

True Friendship

1 Samuel 18:1-4

Preface

Illus: A sign at the front desk of a country inn read:

“Please introduce yourself to your fellow guests since we are one big, happy family.

Next to that sign was another that read:

The management is not responsible for valuables left in your room!”

In other words, we are all one big happy family. Unless there is an obligation or responsibility involved in which case don't look to us for help.

By the way, this is how many people view church these days.

Too often this is the way we approach friendships. We want the friendship of others but we desire to remain exempt from the responsibilities or obligations that might accompany friendship.

Everyone wants a really good friend but few people actually have true friendships in this day and time. I believe friendships are important and biblical.

Today we will look at a Biblical account of a true friendship.

Scripture 1 Samuel 18:1-4

After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. ²From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. ³And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. ⁴Jonathan 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. 1Samuel 18:1-4 NIV

Introduction

Everyone wants to have really good friends. People long for a friend who truly knows them and accepts them.

We all want someone who accepts us with our faults and our baggage, someone who understands us, where we have been and where we are going.

We all want someone with whom we can confide and share our inner most thoughts and feelings. We all want a friend with whom we can vent and tell our frustrations.

Yet, few people have friends like that today. We have become a society of isolation in the midst of busyness.

In a day of ...

Fortune building and profit taking
I'm guilty only if you can prove I'm guilty,
Fast schedules and rapid productivity
In a day of ATMs, drive through meals,

In a day of instant email and instant everything, true friendships are hard to find and many people long for an intimate friend.

The Bible gives us many examples of close friends. The apostle John was referred to as the one Jesus loved. The same was true of Lazarus. They were both close friends of Jesus.

Paul developed many strong personal friendships which included people Timothy, Silas and Barnabas just to name a few.

Our text today, tells of the strong bond and friendship that was established between David and Jonathan. Jonathan was the son of King Saul. David and Jonathan developed a strong bond that would immediately be put to the test.

A few weeks ago the sermon was titled “Facing Goliath.” In that sermon we used the example of David's courage in facing Goliath. Ironically, though David saved the king and Israel by slaying Goliath, that event was the beginning of King Saul's hatred and jealousy towards David.

In 1 Samuel 20 you will find the king trying to kill David out of jealousy. But Jonathan helps hide David and keeps him alive. Thanks to the support of his friend Jonathan, David survives Saul's assignation attempts and goes on to be one of Israel's greatest kings.

Let's six characteristics of **True Friendship**.

1. Real Friends are Transparent

Jonathan and David had a true friendship because they bonded together. They fully understood one another. They saw each other for what they really were and they liked what they saw.

True friendship requires transparency.

I am convinced that the single biggest thing preventing most people from developing friendships is that they have trouble being transparent.

Many people tend to put on fronts when they are around others. They have trouble being genuine. The reason is because we fear that others will not like the real me.

So we put on our masks and try to be what we think others want to see. The problem with this game is that we live in constant fear that people will discover who we really are.

Friends are people with whom you dare to just be yourself. They ask you to put on nothing, only be who you are. With real friends you can share your thoughts and feelings without fear of criticism.

With true friends you breathe freely. You can weep with them, sing with them, laugh and even pray with them.

Yes, I did say pray with them. If you are a Christian, you should be able and you should pray with real friends.

Illus: When is the last time you just got with a friend and prayed? Everyone likes to get together around here and “drink coffee”. I know you solve the world’s problems when you do but do you ever just pray together?

2. Real Friends Help

True friends help one another and that love is shown in some very specific ways.

Real friends look out for one another.

A friend is one who comes when everyone else goes.

Illus: You may wonder, “How can I tell the difference between acquaintances and friends.” That’s easy, just get into trouble, the people that are still around are your real friends, and there may not be many or any.

Friends do not talk about you.

In fact, a real friend will fight to protect you and your reputations.

Not only do friends never stab you in the back, they guard your back.

David protected Jonathan and Jonathan protected David.

Real friends sharpen one another.

Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, a friend sharpens a friend.”

Real friends bring out the best in one another.

Friends rejoice when their friend succeeds. They help friends resolve their problems. Friends encourage one another.

True friends are always challenging us and even pushing us to be all that God wants us to be. They want to help us grow and develop.

Real friends shoot you straight even when it hurts.

Quote: “A friend is someone who tells me the truth about me. I want to know when my work stinks or I’m being hurtful or stupid. I expect a real friend to save me from myself.”

3. Real Friends Care

Friends are not afraid to express their friendship.

1 John 4:7 says, “Dear Friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God.”

Intimate friends let each other hurt. They weep together.

Intimate friends don’t bale, they stay when you are hurting.

Illus: Some people drain our emotional gas but with good friends, we leave with our emotional gas filled.

Real friends bring out the best in one another and hurt when the other hurts.

Some people are encouragers and others are discouragers. Real friends are always encouragers.

Are you an encourager or discourager?

4. Real Friends Forgive

Without forgiveness, no relationship will survive. If we were all perfect, forgiveness would not be a necessary ingredient in relationships.

Since we are not perfect forgiveness is a necessity. Friends must be able to forgive one another. In any meaningful relationship there must be forgiveness.

Illus: Recently in the final Sunday of the Fireproof Sunday School class we were having a general discussion about what makes marriages work. My wife spoke up and said there must be forgiveness. I later wondered if she was just speaking of me and if she always has to forgive me. The truth is the highway of forgiveness must run both ways in a relationship. We all make mistakes and we all hurt others.

Perhaps the best example of this is the friendship between Jesus and Peter. When Jesus is taken by guards from the Garden, Peter draws his sword to defend him. But in the immediate hours and days to follow, Peter was afraid for his own life and denies even knowing Jesus three times. Then in John 21, Jesus asks Peter three times if he truly loves Him. Jesus forgives Peter and gives him even more responsibility.

Perhaps there is someone in your life that you need to forgive. Perhaps forgiveness is hindering a key relationship in your life.

Not one of us has the right or privilege of denying someone else forgiveness.

5. Real Friends Trust

David had to place his complete life in his trust of Jonathan. Friends must be able to trust one another.

With friends we must be able to tell out inner most thoughts and feelings without fear that they will be spread all over town or end up on the internet.

A friend is someone with who you can trust to do the right thing even when their own financial gain is on the line.

Couples need close Christian friends in whom they can confide and discuss their challenges. They must be able to trust one another with confidentiality.

6. Real Friends Invest

Your best investment will not be in stocks, bonds or wealth.

The best investment you will every make will be in meaningful relationships.

Great friends do not come cheap.

Meaningful friendships require an investment.

Jonathan was risking his life to be friends with David.

Jonathan's father Saul was burning with hatred for David yet Jonathan remained loyal to David.

A real friend is willing to sacrifice popularity and prestige to be a loyal friend.

The greatest investment in a friendship is your time.

Friendships don't just happen. They take time.

I don't mean just time as in years, I mean actual time together.

We must be there for one another even if it means sitting in a hospital or giving up something fun.

We must invest in the time together. This is why it is so important that we offer good youth programs for our teens.

Teens need to be involved in church activities where they meet and spend time with other teens who are seeking God's purposes for their lives.

Illus: My friendship with Beaver and now his family - since 7th grade. All began with a youth program.

This is also why we must build a strong Sunday School program, Senior ministry and the like.

Friendship requires an investment of time and effort.

Illus: Hallmark commercial says, "When you care enough to send the very best." The very best thing you can invest in a friendship is you; your time and attention.

Conclusion

You may say to yourself, “why preach a sermon on friendship?”

The answer is simple, I believe so strongly in the importance of good Christian friendships. I know you will be a stronger and better Christian if you have a close Christian friend with whom you can confide, pray and grow spiritually.

Whether you are a teenager dealing with the pressure and anxieties of high school or a senior adult facing the medical challenges of the aging process, having a close brother or sister in Christ is important.

Perhaps you long for a close friend but have never really thought to pray about it. I encourage you to be honest with God and ask him to send someone your way with whom you can bond in Christian love.

Pam and I prayed in the past for Christian friends and God has answered our prayers. We have prayed for Christian friends for our children and God has answered once again.

Ask God to send you meaningful Christian relationships, practice these principals and He will be faithful.

Jonathan saw something in David that he admired.

As we grow in the image of Christ, we begin to show evidence of the fruits of the Spirit in our lives.

When we do, because of what is inside, we become different on the outside. We begin to draw people to ourselves.

There will be something attractive about us that has nothing to do with external appearances and everything to do with what God is doing on the inside.

To have a friend, you have to be a friend. Begin with your friendship with Christ and watch your relationships grow.

Optional

The only perfect friend you will have is Jesus.

Proverbs 18:24 says, “But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.”

Jesus already knows you better than anyone else.

He has already proven His love and willingness to sacrifice himself for you.

“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.”