

## Jonathan and David

**Opener:** When has a close friend protected you when someone wanted to harm you?

**Scripture:** David went to Jonathan and asked, “What have I done? What is my crime? How have I wronged your father, that he is trying to kill me?”<sup>2</sup> “Never!” Jonathan replied. “You are not going to die! Look, my father doesn’t do anything, great or small, without letting me know. Why would he hide this from me? It isn’t so!”

<sup>3</sup> But David took an oath and said, “Your father knows very well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he has said to himself, ‘Jonathan must not know this or he will be grieved.’ Yet as surely as the Lord lives and as you live, there is only a step between me and death.”<sup>4</sup> Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you.”

<sup>5</sup> So David said, “Look, if your father misses me at the New Moon feast tomorrow, tell him, ‘David asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his clan.’<sup>7</sup> If he says, ‘Very well,’ then your servant is safe. But if he loses his temper, you can be sure that he is determined to harm me.<sup>8</sup> As for you, show kindness to your servant, for you have brought him into a covenant with you before the Lord. If I am guilty, then kill me yourself! Why hand me over to your father?”<sup>9</sup> “Never!” Jonathan said. “If I had the least inkling my father was determined to harm you, wouldn’t I tell you?”

<sup>12</sup> Then Jonathan said to David, “I swear by the Lord, the God of Israel, that I will surely sound out my father by this time the day after tomorrow! If he is favorably disposed toward you, will I not send you word and let you know?<sup>13</sup> But if my father intends to harm you, may the Lord deal with Jonathan, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away in peace. May the Lord be with you as he has been with my father.<sup>14</sup> But show me unfailing kindness like the Lord’s kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed,<sup>15</sup> and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family—not even when the Lord has cut off every one of David’s enemies from the face of the earth.”

<sup>16</sup> So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, “May the Lord call David’s enemies to account.”<sup>17</sup> Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.<sup>23</sup> About what you and I discussed—remember, the Lord is witness between you and me forever.”

<sup>24</sup> When the New Moon feast came David’s place was empty two days in a row. Then Saul said to Jonathan, “Why hasn’t David come to the New Moon feast yesterday or today?”<sup>28</sup> Jonathan answered, “David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem.<sup>29</sup> He said, ‘Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice and my brother ordered me to be there. That is why he has not come to the feast.’”

<sup>30</sup> Saul’s anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, “You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don’t I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you?<sup>31</sup> As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send someone to bring him to me, for he must die!”<sup>32</sup> “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?” Jonathan asked his father.<sup>33</sup> But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.

Jonathan went to where David was hiding and David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most.<sup>42</sup> 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. I Samuel 20 (condensed)

## Discussion Questions

1. I Samuel 20 is about the unlikely friendship between Jonathan and David and its impact on their lives, their families, and Israel itself. How would you describe the challenges they faced?
2. We're told that Jonathan loved David as he loved himself. This is exactly how Jesus told us to love each other: "Love your neighbor as yourself." What are some qualities in their friendship that you admire? How can we develop close friendships in our own lives? I Samuel 20:17; Matt. 22:39
3. Saul feared and despised David because he sensed—quite rightly—that David was a threat to his throne. But aside from Saul, the other person who had the most to fear from David's success and popularity was Jonathan, because any challenge to Saul's reign was also a challenge to him. Why wasn't Jonathan equally determined to eliminate David? Why was he willing to transfer the kingship from Saul to David in place of himself? I Samuel 20:31
4. How did Saul's jealousy impact his relationship with his son Jonathan? How can jealousy and insecurity damage relationships, and how can we guard against these destructive emotions? How did Jonathan try to reason with Saul and what was Saul's response? I Samuel 20:28-34
5. Jonathan and David made a covenant of friendship that sealed their commitment to one another. What is a covenant and why is it important in this context? What would a friendship covenant look like today, and what are some commitments we can make in our relationships to strengthen and deepen them? I Samuel 20:8, 14-17, 23, 42
6. Jonathan and David parted ways because they knew they had to hide their friendship from Saul. Have you ever had to make difficult decisions in order to protect a friend? What happened? I Samuel 20:42
7. There was no claim that Jonathan was incompetent or unfit. Even so, Jonathan abdicated his natural right to the throne in favor of David because he knew it was God's will for David to be king. How can we know when it's time to step aside or to sacrificially give up our rights so that God's will can be done? Examples?



## Wrap Up

David was a shepherd; Jonathan was a prince. Jonathan grew up in the palace and was a trained warrior; David grew up in the little town of Bethlehem and was trained to tend sheep. Jonathan was the oldest son and in line to inherit the throne; David was the youngest of eight boys and was anointed to be the next king in Jonathan's place. Despite their differences, they were the very best of friends. While most men in Jonathan's shoes would have felt jealous and threatened, Jonathan saw what God saw in David: he was a man after God's own heart. And as it turned out, Jonathan was too.