

Jonathan and David, a Noble Friendship

Lesson Scripture: 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 19:1-7; 20:1-42; 2 Samuel 1:17-27; 21:7

Focus Scripture: 1 Samuel 18:1-4; 20:16-17, 32-34, 42; 2 Samuel 1:26-27; 21:7

Key Verse: Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, since both of us have sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between me and you and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'" 1 Samuel 20:42

1 SAMUEL 18:1-4; 20:16-17, 32-34, 42; 2 SAMUEL 1:26-27; 21:7 (NRSV UE)

1 Samuel 18:1-4

1 When David had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was bound to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2 Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul.

4 Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing and gave it to David and his armor and even his sword and his bow and his belt.

20:16-17

16 Thus Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the Lord seek out the enemies of David."

17 Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own life.

32-34

32 Then Jonathan answered his father Saul, "Why should he be put to death? What has he done?"

33 But Saul threw his spear at him to strike him, so Jonathan knew that it was the decision of his father to put David to death.

34 Jonathan sprang up from the table in fierce anger and ate no food on the second day of the month, for he was grieved for David and because his father had disgraced him.

42

42 Then Jonathan said to David, "Go in

1 SAMUEL 18:1-4; 20:16-17, 32-34, 42; 2 SAMUEL 1:26-27; 21:7 (KJV)

1 Samuel 18:1-4

1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

20:16-17

16 So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, Let the Lord even require it at the hand of David's enemies.

17 And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

32-34

32 And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done?

33 And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.

34 So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

42

42 And Jonathan said to David, Go in peace,

peace, since both of us have sworn in the name of the Lord, saying, 'The Lord shall be between me and you and between my descendants and your descendants forever.'" He got up and left, and Jonathan went into the city.

2 Samuel 1:26-27

26 "Jonathan lies slain upon your high places. I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; greatly beloved were you to me; your love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27 How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

21:7

7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Saul's son Jonathan, because of the oath of the Lord that was between them, between David and Jonathan son of Saul.

forasmuch as we have sworn both of us in the name of the Lord, saying, The Lord be between me and thee, and between my seed and thy seed for ever. And he arose and departed: and Jonathan went into the city.

2 Samuel 1:26-27

26 I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

27 How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!

21:7

7 But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of the Lord's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul.

Key Terms

- **No Holds Barred** – Without restrictions or conditions; total freedom in speaking.
- **Posterity** – Future generations.
- **Tanzania** – A country of about 70 million people in Eastern Africa.

Introduction

In lessons 1 and 2, we saw the faithfulness of God expressed through two individuals (Deborah and Hannah) to achieve great outcomes. The witness now turns to an expression of friendship between two friends. Throughout the centuries, this relationship has drawn serious atten-

tion from theologians, Bible commentators, and even critics and haters of the scriptures and religion.

On the positive side, believers see this friendship as a model of commitment and loyalty that God enables between friends who are devoted to each other's well-being. Here, there is no limit on what one friend would do to help the other. But certain Bible scholars see the relationship between David and Jonathan as a case of hidden homosexuality in the scriptures. And maybe this is understandable given how the friendship is described in the Hebrew dialect using the word *hesed*, which has no accurate one-word English match. It is that quality that some translations loosely call lovingkindness,

mercy, faithfulness, and covenant loyalty. The relationship between Ruth and Naomi reflected this *hesed* quality (Ruth 1:8, 3:10).

Follow as it is highlighted in the text.

Telling the Bible Story

As noted above, the *hesed* feature is clear at three points in the text: 1 Samuel 20:8, 20:14, and 20:15. The bonds of friendship were so strong that Jonathan shifted loyalties from his natural father to David. Some commentators read this shift in loyalties as springing from Jonathan's conviction that God had moved the kingly anointing from King Saul to David. The text does not explicitly state this, but passages like 1 Samuel 18:1-4 shout it.

For the soul of the relationship, focus on 1 Samuel chapter 20. There you see two friends in a no holds barred conversation expressing their fears, loyalties, and commitment to protect each other, whatever happens. This is the face of real, loyal, genuine friendship.

Also noted in that text are the many references to God and the Lord. This is crucial to understanding the narrative. David and Jonathan were convinced that what they were doing had God's approval and was in line with what God was doing.

Another great insight comes as we ponder who Jonathan was: the natural heir to the throne of Israel. King Saul hinted at this in 1 Samuel 20:31. David was a

threat to Jonathan's chances of getting and maintaining a kingdom, Saul's legacy. But Jonathan was letting go of all of that to be in a covenant relationship with the man God had approved as the next king. How noble was that?

1 Samuel 20:42 put everything in clear perspective. What was

this friendship between David and Jonathan all about; what really were they trying to achieve? It was not only for their immediate satisfaction. It was for the benefit of posterity. They were setting the future of Israel the way they understood God wanted that future to look.

The bonds of friendship were so strong that Jonathan shifted loyalties from his natural father to David.

Sankofa

The deep friendship between David and Jonathan helped to shape the history of Israel. A similar (political) friendship between Julius Nyerere and Rashidi Kawawa (1950's to 1980's) likewise shaped the history of modern Tanzania. This friendship of mutual support and respect shaped Tanzania's independence, and the economic and social policies it followed thereafter.

Nyerere was the leader – the ideological driving force – while Kawawa was the deputy, bringing the ideas to life and protecting Nyerere. When Nyerere stepped away from being prime minister in 1962 to devote his time to party matters, Kawawa stepped up to the position until Nyerere was ready to move back into the top spot. From all reports, the two men lived to encourage and support each other for the good of their beloved Tanzania. Their model of cooperation in leadership was an inspiration to many other leaders inside and outside of Africa. The way 1 Samuel 20 portrays Jonathan's loyalty to David is the way the historical records

of Tanzania portray Kawawa's loyalty to Nyerere. Black leaders can work together for a common good.

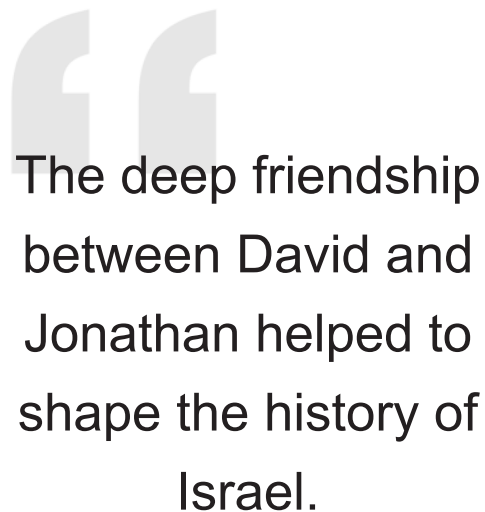
Case Study

We saw above the value of strong friendships in setting the course of nations. But what about setting economic freedom for individuals? The establishment and phenomenal growth of FUBU – the urban clothing company – shows what strong personal friendships can achieve.

The four original FUBU founders – Daymond John, J. Alexander Martin, Keith Perrin, and Carlton Brown – were friends who grew up together in Hollis, New York. Their common bond was hip-hop culture, with a focus on

clothing that reflected the culture. Like David and Jonathan, they shared a deep respect for each other, with an enduring trust. In 1992, FUBU was launched as a symbol of the trust, respect, and cooperation among four friends. The rest, as they say, is history.

As a people, we must lament that such



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a story is so rare. We need to see them more often.

Life Application

Because of a few bad life experiences – some lived, many imagined – some people take pride in having no friends, or only one or two. Usually, this is a self-protective measure. But it is not one we encourage. A person without friends robs themselves of one of the joys of being human. Of course, interactions with other people can bring seasons of distress and pain. Yet, from wholesome friendships spring crucial emotional support, better mental health, and opportunities to relish the joys of sharing. Friendships satisfy that deep human craving for belonging.

So, the challenge for this lesson is to examine your level of friendship with others. How many people outside your immediate family circle can you call friends, who would also call you a friend? To whom

can you turn for emotional support, honest advice, and counsel in life's trying moments? David had Jonathan, the Lone Ranger had Tonto, the FUBU boys had each other. Who do you have? The answer to these questions will explain the quality of life you now live.

Questions

1. Why did Jonathan sacrifice his chance to be king for a friendship with David?
2. Apart from Ruth and Naomi, do you know of another such friendship?
3. Is it necessary to be vulnerable in a close friendship?

Closing Devotions

Closing Hymn: "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" (AMECH #325)

Closing Prayer: Dear Father, help me to know my friends so we can deal effectively with the enemies. And Lord, help me to heal from the trauma of past hurtful relationships. Amen.



So, the challenge for this lesson is to examine your level of friendship with others.

HOME DAILY BIBLE READINGS

June 22-28

Monday	Isaiah 61:4-9 (The Lord Loves Justice)
Tuesday	Luke 15:1-7 (A Shepherd Who Seeks the Lost)
Wednesday	Amos 5:16-20 (The Lord's Day Is Coming)
Thursday	Amos 5:21-27 (Let Justice Roll Down Like Water)
Friday	John 10:1-9 (Good and Safe Pastures)
Saturday	John 10:10-18 (Jesus Is the Good Shepherd)
Sunday	Amos 7:10-15 (Chosen by God)