

# DISCIPLINE FOR GODLINESS

## DISCIPLINE OF FRIENDSHIP

### A GREAT FRIENDSHIP

#### *Friendship's Commitment*

#### *Friendship's Loyalty*

Jonathan maintained a fierce loyalty to David as their friendship grew. This is most remarkable, because after the first flush of dramatic commitment he was reminded by his father (no doubt more than once!), **“As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established”** ([1 Samuel 20:31](#)). Yet, when Saul maligned David, we read that **“Jonathan spoke well of David”** ([1 Samuel 19:4](#)), and on one occasion even persuaded his father to make an oath not to harm David (an oath Saul did not keep).

Loyalty is indispensable to the survival of friendship. How many once-prosperous friendships have faded because of disloyal talk? Pascal put it pointedly: “I set this down as a fact, that if all men knew what each other said of the other, there would not be four friends in the world.” You will never know a deep friendship unless there is mutual loyalty and trust.

#### *Friendship's Encouragement*

Constant flight from Saul produced some down times for David. For example, when he delivered the town of Keilah from the Philistines, he learned that the citizens of the town were plotting to turn him over to Saul — and so off to Horesh in the desert he fled, disheartened and terribly discouraged. But Jonathan came to the rescue: **“And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God”** ([1 Samuel 23:16](#)). What a friend! **“A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”** ([Proverbs 17:17](#)). Jonathan's encouragement was more than “everything is going to be okay.” The verse quoted above literally reads, “He strengthened his hand in God.” Jonathan pointed David upward to the grand perspective which had first drawn him to the shepherd boy. This undoubtedly involved instruction, prayer, and mutual worship.

The Apostle Paul experienced similar comfort from his friend Titus: **“But God, who comforts the downcast, comforted us by the coming of Titus ... so that my joy was greater than ever”** ([2 Corinthians 7:6-7](#)). This is the “Titus Touch” — the golden touch of an encouraging friend.

## Bible Study: Discipline for Godliness

### Discipleship Series:

Pastor Eddie Ildefonso

As we have catalogued the beautiful elements of Jonathan and David's deep friendship — *mutuality, love, commitment, loyalty, and encouragement* — we have observed that they came largely from Jonathan. But it did not remain one-sided. Repeated mutual commitments began to mark the friendship of these two remarkable men. The apex of their commitment was the mutual promise to care for one another's family, should one be taken (cf. [1 Samuel 20:14–17](#)) — “I'll take care of yours, and you take care of mine.” They bound their lives and their children's lives to one another. Later, when they reaffirmed their promises, “**David wept the most**” ([1 Samuel 20:41-42](#)). It appears that Jonathan's friendship had drawn David to unexpected heights of devotion.

Male friendship has reached Heaven when men make such promises to each other. I treasure a sacred moment when my old childhood friend, married and with family, met my wife and me on vacation in the Colorado mountains and said, after a late-evening meal, “If anything happens to you, Kent, Judy and I will look out for Barbara and the children.” It was a sacredness I gladly reciprocated.

## A GREAT LOSS

David was destined to be king, and he and Jonathan planned to be side by side as David ruled. But that was not to be, for Jonathan and his brothers died with their father on Mount Gilboa at the hands of the Philistines. David was crushed with sorrow. In grief he wrote a lament, and commanded that all the men of Judah be taught it. The lament ends with these words:

**How the mighty have fallen in battle!  
Jonathan lies slain on your heights.  
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.  
How the mighty have fallen!  
The weapons of war have perished!**

([2 Samuel 1:25–27](#))

That David felt Jonathan's love was “more wonderful than that of women” would not have been said if he had a good monogamous marriage! This is testimony to the poverty of his relationships with his wives, an inevitable result of the sin of multiplying wives (cf. [Deuteronomy 17:17](#)). However, there is no hint of sensuality here, but simply a celebration of a deep friendship — Jonathan's mutuality of soul, Jonathan's commitment, Jonathan's loyalty, and Jonathan's encouragement — elements David would never know in any other relationship.

David and Jonathan's friendship shows us what a deep friendship can and ought to be. **C. S. Lewis** said, “Friendship ... is the instrument by which God reveals to each the beauties of all others.” This is certainly what the friendship of David and Jonathan does for us. It reveals the beauties that can be ours in a deep male relationship grounded in God and sets the standard for all deep friendships.