

DISCIPLINE FOR GODLINESS

DISCIPLINE OF FRIENDSHIP

A GREAT FRIENDSHIP

If there ever was a “**man’s man**,” it was **Jonathan**; and if there ever was a man who felt the need of a friend, it was Jonathan. The Philistines’ domination of Israel in that day was so complete that they allowed no blacksmiths in the land for fear they would make swords and spears for the Israelites. In fact, there were only two swords in the entire nation, those of King Saul and his son Jonathan.

All Israel was in a dark funk of depression and despair — all, that is, except Jonathan. Jonathan saw matters differently. He believed that if God willed it, Israel could be saved, even by a few. While others looked down, he looked up and saw a great and glorious God who could deliver him anytime He saw fit.

Armed with this conviction and his sword, Jonathan and his armor-bearer attacked a Philistine detachment alone. His rallying words say it all: **“Come, let’s go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few”** ([1 Samuel 14:6](#)).

Assured that God would deliver them into his hand, Jonathan launched a horrifying single-handed attack. It was *mano a mano*, hand-to-hand, man-to-man. Blood ran to the dust and white bone gleamed in the sun as Jonathan sliced and hacked attacker after attacker, until twenty Philistines lay spread over a terrible half-acre. Blood-covered Jonathan was one tough *hombre*!

Jonathan’s heroics put some steel into his people, and a rebellion followed — and some good days for Israel. But with Saul’s subsequent sin and rejection, Israel fell to even darker days than before (**chapters 15–17**), and Jonathan was more alone than ever. Even *his* great heart was affected, as he too trembled before Goliath. There was no one of like mind, he thought — until he encountered David. He could not believe his ears as David called out to the giant:

“You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me, and I’ll strike you down and cut off your head ... and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear

that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give all of you into our hands.” (1 Samuel 17:45–47)

Then David ran full-speed at Goliath and nailed him right between the eyes! Blood-smearing David stood holding the great gory head, talking calmly with Jonathan's father, Saul. At last Jonathan had found someone whose heart was in tune with his — a *friend*.

What followed was the flowering of a deep male friendship, one of the most celebrated friendships in all of literature. As such, it provides the essential elements and wisdom for all genuine friendships

Friendship's Mutuality

The initial element in Jonathan and David's great friendship was mutuality of soul. As the account so plainly states, **“After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David” (1 Samuel 18:1)**. Literally, **“The soul of Jonathan bound itself to the soul of David.”** Jonathan saw that David viewed life from the same divine perspective (God is sovereign and does as He pleases, and all of life is to be lived for Him). And when he saw this, his soul reflexively clung to David's. Here was a man whose heart beat with his!

This is the way it is with deep friendships. It is not that friends think alike on everything. Often it is quite the opposite. But they do share the same worldview and approach to life. And this is why a Christian friendship exceeds anything that exists between nonbelievers — for such a friendship is founded on a supernatural mutuality of soul. The Holy Spirit makes your souls chorus the same cries.

- You assent to the same authority.
- You know the same God.
- You are going the same way.
- You long for the same things.
- You dream mutual dreams.
- You yearn for the same experiences of holiness and worship.

Jonathan's soul bound itself to David's soul. You know when this happens, and it is wonderful.

Friendship's Love

Mutuality of soul is followed by love, as the next phrase indicates — **“and he [Jonathan] loved him [David] as himself” (v. 1)**. This is an amazing statement because of its immediacy. This love did not develop in a month or even a day, but in a flash! It was because David's sizzling soul met such a deep need in Jonathan's — “At last I have found someone who lives like me!” He really did love him as himself, and in doing so was loving his neighbor as himself — and he was thus fulfilling the Law of God.

This love would pay great dividends because honest, unselfish love has irresistible drawing power. David would be drawn to the same love, as we shall see.