

Choosing Friends Wisely

January 2, 2022

1 Samuel 18:1-16

As we start a New Year, I want to speak to you this morning about a topic that has been on my heart for some time - I want to talk about friendship - Specifically, about the power our friends have in our lives - the power they have to **help or to harm** our lives.

Most of us choose our friends simply by **“proximity”** - we choose our friends because **we sit by them in class** - or we are **Co-Workers** - or we are **Neighbors** - or our children play on the **same ball team!**

I want to suggest this is not the best or wisest method of choosing friends - Friends have a POWERFUL ROLE in our lives - **Pro 13:20; “He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed.”**

To a large degree, our choice of friendships will **determine the path of our lives** - Even a devoted Christian can be **influenced for evil** simply because they were foolish in how they chose their friends!

In contrast, Godly friendship are a powerful thing in your life - **Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.** - Next to the presence of the Holy Spirit of God in my life, and the Word of God, I don't

know of a **stronger influence** on a person's life than his friends!

Here's my question to you this morning: **Are you making wise decisions when it comes to the friends you have chosen to walk through life with?**

Are you **being intentional** in the way you choose your friends?

This morning I want us to look at this topic of friendship - To do so, we are going to look at one of the **strongest friendships** found in the Bible - that is of course the friendship between David and Jonathan - Our story is found in 1 Samuel 18.

To give you a quick outline of where we are going in our study, we are going to first look at the relationship of David and Jonathan - We are going to identify the 2 main ingredients of a strong, Godly friendship.

Then, we are going to examine David's relationship with King Saul - there we will see **3 toxic ingredients** that will destroy almost any friendship.

It is interesting that both Jonathan and his father, King Saul, were in the unique position of being THREATEN BY DAVID - When we pick up the story here in Chapter 18, King Saul has been rejected by God as the king over Israel - His

disobedience towards God have disqualified him from his position as king over God's people.

Jonathan is the would-be heir to the throne, if the dynasty of Saul continues - So, David and Jonathan have every reason to be enemies, not friends - much less the close friends they would become - so why did their friendship develop into such a strong bond?

1 Now when he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

Let's get some background of where we are in the story - In chapter 17, David kills the giant Goliath - In doing so, He instantly becomes a **national hero** - We see him at the end of that chapter carrying around the **severed head** of the fallen giant!

David is acting much like a player who has just won the Big Game walking around the stadium showing off his trophy!

Following his victory, David is quickly called before King Saul - Saul knows David a little - Remember David had been playing his music before the King in order to help calm him - Every since Saul had disobeyed God and **had refused to repent**, the Bible tells us that he has been tormented by an evil spirit - David music had had a calming affect on King Saul's life!

Now this young man had done what Saul was afraid to do - he had gone out and fought the Philistine giant - and David had won! - this meant **instant praise and adoration** from the people of Israel - and this was the very thing King Saul desired most for himself!

The King desperately wanted the approval and praise of the people of Israel - But, David's act of bravery causes him to be elevated above the king in the eyes of the people - and as we will see, this does not bode well for the relationship between David and the King.

Yet, Jonathan's reaction to the David is different - Notice, the verse tells us that "**Jonathan's soul (his heart) was knitted to the soul (the heart) of David**" - A connection of friendship had developed between these two young men.

Certainly this is not the first time they had met - They had probably known each other for some time as David was hanging out around the palace - Yet, now the boldness David had shown in **fighting & killing Goliath**, had cause Jonathan to see a different side of David - it was a boldness Jonathan could relate to!

Jonathan could see in David something he did not see in his father - It was a heart **to defend and follow and serve** the God of Israel - It was a boldness to obey God even when it involved great risk - This was a trait both men shared!

You go back to chapter 14 and read about the exploits of Jonathan - you will see in him the same BOLDNESS & FAITH that David had shown in fighting Goliath! - Jonathan had attacked the Philistines alone and greatly outnumbered! - He too had experienced VICTORY!

The first ingredient of a Godly Friendship is the “knitting together of two hearts” around a shared love & commitment to God!

This Hebrew word that is translated “knitted” literally mean to BIND TWO THINGS TOGETHER - or to WEAVE two things together INTO ONE - Think of Knitting a sweater - two separate pieces of yarn are woven into one garment.

LIKEWISE, friends whose hearts are knitted together SHARE A CONNECTION because they are both headed in the SAME DIRECTION following God - they share the SAME PURPOSE & PRIORITIES about life - they share the SAME VALUES & COMMITMENTS!

This type of friendship is one that provides both STRENGTH & ACCOUNTABILITY - Two friends pull each other in the same direction - They don't fight against one another when it comes to the **devotions of their heart!**

For everyone of us, the Spiritual progress we make in this new year will be largely determined by the friends we hang

around! - I cannot overstate this truth - Let's read the verse again: **Pro 13:20; "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed."**

The NT version of this truth is found in **1Co 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Evil company corrupts good habits."** - Or as the NIV puts it: **Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character."**

This past year, were you keeping good company or bad? - Did you share a passion for Jesus with your friends? - Or were your companions constantly pulling you down? - Were they dragging you away from the purposes & will of God?

2 Saul took him that day, and would not let him go home to his father's house anymore. 3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

The second ingredient of a Godly Friendship is that they are **Relationships built on a COVENANT** - Remember, a covenant is simply an agreement that two people make with each other.

In a Covenant Friendship agreements are made - some are spoken, some are unspoken!

There is AGREEMENT ABOUT HOW we will treat each other - there is agreement that **honesty & fairness** will be the

backbone of the friendship - There is agreement that we not **intentionally hurt** each other.

As the friendship **grows and matures**, the greater the spoken and unspoken agreements are between two people - As the love grows between friends, the commitment grows as well.

Jesus said, “**Greater love has no man than this, that he would lay down his life for his friends**”.

This is the **ultimate agreement** we make with our friends - that we would be willing to sacrifice our lives for the well-being of the other person - And this was the Covenant relationship between David and Jonathan - Ultimately Jonathan would risk his life to save the life of his friend, David.

One other important trait of a Covenant friendships is that it is a GIVE & TAKE relationship - These friendships are NEVER ONE-SIDED!

Have you ever had a few ONE-SIDED friendship - one that was all give on your part, and very little is given in return? - Ultimately these friendships don't last or develop.

Both friends have to BE GIVERS if the relationship is going to grow - If only one person gives, the other simply becomes a

LEECH - TAKING but never giving - This is not a friendship - No friendship will last that is all one-sided.

Remember that words of Jesus quoted by Paul in the Book of Acts 20:35, **And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”**

The context of this verse is Paul speaking to the Ephesian Elders - He is describing how he had treated the people at the church in Ephesus - He had always work to make sure he gave more to the people than he EVER TOOK from them!

I believe this is the secret to having good friends - **Always make sure you are giving to the relationship more than you are taking from it** - This is the essence of a Covenant Friendship!

Look at the GIVING HEART of Jonathan . . . **4 And Jonathan took off the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, even to his sword and his bow and his belt.**

In a true act of friendship, Jonathan gives to David HIS ARMOR & SWORD - David has been promoted by King Saul to lead men into battle - Yet, David was a poor shepherd, not a worrier - He had no sword or armor!

Thus, **Jonathan equips David** for the battles he was about to face! - he gives to David the equipment he will need to

succeed in his new challenge - **He gave David what he needed, not what was convenient or easy to give.**

His gift was sacrificial - but more importantly it was what David needed! - A covenant friend gives gifts that are both sacrificial and gifts that are needed!

The really SELFLESS PART of all this is that Jonathan is equipping David to take his place on the throne of Israel - He is certainly aware that if David succeeds, Jonathan will never be king! - That is sacrificing for a friend!

5 So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. 6 Now it had happened as they were coming home, when David was returning from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women had come out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy, and with musical instruments. 7 So the women sang as they danced, and said: "Saul has slain his thousands, And David his ten thousands."

Who did David have to thank for his victories in battle? - His friend Jonathan - the one who supplied the weapons & tools he needed to succeed!

Yet, notice no one was praising Jonathan - Jonathan is quickly taking a back seat to the popularity of David - And what is Jonathan's reaction?

It is the same reaction John the Baptist had to the rising popularity of Jesus - Before Jesus came on the scene, John was the preacher everyone came out to see - His popularity was booming.

Then Jesus arrived on the scene and was baptized by John - From that moment on, John's message and popularity began to fade - Jesus had arrived and John's job was done.

That when John uttered those amazing words of humility and meekness: In **John 3:30, (John says about Jesus) He must increase, but I must decrease!**

This was certainly the understanding of Jonathan - He knew that David was destined to be King - and so he accepted the reality that David would have the brighter light shining on him!

One of the most challenging part of any friendship happens when one person is elevated above the other - What made this friendship between David and Jonathan work was the fact that Jonathan did not allow himself to be jealous of the popularity and success of his friend David.

How do you handle friendships when the brighter light shines on the other person? - What do you do when you realize they

are going to get the accolades and praise you once hoped would come your way? - **Are you able to say, He must increase and I must decrease?**

What an amazing friend Jonathan was to David - Wouldn't we all like to have just one friend who was so selfless **they could celebrate our victories with us?** - Only a friend serious about his walk with God is able to step aside and celebrate the promotion of a friend!

But, this was not the case with King Saul - Let's finish our study today by looking at the reaction of the King to these same events - and here we are going to see 3 attitudes that will kill any friendship.

8 Then Saul was very angry, and the saying displeased him; and he said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

In King Saul, we see the 3 Attitudes that guarantee an UNHEALTHY FRIENDSHIP - or a friendship that is doomed for failure: **(1) JEALOUSY (2) SUSPICION (3) FEAR**

All three of these attitudes are in sharp contrast to the attitudes that held Jonathan and David's friendship together: **commitment, trust and sacrifice.**

(1) **Attitude of Jealousy destroys friendships** - (verse 8)
"They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed only thousands. Now what more can he have but the kingdom?"

Saul hates sharing the spotlight with anyone - and here is this young, shepherd boy from Bethlehem who has **STOLEN HIS SPOTLIGHT!** - This is more than the King can stand!

For Saul, life had to be about him! - He had to be the **CENTER OF ATTENTION** - It is very difficult to have close friends when everything in life has to be about you!

Jealousy will destroy a friendship quickly - For the jealous person, there is no room in their life for anyone else - Everyone else becomes **A RIVAL** - Everyone else becomes **THE COMPETITION** - There is no room for a friend!

I find it fascinating that Jonathan was never jealous of David - If anyone was Jonathan's competition, it was David - David was going to keep Jonathan from ever sitting on the throne of Israel.

How did he avoid having feelings of jealousy? - There is only one way - Jonathan didn't care who was king - It didn't matter to him who got the spotlight - or who was promoted.

He only wanted to see the will of God done - and if that meant David on the throne, he was OK with that - if that meant David getting the songs written about him, then so be it - What an incredible man of faith!

Jonathan had seen the failures of his father - He was certainly aware of the judgement Samuel had announced on his dynasty - God had chosen someone else to rule and Jonathan had accepted that fact!

But, there was no room for David in Saul's World - He was going to fight the PROMOTION of David to the very end - Again, it is really difficult to have friends when the spotlight of your world must be on you.

9 So Saul eyed David from that day forward.

(2) **Attitude of suspicion destroys friendships** - (paranoia/distrust) -

The New American Standard translates verse 9, **And Saul eyed David with suspicion from that day on.** - this better captures the idea of the text - from that day on Saul was suspicious of David - he was PARANOID of David's motives and his movements.

David's presence in the Palace created a very uneasy feeling on the part of Saul - Every time he looked at David, his mind would wonder what devious thing David was up to? - How

was he plotting to take over the Kingdom? - ever action of David came under scrutiny!

But was David plotting to take over the kingdom? - Absolutely not - Few men were ever more loyal to King Saul than was David - But Saul couldn't believe someone could be that loyal to him! - Why?

Because Saul would never be that loyal to anyone - if given the opportunity to steal their kingdom, he would take it!

Saul was seeing David through the lens of his own warped character - He IMAGINED IN DAVID what was present in his own life! - The only person Saul was loyal to was Saul - And he could only assume everyone else THOUGHT JUST LIKE HIM!

I think this statement is true: **We all assume others think and feel the way we do, especially when it comes to our weaknesses!**

SUSPICION is an enemy of friendships - When you assume those around you are out to get you, you will keep everyone at ARM'S LINK DISTANCE - It's just not safe to let anyone get close!

The opposite of Suspicion is trust - When it comes to friendship **Trust is the belief that someone will not intentionally hurt you** - Notice I did say "intentionally" -

because we all will hurt each other from time to time - We live in a fallen world, made up of fallen people!

And sinful people will hurt each other - but that doesn't mean we are all a threat to each other - Can you see the difference?

I may hurt your feelings from time to time - I may be insensitive and even uncaring at times - but that doesn't mean I am out to get you - it simply means I am human - all of us are human.

If you want only friends who will never hurt you or disappoint you, you will never have any friends - In a fallen world, even the best friends must work through hurt feelings and painful words.

The best of friends will have to practice forgiveness on a regular basis! - But, needing forgiveness is different from BEING A THREAT.

10 And it happened on the next day that the distressing spirit from God came upon Saul, and he prophesied inside the house. So David played music with his hand, as at other times; but there was a spear in Saul's hand. 11 And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice. 12 Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul. 13 Therefore Saul

removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people. 14 And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him. 15 Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him. 16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

(3) The final attitude that Saul carried towards David was Fear - **The attitude of fear towards another will destroy the friendship.**

Twice we see Saul afraid of David! - **12 Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him - 15 Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him.**

When you are AFRAID of something, you stay away from it -
When you are afraid of someone, you stay away from them!

Fear CREATES DISTANCE - If you are afraid of water, you will stay clear of the beach - If you are afraid of spiders, you will not go climbing around in your basement crawl space.

If you are claustrophobic like me, you will NEVER EVER go Spelunking! Climbing in small holes in the ground is **Crazy to me!** - I stay as far away from caves as I possibly can - I don't even like closing the closet door when I'm inside it!

If you are afraid of people, you will stay as far away from them as you can - And some of you are afraid for good reason - at some point in your life, you got hurt - You got betrayed by someone you thought you could trust.

You let someone get close and they shared your secrets - they made fun of your weaknesses - they used you as the punchline of their jokes - You trusted someone and you got burned!

If that is you this morning, here is what I want you to do - Look around - I can promise you that everyone in this room has had that experience at some point in their life.

If you chose to love, you will get hurt - loving others is risky business - If you put yourself out there, someone will take advantage of that love sooner or later - but that doesn't mean we stop loving!

The Bible tells us that “**perfect love cast out fear!**” (1 John 4:18) - Sometimes when you are afraid, you just have to keep on loving - Love is the only cure for the FEAR OF PEOPLE.

Is there someone you are afraid of this morning? - Are you afraid of them because they are really a threat to you? - Or are you afraid of them because they **may steal your position - or your power?**

Saul feared David for all the wrong reasons - David was no threat to Saul - But, David did have some things Saul lacked - Are you afraid of a person because they possess something you lack? - That may be your old friend JEALOUSY RAISING ITS UGLY HEAD AGAIN!

Don't let fear or suspicion or jealousy keep you from having strong, godly friendships - These may be the very friendships that help you remain FAITHFUL & FRUITFUL in the coming New Year!

There are three main thoughts I want you to carry away from this mornings study about friendships:

- (1) **Friendships are not easy - they take time, sacrifice and commitment!** - if you want strong friendships, you have to be willing to work for them.
- (2) **The friends you choose will determine to a large degree the direction you life will go in - Choose them wisely!** - Yoke yourself to friends who are going in the direction you want your life to go!
- (3) **Don't undermine your friendships with jealousy, suspicion and fear!** - Be a Jonathan - Want what is best for your friends, even when it means a little less for you.

Let's pray!