**COVENANT FRIENDSHIPS**

**Faithful Regardless – Sept 26th, 2021**

This week we focus on the relationship of David and Jonathan. Their friendship and love for one another is an example of how Jesus taught us to love one another as He loved us.

**1st Samuel 20:1-42 “**Then David fled from Naioth at Ramah and 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?”

**2**“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!”

**3**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.”

**4**Jonathan said to David, “Whatever you want me to do, I’ll do for you.”

**5**So David said, “Look, tomorrow is the New Moon feast, and I am supposed to dine with the king; but let me go and hide in the field until the evening of the day after tomorrow. **6**If your father misses me at all, tell him, ‘David earnestly asked my permission to hurry to Bethlehem, his hometown, because an annual sacrifice is being made there for his whole clan.’ **7**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. **8**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?”

[pause]

**9**“Never!” Jonathan said. “If I had the least inkling that my father was determined to harm you, wouldn’t I tell you?”

**10**David asked, “Who will tell me if your father answers you harshly?”

**11**“Come,” Jonathan said, “let’s go out into the field.” So they went there together.

**12**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? **13**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. **14**But show me unfailing kindness like the Lord’s kindness as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, **15**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.”

**16**So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, “May the Lord call David’s enemies to account.” **17**And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself.

*The two made a “Covenant” with one another, that extended beyond themselves to their families as well.*

**18**Then Jonathan said to David, “Tomorrow is the New Moon feast. You will be missed, because your seat will be empty. **19**The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began, and wait by the stone Ezel. **20**I will shoot three arrows to the side of it, as though I were shooting at a target. **21**Then I will send a boy and say, ‘Go, find the arrows.’ If I say to him, ‘Look, the arrows are on this side of you; bring them here,’ then come, because, as surely as the Lord lives, you are safe; there is no danger. **22**But if I say to the boy, ‘Look, the arrows are beyond you,’ then you must go, because the Lord has sent you away. **23**And about the matter you and I discussed—remember, the Lord is witness between you and me forever.”

**24**So David hid in the field, and when the New Moon feast came, the king sat down to eat. **25**He sat in his customary place by the wall, opposite Jonathan, and Abner sat next to Saul, but David’s place was empty. **26**Saul said nothing that day, for he thought, “Something must have happened to David to make him ceremonially unclean—surely he is unclean.” **27**But the next day, the second day of the month, David’s place was empty again. Then Saul said to his son Jonathan, “Why hasn’t the son of Jesse come to the meal, either yesterday or today?”

**28**Jonathan answered, “David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem. **29**He said, ‘Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favor in your eyes, let me get away to see my brothers.’ That is why he has not come to the king’s table.”

**30**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? **31**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!”

**32**“Why should he be put to death? What has he done?” Jonathan asked his father. **33**But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.

*Saul had become so manically insane over his hatred and jealousy for David, that he tried to kill his own son at the dinner table for simply questioning him.*

**34**Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger; on that second day of the feast he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father’s shameful treatment of David.

**35**In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for his meeting with David. He had a small boy with him, **36**and he said to the boy, “Run and find the arrows I shoot.” As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. **37**When the boy came to the place where Jonathan’s arrow had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, “Isn’t the arrow beyond you?” **38**Then he shouted, “Hurry! Go quickly! Don’t stop!” The boy picked up the arrow and returned to his master. **39**(The boy knew nothing about all this; only Jonathan and David knew.) **40**Then Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said, “Go, carry them back to town.”

**41**After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together—but David wept the most.

**42**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.”

Jonathan and David have something not many people experience in their lives.

*“Covenant Friendship” – “Sworn Friendship”*

*42“Sworn friendship* in the name of the Lord.”

This is a friendship that comes with a verbal life-long commitment to remain close friends regardless of what may come to pass.

A *covenant* is a formal agreement between two people.

Much like a wedding, where the bride and groom make a public *covenant* to one another,

*“to have and to hold, from this day forward,*

*for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,*

*in sickness and in health, till death do us part,”*

Jonathan and David’s “sworn friendship” was a covenant of these four things;

1. **Their deep love for one another**

The two earnestly loved one another.

**1 Samuel 18:1, 3-4** “After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and *he loved him as himself*.  **3**And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. **4**Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.”

This is not a romantic or sexual love *as some might suggest*, this is a love that prioritizes the other *as much as or even above your own self*.

* + **Matt 22:39** “‘Love your neighbor as yourself.
1. **They were committed to be loyal to one another;**

Similar to Peter’s intentions of loyalty on the night Jesus was arrested, although he quickly failed the test in his denial.

**Matt 26:33-35“**Peter declared, “Even if everyone else deserts you, I will never desert you.” Jesus replied, “I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me.”“No!” Peter insisted. “Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!” And all the other disciples vowed the same.”

1. **They were committed to defend one another.**

This goes beyond defending someone who is p*hysically attacked*, or threatened with danger. It extends toward defending someone whose character is being attacked, or who is being *disparaged or denigrated* behind their back.

**verses 32-33** “Why should he be put to death? What has he done?” Jonathan asked his father. **33**But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him.”

This is the love Jesus commanded us to have toward one another,

**John 15:13**“Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

1. **Their commitment extended to each other’s families.**

Jonathan and David’s covenant friendship was so deep, that it extended beyond themselves and covered their descendants as well.

**v. 42** “The Lord is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.”

This is presented beautifully in the story of Mephibosheth in 2nd Samuel 4. He was a crippled son of Jonathan whom David treated as his own son long after Jonathan had died, even though David could have had him killed.

David and Jonathan could have easily been each other’s worst adversary, but instead they became closest of friends.

* Their friendship was cultivated in a hostile environment.
* David was Jonathan’s father’s sworn enemy.
* David was clearly given the throne of King that could have gone to Jonathan but didn’t.
* Jonathan put his life at risk for merely suggesting David’s innocence.
* David had to rely on Jonathan’s word to find out if and when the King planned to execute him.

Instead of the *strain of circumstances* causing them to be distant friends.

They were close friends, closer than brothers.

We all need to have friends like these.

It may not be many, it’ll probably be only one or two.

Much like a best man or Maid of Honor at a wedding. It’s usually a person who is more than just a “best friend”.

It’s someone whom you know you can count on in good and bad times, whose friendship has stood the test of time and held up through the storms of life.

If you don’t have a close friend, pray for one, also *be a “friend”* *(someone who is friendly : )*

**Prov 18:24** “A man *who has* friends must himself be friendly, But there is a friend *who* sticks closer than a brother.”

There is *no one* who sticks closer to us than Jesus.

**John 15:15** “I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.”

Just a few verses earlier he told us,

**John 15:12“**This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.”

He said “love one another *as He loved us”*.

Jesus wants us to be in covenant friendship with each other.

**John 13:35** “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

*[Example: Family Dinner at my brother’s house in MD. He invited his friends, a group of old friends that really seemed to have deep friendships and love for one another. Very supportive, patient and affectionate to one another even though some of them have switched churches and moved away.*

*They all knew who we were, and were eager to meet us. They knew very specific challenges that we each faced through the years and talked about how they prayed for us.*

*Not a bad word or coarse joke about each other,*

*Obviously they truly enjoyed being in life with one another and you could tell.*

*It was an environment of friendship and love and was very attractive.*

*We didn’t want to leave.*

*(Much different than being people who constantly bicker, complain about, or poke fun at each other)*

I believe that when we get together, there should be an “*environment of friendship and love”* that people want to be part of.

I believe that Jesus created an “*environment of friendship and love”* like none other that ever existed.

It’s where everyone is committed to loving one another and showing great care, patience and concern for each other, in a completely *unselfish* manner.

It’s very attractive, magnetic and contagious.

Churches that are able to fully live this out, grow very rapidly.

That’s why Jesus said,

**John 13:35 “**By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”

 ‘They’ll know you are my disciples by, not just your love,

but your love for one another.

What is love?

*If they will know us by “it”, we need to know what “it” is…*

It’s clearly defined in 1st Corinthians 13

1. Love is patient,
2. love is kind.
3. It does not envy,
4. it does not boast,
5. it is not proud.
6. It is not rude,
7. it is not self-seeking,
8. it is not easily angered,
9. it keeps no record of wrongs.
10. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
11. It always protects,
12. always trusts,
13. always hopes,
14. always perseveres.

 This is how they will know we are His disciples…these things. Not just these things in general. Not just these things to anyone…but these things to *each other.*

**Gal 6:10** “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.”

I love the fact that we are always giving gloves and socks, backpacks etc. to thousands of random strangers, However, if any of YOU need them, please take them, according to what we just read, You are our priority.

**1st John 3:17** “If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?”

How do we Cultivate Covenant Friendships?

1. Love one another
2. Have loyalty toward one another
3. Defend of one another
4. Pray for one another
5. Show GRACE *to one another*

When someone falls or fails, don’t be the first to kick them when they are down, but be the first to help them back up again.

**Gal. 6:1-2** “Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted. **2**Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill ‘*the law of Christ’*.”

What is the “Law of Christ”?

It’s the “New Commandment”.

***John 15:12***

***“*A new commandment I give to you,**

**that you love one another;**

**as I have loved you,**

**that you also *love one another.”***