

FINDING SOMEONE WHO WILL STICK WITH YOU
I SAMUEL 18

INTRODUCTION:

- A. Early in June my friend, John Turner, died from cancer. Then, two weeks ago there was a memorial service at Camano Chapel that Merilee and I attended. As I sat there I remembered how John and I had connected. It was almost 20 years ago and it was in line for pie at a church event. Somewhere in the conversation he asked me if I would be interested in doing a weekly one-on-one Bible study together. Nobody had ever asked me that before. I'd never done that before. But I said "Yes" and that led to a great friendship centered on Christ. We met for about a year and then decided to each go find another guy to meet with to try to infect other men with one-on-one Bible study. John reaching out to me left a legacy in my life that found its way into the lives of other men I met with like Tony, Bob, Brett, Jeff, Mark, Mike, Steve, Dick and maybe a few others.
 - B. Even after John and I split up to go after other Bible study partners, we still gravitated to each other. The chemistry was there. The investment was there. When someone mentions the name of John Turner, I don't just say that I know him. I say that he was my friend. And I don't throw the term, friend, around casually. Friendship is something solid. Friendship is worth more to me now than ever before. Out of all the other stuff in our lives, I earnestly believe that friendship is right up there with God and family. Friends are worth time and money and tough love and forgiveness and apologizing and fighting for and inconvenience and shared sorrows. I honor John for launching me in a quest for friendship that changed and enriched my life.
 - C. If you're right now like I was in the pie line, I want to help you toward friendship this morning. If you already have friendship in your life, I hope to move you toward deeper levels of friendship. So here's the question: How do you find or deepen a friendship?
- I. GIVE SOMEBODY SOME REASON (18:1-5)
- A. What Attraction Do You Offer? **VERSE 18:1**, *After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.*
 - 1. If you've ever watched those wonderful *Anne of Green Gables* programs, you will understand the expression, "kindred spirits."
"Matthew is a most ridiculous man." Said Marilla Cuthbert.
"I think he's lovely," said Anne reproachfully. "He is so very sympathetic. He didn't mind how much I talked - he seemed to like it. I felt that he was a kindred spirit as soon as ever I saw him."
"You're both queer enough, if that's what you mean by kindred spirits," said Marilla with a sniff. (L. M. Montgomery, *Anne of Green Gables*, Bantam Classic Edition, New York, 1987, 33) Well, in time Marilla herself is revealed to be a kindred spirit, as are Diana, Miss Stacy and surprisingly even crusty old Miss Barry.
 - 2. Jonathan felt that serendipitous chemistry of attraction as his father King Saul was interviewing David following the David and Goliath incident. It says that *Jonathan became one in spirit with David*. The older translations put it even more powerfully. **KJV** has *the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David*. How's that for kindred spirits?
 - 3. I want you to notice that this "knitting of souls" didn't just come out of nowhere. There was objective substance to it. Of course, David was attractive. He was an instant hero and celebrity because he had improbably killed Goliath and routed the whole Philistine army. He was Luke Skywalker blowing up the death star and saving Princess Leia and the rebellion!
But this wasn't a one-sided chemical reaction. Go back to chapter 14 for the rest of the story. Israel is desperately threatened by the hostile Philistines. They have penetrated deeply into Israeli territory and set up garrisons from which they send out raiding parties. The plot thickens when you note that in all of Israel, the

only people who own a sword or a spear are King Saul and son Jonathan. Here's where it gets exciting. Jonathan invites his armor bearer to join him in a spiritual adventure. He suggests that the two of them attack a Philistine detachment at Micmash, 14:6, "*Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few.*" Skip to verse 13, *The Philistines fell before Jonathan, and his armor-bearer followed and killed behind him. 14 In that first attack Jonathan and his armor-bearer killed some twenty men in an area of about half an acre.* The rest of the chapter documents the rout of the panicked and confused Philistine army.

4. Now it's clear what attracted Jonathan to David. Both these men were intrepid soldiers who stuck their necks out in bold dependence on God and lived to tell about it. Both are military heroes and spiritual heroes. Jonathan listened to David talk and said to himself: *This young fellow and I are on the same page. We sing out of the same hymnbook This is my kind of guy!*
5. The attraction in a nutshell? Faith and Courage.
6. I was called by a family many years ago to do the funeral for dad. I met with the family as I always do to go over the service and to learn what I could about the man. I made several runs at trying to get the measure of this man's life and all I could get out of the family was this one sentence: *He loved to fish.* He probably had a few fishing buddies, but he had no real friends. Even his own family didn't know him.
7. If I want friends of substance, I had better be a person of substance.
 - If I want generous friends, I better be generous.
 - If I want friends who are fully devoted to Christ, I better be fully devoted to Christ.
 - If I want friends of high integrity, I better have high integrity.
 - If I want friends who are trying to others to Christ, I better be trying to lead others to Christ.
8. Otherwise, the people I want to notice me and be my friends are going to pass me right by. If you want a Jonathan as your friend, you better go throw some rocks at a Goliath. That will put you on his radar screen.
9. Give somebody a reason. Get attractive!
 - Start a Bible study at work.
 - Be MOPS table leader.
 - Start going on mission trips.
 - Become a soccer coach and take Christ to the playing field.
 - Do something substantial!
10. **C. S. Lewis** really nailed it with these words: *[P]eople who simply "want friends" never have any. The very condition of having Friends is that we should ant something else besides Friends. Where the truthful answer to the question "Do you see the same truth?" would be "I see nothing and I don't care about the truth; I only want a friend" no friendship can arise...there would be nothing for the friendship to be about; and friendship must be about something, even if it were only an enthusiasm for dominoes or white mice. Those who have nothing can share nothing; those who are going nowhere can have no fellow-travelers.* (Quoted in Stu Weber, *Locking Arms*, Multnomah, Sisters, OR, 1995, 66-67)

B. What Value Do You Add?

1. Focus on being before getting. Focus on giving before receiving.
2. The first thing Jonathan did was to add value to David's life. He did it two ways:
 - He gave a material gift: His princely robe and tunic. His sword, bow and belt. **(18:4)** In the very next verse David is being sent out to fight for the king, so this was a pretty practical gift. David needed this equipment.

- He gave a relational gift: His covenant, apparently a pledge of loyalty and friendship. David was remarkably elevated by this consideration of Jonathan. David was a commoner invited to intimacy with royalty. David was a youth invited to intimacy with an older man: scholars estimate that Jonathan was more than 30 years old at this point, and David was a teenager. In 17:33, Saul calls David “only a boy.”
3. I don’t believe that a friendship will ever really go anywhere good without giving. Sure, you can have lots of casual friendships without giving. But if you want a really good friendships, get ready to give.
 - Friends don’t let friends load a moving truck alone.
 - Friends visit at the hospital.
 - Friends remember at least the big birthdays.
 - Friends listen when you’re depressed.
 - I don’t know who said this. I’ve seen it attributed to George Eliot, Dinah Mulock and an Arabian wise man. Anyhow, here it is. Friends do this: *Oh the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pouring them all right out, just as they are - chaff and grain together - certain that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and with the breath of kindness blow the rest away.*
 4. By the way, if you need a little more convincing that friends need to give, think about John **3:16**, *For God so loved that he gave...*
 5. If that’s a little lofty, try these words on for size. They are tribute from the Apostle Paul to his protégé, Timothy: *I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. 21 For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 2:20-21)*

II. GIVE SOMEBODY YOUR NEED (**23:15**, *While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. 16 And Saul’s son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.*)

A. Friendship Needs Disclosure

1. Give your friend the gift of your need. I’ve never been able to get close to anyone who refuses to acknowledge any need or weakness.
2. I had a friend who had a great job and bought a beautiful home in Mill Creek. A French firm bought out his company and quite unexpectedly he was told to clean out his desk and not come back tomorrow. He went many months unable to find a job. Their home was at risk. His wife was coming unraveled. But whenever I asked him how he was, his invariable answer was, “Superior” with a big smile. One night I took a long distance call from relatives in the Midwest asking me if there was something I could do to get through to him. But I could never get past the “Superior.” I wasn’t able to get close. I wasn’t able to help. I wasn’t able to get to the acknowledgment of need.
3. Jonathan didn’t face that problem. As you peruse the pages of I Samuel, you find David very openly calling for help, e.g., **20:1**, *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 take my life?”*
4. Now, here in **chapter 23**, Jonathan risks his neck to find the David his father couldn’t find in the desert. He’s a man on a mission. He can’t stop his father or his father’s army. But he suspects that David needs a caring reminder that God is in the whirlwind.
5. David was ready to acknowledge that his life looked like it hanging by a very slender thread. In the next chapter he calls himself a flea and a dead dog. (**24:14**)

6. Did Jonathan get through to David? The answer is there in **23:16**, Jonathan...*helped him find strength in God.*
7. There's a wonderful little word of wisdom on this topic in **Proverbs 27:10**, *Do not forsake your friend and the friend of your father, and do not go to your brother's house when disaster strikes you - better a neighbor nearby than a brother far away.*
8. I know...I know. When we have a need, we don't want to become a burden to our friends. So we call dad and mom 5 states away for a check in the mail or a plane ticket. Three weeks later our friends start asking questions and feel hurt that we didn't let them know we had a need. *Why didn't you let us help you?* they ask. *Did you think that we wouldn't care?* they ask. Real friends want to help. Real friends feel honored when you let them help you find strength in God and when you let them buy some groceries. PS: I'm talking about real friends. [Lee Iaccoca]
9. Yep...sometimes people let us down. Like when Jesus told his disciples at Gethsemane that *His soul was overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.* (Matthew 26:38) But they fell asleep and in short order one betrayed him, they all forsook him and Peter denied Him.
10. Make sure your friends are real friends and then do them the honor of asking...
11. Footnote for guys: Men who ask for help are about as common as men who ask for directions when they're lost. It's not exactly missing from the male gene pool but it's rare. I know why we don't ask for help. It's because we're scared. We're scared somebody will look down on us because we can't fix it ourselves. I think it's pretty smart to admit when you need help. Do something really manly. Admit your need.
12. I want you to know that I really do practice what I'm preaching. When I get depressed and feel beat-up, when I'm stumped with a problem...I have a few guy friends I'm pretty open with...and they with me. And it's one of the best things I've got going in my life.

B. Friendship Needs Discipline

1. Just a quick word of caution here. When my friends help me they do have some expectations. And if their expectations are not met, they will be less likely to help me in the future.
2. Helping friends expect from me the Discipline of...
 - Follow-through.
 - If I'm given money to meet a need, I need to spend it.
 - If I'm given a job lead, I need to follow it up.
 - If I'm given a car part, I need to install it.
 - Gratitude
 - Friends aren't looking for us to kiss their feet, but a sincere "Thank You" is always appropriate. Maybe a note. Maybe a small gift or gesture.
 - Reciprocity
 - Some day my helping friend may himself need help. If I don't help him then, lotsa luck the next time I ask him for help.
 - **II Corinthians 8:14**, *At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality...*
 - Pacing
 - **Proverbs 25:17**, *Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house - too much of you, and he will hate you.*
 - And a word from Samuel Johnson, *Fish and friends smell after three days.*

III. GIVE SOMEBODY REAL LOYALTY

A. Be There

1. Jonathan defends David to his father. **READ 19:1-7**
2. Jonathan pledges assistance to David. **20:4**, *Jonathan said to David, "Whatever you want me to do, I'll do for you."*
3. Jonathan almost gets killed for David. **20:32**, *"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. The Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David. 34 Jonathan got up from the table in fierce anger, on that second day of the month he did not eat, because he was grieved at his father's shameful treatment of David."*
3. Jonathan accepts #2 position. **23:17**, *"Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this."*
4. **Proverbs 17:17**, *A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*
5. *When Chicago Bears running backs Gale Sayers and Brian Piccolo began rooming together, it marked a first for pro football. A white and a black sharing a room was news in 1967. During the 1969 season, doctors diagnosed Piccolo as having cancer. By the end of the season he lay bedridden. Meanwhile, the Professional Football Writers honored Sayers at their annual dinner as the league's most courageous player. With tears Sayers said, "You flatter me by giving me this award, but I tell you here and now that I accept it for Brian Picciolo. Brian Piccolo is the man of courage...I love Brian Piccolo, and I'd like you to love him. Tonight, when you hit your knees, please ask God to love him, too."* (James Corley in a *Moody Monthly* article, n.d.)

B. Do Things

1. David weeps for Jonathan. **II Samuel 1:26**, *David publicly eulogizes Jonathan after he falls in battle, How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. 26 I grieve for you, Jonathan, my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women.*
2. David rewards Jonathan's descendent. In **20:14**, Jonathan asks David to make a covenant promise to him: *But show me the unfailing kindness like that of the Lord as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, 15 and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family...*
 - **2:6**, David promises favor to the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead because of their gutsy nighttime rescue of the bodies of Saul and Jonathan from an enemy city.
 - **9:1**, David enriches and vitally adopts the crippled only son of Jonathan, Mephibosheth. *David asked, "Is there anyone still left of the house of Saul to whom I can show kindness for Jonathan's sake?"*
3. **George Burns and Jack Benny** had been friends for a long time. After Jack Benny died, George was interviewed on a TV talk show. He was asked about his relationship with Jack. He flicked his cigar and said, *"Well, Jack and I had a wonderful friendship for nearly fifty-five years; Jack never walked out on me when I sang a song, and I never walked out on him when he played the violin."* (Paul Robbins, "Must Men Be Friendless?" *Leadership*, Fall 1984, 28-29)

CONCLUSION:

- A. Well, friends like this are pretty precious. **Shakespeare** got it right: *Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried, Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.*
- B. *One man in a thousand, Solomon says,
Will stick more close than a brother.
And it's worthwhile seeking him half your days
If you find him before the other.*

*Nine hundred and ninety-nine depend
On what the world sees in you,
But the Thousandth Man will stand your friend
With the whole round world agin you.*

*'Tis neither promise nor prayer nor show
will settle the finding for 'ee.
Nine hundred and ninety-nine of 'em go by your looks, or your acts or your glory.
but if he finds you and you find him,
the rest of the world don't matter;
for the Thousandth Man will sink or swim
with you in any water.*

*You can use his purse with no more talk
than he uses his for his spendings,
and laugh and meet in your daily walk
as though there had been no lendings.
Nine hundred and ninety-nine of 'em call
for silver and gold in their dealings;
but the Thousandth Man he's worth 'em all,
because you can show him your feelings.*

*His wrong's your wrong, and his right's your right,
in season or out of season.
Stand up and back it in all men's sight-
with that for your only reason!
Nine hundred and ninety-nine can't bide
the shame or mocking or laughter,
but the Thousandth Man will stand by your side
to the gallows-foot-and after!*

(Rudyard Kipling, from *A Selection of His Stories and Poems*, edited
by John Beecroft, Doubleday, 1956)

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