
Growth Group Notes: David 3– an unlikely friendship



Warm Up...

Many of us are blessed to have (or have had) good friends. What would you say were the key characteristics or traits that you value in a good friend?

Do you feel our society values non-sexual friendships? Why/Why not?

background

The friendship between David and Jonathan is one of the most significant, moving and tragic relationships in the Scriptures. It has come to represent a depth of loyalty and true friendship across the centuries. In some respects it is an unlikely friendship (especially in our context of first loyalties being to the nuclear family) as David nurtures a deep and lasting friendship with the son of the king that he will depose. David's success is a direct threat to Jonathan who as son of the king is also his natural heir. But somehow the friendship grows and lasts throughout all of the military and political intrigues and challenges that it faces.

read 1 Samuel ch18 v1-4 ch19 v1-6 & ch20v1-17, 30-42 (read whole chapter if time)

How would you describe David and Jonathan's friendship?

What key characteristics of their friendship can you identify?

(here are 4 to get you started – you may spot others too)

1 (look at 1 Sam 19v4-5)

2 (look at 1 Sam 20v30-32)

3 (look at 1 Sam 18v4)

4 (look at 1 Sam 20v16-17)

Given who they each are, why is their ongoing friendship so unlikely?

How do you think they overcame the obstacles?

How would you describe their parting? 1 Sam 20v41-42

What might be the nature or purpose of their covenant? (a covenant is a formal promise & legal commitment)

1 Sam 20v16-17

How their story ends:

David sees Jonathan once more 1 Sam 23v16-18, before Jonathan dies in battle 1 Sam 31v2. When David hears the news, he sings a lament recorded in 2 Sam 1:

²⁵ '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 Samuel 1:25-26

Reflecting on FRIENDSHIPS

How important to you feel friendships are

In your own life?

In our church community?

What (if any) might be the dangers / problems of having close friends

In your life?

In our church community?

How might we avoid these issues?

"I hate solitude, but I'm afraid of intimacy. The substance of my life is a private conversation with myself which to turn into a dialogue would be equivalent to self-destruction. The company which I need is the company which a pub or a cafe will provide. I have never wanted a communion of souls. It's already hard enough to tell the truth to oneself." Iris Murdoch, Under the Net

Real connection and intimacy is like a meal, not a sugar fix. Kristin Armstrong

I'm certain that most couples expect to find intimacy in marriage, but it somehow eludes them. James Dobson

Reflecting on INTIMACY

David reflects that Jonathan's love was more wonderful than that of a woman. While this may just be a comment on poor male-female relationships of the era, there is a sense in which non sexual friendship offer something very different to sexual ones.

(Please note that there is no vaguest hint in the text of any homosexual element to Jonathan and David's friendship, and any suggestion of this would have been unequivocally been condemned by the Hebrew culture of the time.)

It is suggested that our era is characterised by an increased number of sexual relationship yet a profound lack of true intimacy.

If you agree: why do you think this might be?

How might it be dangerous to "place all our eggs in one basket" relationally in terms of marriage or a sexual partner?

What can we gain from non-sexual deep relationships / "friendships" that we cannot get elsewhere?

How can we as God's people model and develop better friendships?

Real intimacy is a sacred experience. It never exposes its secret trust and belonging to the voyeuristic eye of a neon culture. Real intimacy is of the soul, and the soul is reserved. John O'Donohue, Anam Cara: A Book of Celtic Wisdom

It is not time or opportunity that is to determine intimacy;—it is disposition alone. Seven years would be insufficient to make some people acquainted with each other, and seven days are more than enough for others." Jane Austen, Sense and Sensibility

From David to Jesus....

We all know the hard way that we let down and are let down by our human friendships. But the Bible reveals to us that ultimately all our human relationships point us to a deeper lasting intimacy that we can find in relationship with God. In John 15 Jesus tells his disciples that he now calls them friends.

Pray together

Spend some time thanking God for his invention of friendships and the positive things they bring into our lives. Let's also thank him for His friendship which will never let us down.

Why not spend some time asking God to help you be a better friend and to have wisdom knowing how best to invest in friendships.

¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴ You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵ I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit – fruit that will last – and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. ¹⁷ This is my command: love each other. Jesus in John 15:13-17