

Session 1: A FRIEND IN NEED

FOCUS

David faced many difficulties during his life, and needed a friend. That friend was Jonathan.

Jonathan and David are the subject of this first session on friendship.

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BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

1 Samuel 19:1-7; 20:1-42; Proverbs 16:28; 17:9

COMMENTARY

Use the Commentary as background information and discussion material as you prepare and facilitate this session.

The Loyalty of Friendship (1 Samuel 19:1-7)

Loyalty is an indispensable ingredient in any friendship. The loyalty between David and Jonathan was founded on something far more substantial though than just common interests.

The secret of David and Jonathan's friendship is found in David's words to Jonathan in 1 Samuel 20:8, "As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the lord."

They had a covenant friendship, which is central to the biblical idea of friendship. Abraham, for example, is the only person in the Bible called a friend of God, and the basis of that title is God's covenant with him. In the New Testament, Jesus calls us "friends," and the context is after giving the disciples the cup in the upper room as a sign of the new covenant.

The Test of Loyalty

Jonathan and David's friendship came under intense pressure as Jonathan's father, Saul, sought to kill David out of his own jealousy and rage.

Jonathan could have responded to his father's attack upon his friend by agreeing with his father, and betraying his friendship with David. Instead, he went to David, told him what had happened, and encouraged him in God.

Burden-Bearing in Friendship (1 Samuel 20:1-11)

The story is told of Saul's pursuit of David in 1 Samuel 19:8-24.

He ambushed David's house and commanded his soldiers, "Bring (David) up to me in his bed so that I may kill him" (1 Samuel 19:15). But the plot failed as Saul was betrayed by his own daughter, Michal, who helped her husband David, to escape. David now carried the burden of being a fugitive.

In David's flight from Saul, a second characteristic of true friendship is seen. Jonathan not only defended David's reputation, but as we are told in 1 Samuel 20:1-11, he became involved with David's problems. When we are overwhelmed with problems, it is in that time of need where the crucial test of friendship is found.

The Friendship of Being There

As David's covenant friend, Jonathan came alongside David and shared the burden. When David was discovered by Saul at Ramah while he was with Samuel, he fled to Saul's very hometown of Gibeah, for he knew Jonathan would be there to help.

But Jonathan was not merely a willing listener, he was an honest friend. He disagreed with David, and told him so (1 Samuel 20:2).

Edification in Friendship (1 Samuel 20:12-17)

One of the most moving dialogues in all of Scripture is that between Jonathan and David in 1 Samuel 20:12-17.

Jonathan could have viewed David as a competitor. It is easy at times to see our friends that way. Instead, Jonathan chose to see David as his brother.

Jonathan was a genuine man of faith, and because he lived for God's glory, and not his own, he could edify David. He could rejoice in seeing his friend enjoy God's best for his life.

Trust in Friendship (1 Samuel 20:18-42)

The final characteristic we see in the friendship between Jonathan and David is trust.

As Jonathan departed to return to his father, he entrusted his future to David's hands. And David trusted Jonathan to inform him of his father Saul's plans toward him (1 Samuel 20:12-13).

The price Jonathan had to pay for intervening on behalf of his friend is revealed in 1 Samuel 20:30-33. Jonathan risked his life for David. And David trusted Jonathan with his life.

Not only did they place their trust in one another, but they entrusted one another to God.

Life Affirmations

We can make several affirmations regarding friends who are faithful in times of trouble.

1. The concept of covenant friendship is one we very much need to recapture. There ought to be, among friends in the Lord, an open declared commitment of one's life to a person as a friend.
2. To place our trust fully in God allows us the freedom to do whatever we can to see God's purpose fulfilled in our friends. Our motives become Christ-centered and pure, away from self-gain.
3. Friendships in the Lord are investments for eternity. "The lord is witness between you and me" is not a barrier, but a bridge.



IN-SESSION COMMUNITY BUILDING OPTIONS

Select one or more of these activities to begin building bridges between group members as you introduce today's subject.

1. A Faithful Friend

Begin your session by referring to the topic of this session: "A true friend is one who is faithful even in times of trouble." Then invite your group to think about the following question:

- Has there been someone in your life who you would describe as having been a faithful friend to you in your times of trouble?"

Invite your group to think of one such person and ask several to share the characteristics that describe the faithful friend. Use this to introduce the session on the characteristics of friendship in times of trouble and need.

2. My Best Friend

Ask your group to think back to their younger years and identify their one very best friend. Then ask them to identify what qualities made this person a great friend.

3. Quantity or Quality?

Read the following quote by Joyce Landorf, a Christian speaker and writer, on having many friends. Then ask your group if they agree or disagree with it, and why.

"I don't know how it happened, or who started the rumor, but having lots of friends is just not where it's at. If you have two or three friends in your whole lifetime who can be counted on, depended on, and prayed with, you know what the real essence of friendship is all about. Quality counts in friendship far above quantity."¹

- In times of trouble is it better to have lots of friends, or "two or three friends . . . who can be counted on"? Why?

PRESENTATION OPTIONS

Select one or more of the following activities to present today's topic.

1. Our Friendship

Provide each of your young adults with a copy of **Handout 1**, which contains several quotes on the nature of friendship. As you present today's session, have them refer to those quotes as they relate to the friendship between Jonathan and David, and as they relate to their own friendships. Invite your group to share their own insights to the quotes and to the session.

2. Group Study

Divide everyone into four groups. Assign one of the following scriptures from the Commentary section to each group:

- A. The Loyalty of Friendship (1 Samuel 19:1-7)
- B. Burden-Bearing in Friendship (1 Samuel 20:1-11)
- C. Edification in Friendship (1 Samuel 20:12-17)
- D. Trust in Friendship (1 Samuel 20:18-42)

Have each group study their assigned scriptures and try to come up with the characteristics of friendship as seen there. Supplement this with the material in the Commentary section above.

SUGGESTED READING

Unnoticed Neighbors: A Pilgrimage into the Social Justice Story (Erina Ludwig: The House Studio, 2011)

PRACTICE

Encourage your group to consider their friendships. Urge them to think about one way they can practice being a better friend this week.

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SUMMARY OPTIONS

Select one or more of these activities to summarize and to give opportunity for group members to apply the truth learned through this session.

1. Enjoyer or Edifier?

As you bring your session to a close, pose the following question to your young adults.

- Do your friendships include edification of one another, or are they simply for enjoyment?
- Can there be friendships where there is edification but little enjoyment?

Stress the role each of us plays in building up one another in Christ.

2. Friend Quotient

Ask your group to rate their own strong and weak points when it comes to being the kind of friend described in the story of Jonathan and David.

- How can they build on their strong points?
- How can they work on their weak points?

Close in prayer, asking God to guide you in being a Christlike friend.

3. Your Significant Others

Have your group consider the following questions:

- Who are the important people in your life?
- Are they your friends?
- What makes each of them significant to you?

You might want to read to your group the three life affirmations found at the conclusion of the Commentary section.

by Jim Usery

Friendship

Insomuch as anyone pushes you nearer to God, he or she is your friend.

—Anonymous

The glory of friendship is not the outstretched hand, nor the kindly smile, nor the joy of companionship; it is the spiritual inspiration that comes to one when he discovers that someone else believes in him and is willing to trust him with his friendship.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

He who has lost a friend has more cause of joy that once he had him, than of grief that he is taken away.
Shall a (person) bury his friendship with his friend?

—Seneca

He that has a thousand friends
has not one friend to spare,
And he who has one enemy
shall meet him everywhere.

—Arab Proverb

We never know the true value of friends. While they live we are too sensible of their faults; when we have lost them we see only their virtues.

—Anonymous