

# S&L, Episode III: The BFF

Reconnect – July 10, 2011



**Text:** I Samuel 20:1-42; John 15:9-14; Psalm 57

**Key Thought:** God still honours those who live out his love and goodness through sacrificial friendship.

Then Jonathan told David, "I promise by the Lord, the God of Israel, that by this time tomorrow, or the next day at the latest, I will talk to my father and let you know at once how he feels about you. If he speaks favourably about you, I will let you know. But if he is angry and wants you killed, may the Lord strike me and even kill me if I don't warn you so you can escape and live. May the Lord be with you as he used to be with my father. And may you treat me with the faithful love of the Lord as long as I live. But if I die, treat my family with this faithful love, even when the Lord destroys all your enemies from the face of the earth." So Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, saying, "May the Lord destroy all your enemies!" And Jonathan made David reaffirm his vow of friendship again, for Jonathan loved David as he loved himself. (I Sam. 20, NLT)

## Intro: BFF?



**Q: Think of the person you would consider your best friend. How did they become that for you? What happened – was it an event or a time in your life?**

- As time passes in our lives, it gets harder and harder to assign that title to someone
- Think about where lifelong friendships are formed – university? High school? Times where you have a lot of time to hang out and talk... it's tough to build a lifelong friendship apart from that...
- They say that adults, especially married men, don't have many close friends that they spend significant time with or consider themselves close to
- We have different friends for different times in our lives – it's not very often that we have a lifetime friend that actually continues to function in that role – more often we have a "friends hall of fame" of

people who have played that part, and who we still love, but who have been separated from us by distance or change or circumstances

- (Facebook lets us keep relationships on a string – where we keep up but don't necessarily spend physical time with someone)
- And then again, sometimes a BFF isn't actually worthy of the second "f" – sometimes they do turn on us, sometimes they let us down, sometimes a misunderstanding comes and the person who you thought knew you so well and always would, now doesn't know you at all – but you still have a piece of them and they still have a piece of you that was exchanged at the time

## No time for friends

- And as a result, many have remarked that we have lost a lot of what the essence of friendship is, especially when it comes to males perhaps, but on both sides too
- And then we come to the Bible, and the iconic story of David and Jonathan – a friendship for the ages – for whom David would famously say, "I loved you more than all the women in my life" (II Samuel 1)
- Some see it as a homosexual relationship, others see it as David using Jonathan for political purposes, still others see an insecure prince who is desperate to be liked and so gives his kingdom away to spite his domineering father
- But we need to see it for ourselves this morning, because it is the story of how two people who both loved God and dared to do great things for him, found comfort in a friendship that would become the epitome of sacrifice and loyalty



## Read/go through text: I Samuel 20:1-42, NLT

David now fled from Natioth in Ramah and found Jonathan. "What have I done?" he exclaimed. "What is my crime? How have I offended your father that he is so determined to kill me?" "That's not true!" Jonathan protested. "You're not going to die. He always tells me everything he's going to do, even the little things. I know my father wouldn't hide something like this from me. It just isn't so!" Then David took an oath before Jonathan and said, "Your father knows perfectly well about our friendship, so he has said to himself, 'I won't tell Jonathan—why should I hurt him?' But I swear to you that I am only a step away from death! I swear it by the Lord and by your own soul!"

- Background: I Samuel 18 – the beginning of their friendship, right after Goliath was beheaded
- **“After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan, the king’s son. There was an immediate bond between them, for Jonathan loved David. From that day on Saul kept David with him and wouldn’t let him return home. And Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, because he loved him as he loved himself. Jonathan sealed the pact by taking off his robe and giving it to David, together with his tunic, sword, bow, and belt.” I Samuel 18:1-4, NLT**
- “...David and Jonathan had much in common; they were both courageous and capable young warriors who possessed profound faith in the Lord. Both had initiated faith-motivated attacks against militarily superior Philistines that had resulted in great victories for Israel.” (Bergen, 1&2 Samuel, 199)
- Ever since David defeated Goliath and the attention of people shifted from Saul to David, King Saul’s insecurities have been coming to the surface, to the point where he has already tried to kill David out of a murderous rage
- Earlier in the book it’s said that God’s Spirit had “departed from Saul” – that God had lifted his presence and blessing from Saul’s life – and that has pushed Saul over the deep end – his emotions are fluctuating wildly – mania, paranoia and the like – in his desperate quest to keep his throne
- But Jonathan – an adult of probably my age or a little older at this point – prefers to see his father as he always knew him, before he became king – he doesn’t want to see his dad with feet of clay
- David is desperately trying to convince his friend of how desperate his situation is, and how much he needs his friendship at this critical point in his life

**“Tell me what I can do to help you,” Jonathan exclaimed. David replied, “Tomorrow we celebrate the new moon festival. I’ve always eaten with the king on this occasion, but tomorrow I’ll hide in the field and stay there until the evening of the third day. If your father asks where I am, tell him I asked permission to go home to Bethlehem for an annual family sacrifice. If he says, ‘Fine!’ you will know all is well. But if he is angry and loses his temper, you will know he is determined to kill me. Show me this loyalty as my sworn friend—for we made a solemn pact before the Lord—or kill me yourself if I have sinned against your father. But please don’t betray me to him!” “Never!” Jonathan exclaimed. “You know that if I had the slightest notion my father was planning to kill you, I would tell you at once.”**

- Jonathan responds out of friendship – “Even if my father is trying to kill you (which I don’t think he is), I will still help you, what do you need?”
- David outlines a plan to draw out Saul’s intentions by deliberately provoking him – Saul’s reactions will be the litmus test to see if things are well or not – and he reminds Jonathan of their sworn loyalty

**Then David asked, “How will I know whether or not your father is angry?” “Come out to the field with me,” Jonathan replied. And they went out there together. Then Jonathan told David, “I promise by the Lord, the God of Israel, that by this time tomorrow, or the next day at the latest, I will talk to my father and let you know at once how he feels about you. If he speaks favourably about you, I will let you know. But if he is angry and wants you killed, may the Lord strike me and even kill me if I don’t warn you so you can escape and live. May the Lord be with you as he used to be with my father. And may you treat me with the faithful love of the Lord as long as I live. But if I die, treat my family with this faithful love, even when the Lord destroys all your enemies from the face of the earth.”**

- Now it's Jonathan's turn to talk about their friendship and mutual sworn loyalty – he promises David that he will let him know either way, ASAP, as to his father's intentions towards him – and he tells David that his loyalty is to him as his friend, not to his father – because David is on God's side, whereas God has departed from Saul – it's a spiritual perspective that goes against that culture of family and clan loyalty

**So Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, saying, “May the Lord destroy all your enemies!” And Jonathan made David reaffirm his vow of friendship again, for Jonathan loved David as he loved himself. Then Jonathan said, “Tomorrow we celebrate the new moon festival. You will be missed when your place at the table is empty. The day after tomorrow, toward evening, go to the place where you hid before, and wait there by the stone pile. I will come out and shoot three arrows to the side of the stone pile as though I were shooting at a target. Then I will send a boy to bring the arrows back. If you hear me tell him, ‘They’re on this side,’ then you will know, as surely as the Lord lives, that all is well, and there is no trouble. But if I tell him, ‘Go farther—the arrows are still ahead of you,’ then it will mean that you must leave immediately, for the Lord is sending you away. And may the Lord make us keep our promises to each other, for he has witnessed them.”**

- They reaffirm their friendship once again – “Jonathan loved David as he loved himself”
- They come up with a plan to communicate with each other, just in case they are being watched by Saul or his forces – a code and a meeting

**So David hid himself in the field, and when the new moon festival began, the king sat down to eat. He sat at his usual place against the wall, with Jonathan sitting opposite him and Abner beside him. But David's place was empty. Saul didn't say anything about it that day, for he said to himself, “Something must have made David ceremonially unclean.” But when David's place was empty again the next day, Saul asked Jonathan, “Why hasn't the son of Jesse been here for the meal either yesterday or today?” Jonathan replied, “David earnestly asked me if he could go to Bethlehem. He said, ‘Please let me go, for we are having a family sacrifice. My brother demanded that I be there. So please let me get away to see my brothers.’ That's why he isn't here at the king's table.” Saul boiled with rage at Jonathan. “You son of a perverse and rebellious woman!” he swore at him. “Do you think I don't know that you want him to be king in your place, shaming yourself and your mother? As long as that son of Jesse is alive, you'll never be king. Now go and get him so I can kill him!”**

- “ceremonially unclean” – David being someone who was following God, was observing Jewish law – you could become unclean for a day for a variety of reasons, from contact with certain insects to having certain skin diseases – basically you couldn't be a part of religious ritual until the next day
- But then when David's not there the next day – and it's not a holy day either – Saul realizes he hasn't been right
- “son of Jesse” – Saul can't even say his name
- Saul uses three powerful motivators to try to get Jonathan back to “his side”: shame, guilt and greed (Bergen 218) – fear too – raging at Jonathan and appealing to his mother

- In that culture, it was normal that if the throne went to another family, that the current royal family would be quickly and quietly murdered, to consolidate the throne and eliminate any threat of them retaking it – Saul’s understanding of custom says that David is his and his family’s greatest threat – but ironically, it would be Saul himself

**“But why should he be put to death?” Jonathan asked his father. “What has he done?” Then Saul hurled his spear at Jonathan, intending to kill him. So at last Jonathan realized that his father was really determined to kill David. Jonathan left the table in fierce anger and refused to eat on that second day of the festival, for he was crushed by his father’s shameful behaviour toward David.**

- Saul, who has tried to run David through with his spear before, now takes a shot at his own son, which is what seems to finally convince Jonathan that his father is now psychotic and delusional

**The next morning, as agreed, Jonathan went out into the field and took a young boy with him to gather his arrows. “Start running,” he told the boy, “so you can find the arrows as I shoot them.” So the boy ran, and Jonathan shot an arrow beyond him. When the boy had almost reached the arrow, Jonathan shouted, “The arrow is still ahead of you. Hurry, hurry, don’t wait.” So the boy quickly gathered up the arrows and ran back to his master. He, of course, suspected nothing; only Jonathan and David understood the signal. Then Jonathan gave his bow and arrows to the boy and told him to take them back to town. As soon as the boy was gone, David came out from where he had been hiding near the stone pile. Then David bowed three times to Jonathan with his face to the ground. Both of them were in tears as they embraced each other and said good-bye, especially David. At last Jonathan said to David, “Go in peace, for we have sworn loyalty to each other in the Lord’s name. The Lord is the witness of a bond between us and our children forever.” Then David left, and Jonathan returned to the town. | Samuel 20:1-42, NLT**

- They break their prearranged plan somewhat to meet – seems that the coast was clear after the attendant had left
- David bows three times to Jonathan as a sign of deepest respect in that culture – Jonathan embraces him as a demonstration that they are peers
- Again they remind each other of loyalty – the Bible only records one more meeting between them after this – and they go back to their respective positions and places in life
- From this point on, it’s definitely David who has the better part of the deal

### **A relationship of *hesed*:**

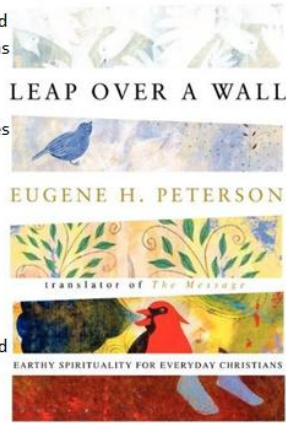
- I want to talk about that word loyalty that gets repeated over and over again – the idea of “faithful love” – the Hebrew word for that is *hesed*
- Loyalty is a bit of an old-fashioned concept – and generally we don’t hear it used much as a compliment anymore – if we say someone is loyal, we either can’t think of anything better to say OR we say it as faint praise – as in, they are loyal to someone that they shouldn’t be, and that loyalty is limiting them – OR – they are loyal to someone and so therefore can’t see what’s really happening or make the best choices for themselves

- Loyalty is not a quality you need in the good times – it’s a quality that only comes out when there’s trouble, when times are tough – when you have to stand by someone in difficult circumstances and continue to “take their side” – loyalty is a sacrificial quality, something that is a negative (at least at the time) for the person showing it – and loyalty only “pays off” in the end if the person’s circumstances change – if things get better for them again – if they come out on top again – if not, loyalty is a boat anchor that drags you down with a sinking ship

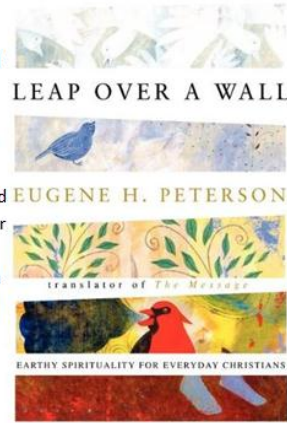


- And even in this story – what does Jonathan’s loyalty gain for him? All it does is put him in the king’s bad books and keep him from his throne – at least on the surface of things
- “The essence of that relationship between David and Jonathan is a covenant that involves promises of mutual protection. They are committed to looking out for each other. Jonathan will do all he can to protect David; likewise, David will look after Jonathan. But the whole arrangement depends completely on the covenant relationship with its fierce loyalty. What holds the unit together is the prospects of relational faithfulness” (Arnold, 1&2 Samuel, 300)
- “...the Bible opens up a whole different perspective into the potential of human relationships. Against much of modern pop culture, this text teaches that it is possible for humans to build relationships that are durable and employable in God’s plan for the future.” (Arnold 303)
- Hesed is loyalty, faithfulness, kindness, love, mercy – an umbrella of loyal love, of looking out for the other person not based on who they are, but who you are – it’s not about what they can do for you, but it’s about who you are choosing to be to them – David and Jonathan’s relationship in this way is a mirror of God’s relationship to his people Israel then and to us today
- Hesed is not easy – it’s taxing, it’s at times thankless – look at God with us – he continues to forgive us, to demonstrate his love to us – he sacrificed everything for us including his son Jesus
- Jonathan winds up giving everything up for David – his relationship with his father, his status as the crown prince – but it’s because he sees God at work in David’s life and knows that he has to be on the side of God – where God comes down on things, that’s where Jonathan wants to be too
- The sacrifices of friendship – friendship has been lost in our time, today – we either have friends that we vent to, or friends that we hang out with but don’t talk to – how deep is the level of sharing?
- This story says that the essence of friendship is sacrifice – “greater love has no man than he that lays down his life for his friend” – but we network to get ahead, we socialize to show off our own status and talk about ourselves, we hang out to pursue our own interests – true friendship in our busy world is rare

Friendship is a much underestimated aspect of spirituality. It's every bit as significant as prayer and fasting. Like the sacramental use of water and bread and wine, friendship takes what's common in human experience and turns it into something holy. Friendship with David complicated Jonathan's life enormously. He risked losing his father's favour and willingly sacrificed his own royal future. But neither the risk nor the loss deterred him; he became and stayed David's friend...



Jonathan's friendship was essential to David's life. It's highly unlikely that David could have persisted in serving Saul without the friendship of Jonathan. Jonathan, in striking contrast to his father, discerned God in David, comprehended the danger and difficulty of his anointing, and made a covenant of friendship with him. Jonathan's friendship entered David's soul in a way that Saul's hatred never did." (53)



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**Key Thought:**

**God still honours those who live out his love and goodness through sacrificial friendship.**

“I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends. You are my friends if you do what I command... You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. This is my command: Love each other.” **Jesus, in John 15:9-17, NLT**

## TAKE IT HOME:

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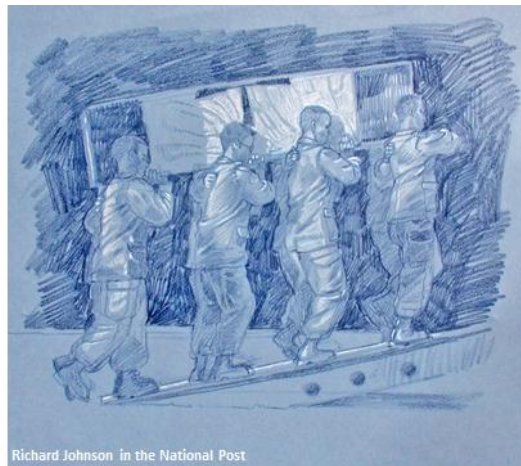
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## Conclusion: Afghanistan mission-end



Richard Johnson in the National Post



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- Explaining the war and soldiers to Hope – they help keep us safe and help other people to be safe, too
- A ten-year war – questions over what has been accomplished, etc.
- But regardless of your perspective on it, our military is full of those who have volunteered to put themselves in jeopardy
- You can say that it's a job like any other, BUT it is different – it is putting themselves in harm's way, and not for the kind of money that normally inspires people to do crazy things
- They care for each other and they also help us, those they have never met, and they also help those in Afghanistan who would otherwise have no-one to help them or protect them (ie. Women and girls especially) – they have made sacrifices the rest of us can never understand – both in battle and then coming home, struggling with PTSD, struggling to come back to "normal" after spending each day searching in front of them for things that will blow them up – our soldiers need our prayers
- Their work should inspire the rest of us, since it is our part to build and further the ideals that they are sacrificing over there for – to continue to be "salt" and "light" to Canada, to use the freedoms we enjoy to the fullest to continue to bring God's love and light to those around us and to our world

**Response: Psalm 57 (group reading, then end with prayer)**

**For the choir director: A psalm of David, regarding the time he fled from Saul and went into the cave. To be sung to the tune “Do Not Destroy!”**

Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy!

I look to you for protection.

I will hide beneath the shadow of your wings  
until the danger passes by.

I cry out to God Most High,

to God who will fulfill his purpose for me.

He will send help from heaven to rescue me,  
disgracing those who hound me.

Interlude

My God will send forth his unfailing love and  
faithfulness.

I am surrounded by fierce lions

who greedily devour human prey—  
whose teeth pierce like spears and arrows,  
and whose tongues cut like swords.

Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens!

May your glory shine over all the earth.

My enemies have set a trap for me.

I am weary from distress.

They have dug a deep pit in my path,  
but they themselves have fallen into it.

Interlude

My heart is confident in you, O God;  
my heart is confident.

No wonder I can sing your praises!

Wake up, my heart!

Wake up, O lyre and harp!

I will wake the dawn with my song.

I will thank you, Lord, among all the people.

I will sing your praises among the nations.

For your unfailing love is as high as the heavens.

Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

Be exalted, O God, above the highest heavens.

May your glory shine over all the earth.