others above myself and rejoicing in their joys and weeping with them in their trials. Jesus, thank you for being the best friend that anyone could ever have. Thank you for paying the price for my sin and for allowing me to come into a right friendship with you. Please help me to tell others about you, the friend of sinners. Amen.



**BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE,
PATIENCE, KINDNESS, GOODNESS, FAITHFULNESS,
GENTLENESS, SELF-CONTROL. (GALATIANS 5:22-23)**

MY ACTION PLAN ...

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.