

June 21, 2026

"Jonathan and David, Resolute Friends"
Lesson 31 Samuel 18, 20
2 Samuel 1, 21**Intro**

The two books of Samuel dwell on three important Biblical people: Samuel, Saul, and David. Samuel's birth to Hannah was a gift from God, the study of last week's lesson. Samuel is the transitional leader between the time of the Judges and the time of Israel's monarchy. He first anointed Saul, then later David, as kings of Israel. Kings at that time were seen as military protectors, able to lead their people into battle. David was anointed king before Saul was no longer king, which presents a major conflict to both Saul and his house. His firstborn son and heir, Jonathan, would be the next person to be king once Saul is gone. He could understandably and easily reject David's anointing. But Jonathan shows he views God as being in charge. In 1 Samuel 14, he and his armor-bearer defeat about 20 Philistines by themselves, which turns the battle in favor of Israel. Jonathan says in 14:6, "nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few."

Read 1 Samuel 18:1-4

1. vs. 1: This verse happens after David defeats Goliath, and meets with Saul after the victory
 - Jonathan is also there, hearing what David says
 - David's words and manner elevate him in Jonathan's mind and heart
 - Jonathan "became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself"
 - The phrase "became one" describes things that are bound together
 - David took on the Philistine champion and killed him
 - Saul, the king, only offered David armor, but didn't lead or fight against Goliath
 - This indicates David's superiority over Saul as the future king
 - Jonathan's love for David is here like the love a people would have for an honored leader
 - This is indeed how the people feel about David after he defeats Goliath
 - Jonathan is the king's son, the next in line for the throne
 - For him to have this view shows David has kingly skills
 - He is able to win people over by both his words and actions
2. vs. 2: Saul keeps David close after he defeats Goliath
 - This appears to be gracious, treating him with favor, maybe looking like an advisor
 - But this also gives Saul time to look at David's growing popularity
 - Keeping David there allows Saul to control him and prevent his reputation from growing
 - Eventually, Saul will try to trap and kill David
3. vs. 3: Jonathan appears to have the stronger position between himself and David
 - He is heir to the throne; we might expect him to demand support from David
 - Instead, he *loved David as himself*
 - With the verse being about Jonathan, it appears he is the one initiating the covenant
 - Jonathan's choice to support David is an agreement with God's call for David to be king

4. vs. 4: Jonathan gives David several gifts here, and they are significant
In ancient times, royals were identified by their fine robes
This robe would be the total opposite of David's shepherd's clothing
By wearing royal robes, David would be associated with the royal family
Jonathan gives David not only his robe and tunic, but also his sword and bow
Giving them away to David indicates he is giving up his ambition to rule, to be king

Read 1 Samuel 20:16-17, 34-34, 42

In the verses between 18:4 and 20:16, Saul tries to manipulate David by having him marry into the family. David later leaves (escapes from Saul), and Jonathan stands up for him, after which Saul swears that he will not harm David. He breaks the oath, however, and tries to kill David, which sends David on the run. David is now at Jonathan's mercy, as Jonathan knows where David is. He could reveal David's location, and help Saul's men find him.

5. vs. 16: Just before this verse, in 20:14-15, Jonathan makes two requests of David
First, he says he wants a time when David will have no enemies
Second, in exchange for helping David, he asks for future kindness for his own family
The covenant they originally made is now expanded
The original was an agreement of mutual friendship between the two men
Now it is a covenant between Jonathan and the *house of David*
In Hebrew, the house refers to all the people connected to the family
This includes future descendants as well as those currently living
This shows that Jonathan understands the significance of David's lineage
To show the seriousness of this commitment, Jonathan invokes God's authority
He asks God to look over David and bring his enemies to account
6. vs. 17: This verse concludes the story that began in 18:1
The two men agree to protect each other's family
Jonathan loves David as he loves himself
This shows his commitment to protecting David, who is favored by God
Jonathan will do this, even if it means risking his own situation
7. vs. 32: Jonathan's words here are to Saul, and show how Jonathan is keeping the oath he made to David
Saul wants to kill David, who is a threat to Jonathan becoming king
Saul has said that as long as David lives, Jonathan will not inherit the throne
Jonathan asks the key question: "What has he done? Why should he be put to death?"
8. vs. 33: Saul here throws a spear at Jonathan, his own son!
This shows how unhinged and reckless Saul's thinking has become
If he kills his own son here for defending David, how will Jonathan become king?
Saul also threw a spear at David in 19:10, trying to kill him then
Samuel has twice stated that Saul's kingdom would be torn away from him (13:14, 15:26)
Saul refuses to listen to what God says
9. vs. 34: Jonathan has been at the table with his father for the Feast of the New Moon
But here he gets up from the table and refuses to eat under such circumstances
Saul has crossed a line of no return; he has brought shame on the family

Jonathan grieves for his father's mistreatment of David—loyal to his covenant

10. vs. 42: Jonathan and David have a plan for how to communicate about Saul's actions
Jonathan thought Saul would allow David to live, but now knows that's not true
He meets David where they arranged, and tells him Saul want David dead
He sends David away in peace—shalom, in Hebrew
He reminds David of the covenant of peace between their two lines of descendants
 This covenant is to last *forever*
After this meeting, David will not see Jonathan again

Read 2 Samuel 1:26-27, 21:7

The remainder of 1 Samuel tells of Saul's pursuit of David, of David sparing Saul's life twice, of the death of Samuel, and the death of Saul and Jonathan in battle. The book of 2 Samuel begins with David mourning the death of Jonathan.

11. vs. 26: David composes a lament for the deaths of Jonathan and Saul
A lament is a song expressing pain, loss, and uncertainty
David shows his character by lamenting Saul's death, though he tried to kill David
 Saul was God's anointed, and David acted rightly toward him
David says here that Jonathan was "dear" to him
He says that Jonathan's love to David was "more wonderful than that of women"
Both of these show the closeness of the relationship between these two
Not all loves are of a romantic nature; this one is one of those non-romantic types
David and Jonathan have a bond different and stronger than those of a romance
David calls Jonathan "my brother", which fits the idea of how close they were
It is also true because David married Saul's daughter, becoming part of the family
12. vs. 27: David finishes his lament by crying out that "the mighty have fallen"
The "weapons of war" are Jonathan and Saul
13. vs. 7: This verse happens 20 chapters after the previous two verses
David has been the king for a long time
Mephibosheth is the son of Jonathan
 David is keeping the covenant he made with Jonathan to protect his family
In those days, it was common to kill all the members of the previous royal line
David chooses instead to care for Mephibosheth, honoring his commitment

Application: The church is called to follow the examples of David and Jonathan. Both were willing to serve the other sacrificially. We are called to look beyond our own needs and see what another needs us to do for them. These actions might include a phone call to check in on them, having a cup of coffee to talk, sharing a meal, or others. These simple actions can open the door to deeper relationships where both people grow and are serving one another while their grow in Christ. It is possible that these actions won't be received in the way desired. That's OK. Christians are called to be hospitable, generous, and even to love enemies. If the kindness isn't accepted or reciprocated, it remains a kindness well-done.

Prayer: Father God, lead us to create and maintain unshakeable bonds of friendship like we see between David and Jonathan. Help us to be faithful and loyal to one another, even when it is difficult and costs us something hard. Build us into healthy communities through which You carry out Your work. In Jesus' name, Amen.