

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

STUDY SEVEN

The Bond between Close Friends

Selections from 1 Samuel 18–20

When life gets sideways and you feel alone, there's nothing like a faithful friend to help you through.

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

LIKE clusters of grapes from God's bountiful vine, the fruits of the Spirit are ripe and ready to be picked. Do you lack love? Reach for His love to nourish yourself and share with others. Do you seek joy? The joy of the Lord is yours for the taking. Is your heart in need of peace? Let God's abundant peace overflow your soul.

Patience, kindness, goodness—all the fruits of the Spirit are available, including the next virtue for our study, "faithfulness" (Galatians 5:22).

Faithfulness is the foundation of any relationship, especially our relationship with God. "Great is his faithfulness," the prophet declared (Lamentations 3:23). Because He is faithful, we can trust Him. He is reliable—we can always count on Him. He is loyal—we can be certain He will never turn His back on us. He is consistent—as He loves us today, we know He will love us tomorrow.

Faithfulness is in God's nature, and He offers us that same quality as a fruit of the Spirit so our relationships can thrive. An example in Scripture of faithfulness is the friendship between Jonathan and David. Their relationship endured through the harshest storms. Even when Jonathan's father, King Saul, forcefully tried to drive them apart, their bond held fast.

Let's visit Jonathan and David in King Saul's palace and see in their friendship a reflection of God's faithfulness and an inspiration of how we can show faithfulness toward those we love.



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PREPARE YOUR HEART

“The faithful love of the LORD never ends!” (Lamentations 3:22). Lean on God’s promise as you open His Word in prayer.

Father, I rest in Your faithfulness, certain of Your love and mercy toward me. Through Your Word, show me how I can reflect these qualities toward others so that they see a glimmer of Your faithfulness in me. In Jesus’ name, amen.



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

Jonathan was King Saul’s eldest son and heir to the throne. He displayed all the character qualities that would make him a great king of Israel. When the Philistines threatened to crush Israel, Jonathan and his armor-bearer launched a daring assault on a Philistine outpost, trusting God to bring the victory. Jonathan’s attack, coupled with a heaven-sent earthquake, caused the Philistines to turn in panic and run (*1 Samuel 14:1–23*).

When God rejected Saul because of his disobedience, God ended Saul’s dynasty, removing Jonathan from succession to the throne (*1 Samuel 13:13–14; 16:1*). God chose David instead to be Israel’s next king. Rather than make an enemy of David, however, Jonathan humbly accepted God’s plan and welcomed David as his friend.



Observation: Four Qualities of Faithfulness

Let’s examine four passages of Scripture featuring Jonathan and David and discover the qualities of faithfulness that marked their friendship. Use your skills of *observation* to identify key details in the interactions between the two men.¹

Personal Sacrifice—1 Samuel 18:1–4

Only a few knew Samuel had anointed David to be the next king (*1 Samuel 16:10–13*), but *everyone* knew David after he slew Goliath (*17:12–58*). With a whirl of his sling, David catapulted himself into national fame . . . and into the crosshairs of King Saul’s jealous suspicions. From that day on, Saul kept David close to him in the palace and “wouldn’t let him return home” (18:2).

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How did Jonathan's friendship with David begin, according to *1 Samuel 18:1–4*? What sacrificial gesture did Jonathan make to seal the covenant?

Jonathan saw in David qualities that he admired. He formed a pact with David because he loved David as he loved his own soul. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Loyal Defense—1 Samuel 19:1–6

As David won more victories and the winds of public favor shifted toward him, Saul “became even more afraid of him” (1 Samuel 18:15). Saul sent David into battle hoping the Philistines would kill him (*18:17–27*), but when that scheme failed, Saul resorted to conspiracy. He “urged his servants and his son Jonathan to assassinate David” (19:1).

In response, how did Jonathan show faithfulness to David, according to *1 Samuel 19:1–6*?

Jonathan could have been jealous and envious of young David, but he wasn't. He spoke up in David's defense. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

Genuine Acceptance—1 Samuel 20:41–42

Realizing David must flee, Jonathan arranged to meet him in a safe place to say goodbye. How did David express his farewell to the man who was like a brother, according *1 Samuel 20:41–42*?

When your heart is broken, you need a friend to cry with. So it was with David and Jonathan. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll

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Consistent Encouragement—1 Samuel 23:15–18

David hid in caves and canyons to evade Saul’s searches. At his lowest point, when even those he trusted betrayed him (*1 Samuel 23:9–12*), David received a visit from a friend. What did Jonathan tell David in *1 Samuel 23:15–18*? What do you think Jonathan’s presence meant to David?

David had been hiding. He was broken, scared, dirty, hungry, thirsty, alone, feeling abandoned. That’s when Jonathan came. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: David and Jonathan’s Covenant

Jonathan formalized his commitment to David in a covenant, but his friendship was rooted in love. Jonathan made the covenant “because he loved [David] as he loved himself” (1 Samuel 18:3)—which, according to the Mosaic law, reflected the highest form of devotion:

“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.” (Leviticus 19:18)

While Saul bore a grudge against David, Jonathan viewed David not as a threat but as an equal—he loved him *as himself*. And He loved him as a spiritual brother because of their shared devotion to God. When Jonathan perceived God’s blessing on David, he humbly stepped aside, forfeiting his own future kingship to allow David free access to the throne when the time was right.

What did Jonathan communicate to David by giving him his royal “robe,” along with his “tunic, sword, bow, and belt” (*1 Samuel 18:4*)? For help with the meaning of Jonathan’s gifts, consult your Bible-study tools or *Constable’s Notes* at netbible.org.

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Jonathan didn't ask David for anything in return, but what did Jonathan hope for as a result of their friendship, according to *1 Samuel 20:14–17; 41–42; 23:16–18*?

What principles about faithfulness do you gather from Jonathan's covenant with David? What was the nature of their love for one another?

On occasion in life, along comes a kindred spirit. You have a oneness of soul with another person, although you may be very different. Think of how different Jonathan and David were! —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Correlation: God's Faithfulness toward Us

Jonathan demonstrated faithfulness to David by offering him his own royal status. He defended David, accepted his tears, and encouraged him at his lowest point. The following verses illustrate the similar ways in which God has remained faithful to us. Read the passage and write down the expressions of God's faithfulness to you.

1 Peter 2:9–10: _____

1 John 2:1–2: _____

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Psalm 56:8; Hebrews 4:15–16: _____

Isaiah 40:28–31: _____

How has the Lord shown His faithfulness to you recently?

We receive God’s faithfulness, and then we transfer what He gives us to others. Let’s look at ways the fruit of faithfulness can be expressed in our relationships.

The Lord is there for you. You can wake up at 1:00 in the morning and call on Him, and He will hear your call. Or you can celebrate and express joy, and He will hear your praise. You can count on the Lord to be there. Even when others fail you, He will not. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Application: Faithfulness in Our Relationships

Who wouldn’t be blessed by a Jonathan-type friend? Jonathan went to “find David” when he was alone, disillusioned, and at the end of his resources, and he “encouraged [David] to stay strong in his faith in God” (1 Samuel 23:16). Do you need encouragement? In a prayerful request, share with the Lord your need for a faithful friend.

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“A real friend sticks closer than a brother” (Proverbs 18:24). How can the Lord through the Spirit enrich one of your friendships with the fruit of faithfulness? Let’s review the ways we can express faithfulness from our *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study.

1. A faithful friend is willing to sacrifice.
2. A faithful friend defends you when others accuse.
3. A faithful friend allows you freedom to be vulnerable and unguarded.
4. A faithful friend keeps encouraging and affirming you.

Which of the four ways Jonathan was faithful to David can you be faithful in one of your relationships? Call upon the Spirit to fill you with His faithful love as you take these steps.

David leaned on God while running from King Saul, but David still needed Jonathan—God’s faithfulness in the flesh. How valuable is a friend in times of trouble! As you close your study, thank the Lord for the Jonathan-like friends in your life and pray for His wisdom to be like a Jonathan to those who need to feel God’s faithfulness through you.



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, when the bottom drops out of my life, I know I can count on You to never leave me, to walk with me when I have no one else. Thank You for your faithfulness! Thank You for those who have expressed Your faithfulness to me when I needed a friend. Give me the privilege of giving to others what I have so bountifully received. In Jesus’ name, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. To learn more about Pastor Chuck Swindoll’s *Searching the Scriptures* Bible-study method, go to the web page, “[How Does Pastor Chuck Swindoll Study the Bible?](#)”

For the 2024 broadcasts, this *Searching the Scriptures* Bible study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, vice president of *Searching the Scriptures* Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll’s messages. Copyright © 2023, 2024 by Charles R. Swindoll, Inc. All rights are reserved worldwide. Duplication of copyrighted material for commercial use is strictly prohibited.

