

It's My Duty

Taken From 1 Samuel 18—20

Foundation

Don't read on until you've taken time to pray first! Commit today's lesson into God's hands, then ask Him to use it in your life.

FOCUS

Have you ever been hurt by a friend who turned against you and wished for a friend who would be loyal no matter what the cost?

Jonathan couldn't help but think of his friendship with David. Ever since David had been invited to live in the palace, he and Jonathan had been friends—and it didn't take long for them to grow closer than brothers.

"Here's my robe, David," Jonathan said. "As a token of my commitment to be your friend at all costs, I want you to have it—as well as my tunic, my sword, my bow, and my belt."

David was speechless. The two of them had a bond that went beyond words. They had made an agreement to be friends for life, a covenant that David would be sure to honor as long as he lived. That covenant was tested only a short time later.

"Jonathan," David said, looking over his shoulder to make sure no one had spotted him. "Why is your father trying to kill me? What offense have I committed to deserve this?"

Jonathan remained silent for a moment, shocked by the words he heard. "It's not true, David," he replied, trying to recall anything his father might have recently said or done to make David feel this way. "You aren't going to die, for my father doesn't

do anything without confiding in me. Why would he hide this from me?" Jonathan met the concerned gaze in David's eyes, and they both stood silently together, searching for answers.

"As surely as I stand here today, I know I'm only one step away from death," David said quietly.

He glanced over his shoulder again, aware of the fact that he was being hunted. Saul had already sent his men to David's house to kill him, but David had escaped. Fleeing to Samuel in Ramah, David was soon hunted down there as well. But with God's help, David had escaped and come back to speak with Jonathan.

"Your father knows very well that we're best friends, and perhaps he is trying to keep you from being hurt by not telling you of his plans to have me killed," David suggested.

Jonathan felt heartsick. He hadn't heard of any recent plot to kill David, but what David said made sense. Jonathan knew he needed to find out what his father was thinking. If his father were trying to kill David, Jonathan would do all he could to help David escape. But if his father had no such intentions, David's running would be pointless and unnecessary.

David interrupted the silence with an idea, "Tomorrow is a festival and I am supposed to dine with your father. Instead of going, I'll hide in the field. If the king misses me, tell him I begged your permission to hurry to Bethlehem for a sacrifice that is being offered for my entire clan. If your father says, 'That's fine,' and seems unconcerned, then all is well. But if he becomes angry, you'll know that he has plans to kill me."

Jonathan saw the wisdom in David's plan and agreed to do as David suggested.

"But how will I know," David suddenly asked, "if your father answers you harshly?"

When David became king, he kept a promise he made to Jonathan almost twenty years earlier! The promise is found in 1 Samuel 20:12-17. How did he keep that promise? You can read all about it in 2 Samuel 9.

This time Jonathan had an idea. “The day after tomorrow, go to the place where you hid when this trouble began and wait by the large stone there. Toward evening I’ll come and shoot three arrows to the side of the stone as if I were shooting at a target. Then, I will send a boy to fetch them for me. As he is running to get them, I will shout directions to him, which will really be my secret message to you. If you hear me say, ‘Run farther for they are beyond you,’ you will know that you need to run for your life. If you hear me shout, ‘The arrows are on this side; bring them here,’ you will know that all is safe and that your life is not in danger.”

David agreed, and he and Jonathan sealed their commitment to each other with a pledge. “May God be with you, David, as he once was with my father. May He cut off your enemies from before you—but please remember me and treat my descendants kindly,” Jonathan asked.

David promised he would, considering it his duty as a friend.

“What?” Saul roared when Jonathan told him why David wasn’t at the feast. “You’re a worthless son! As long as David lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established,” Saul raged. “Now send for David and bring him to me, for he must die!”

Jonathan looked at his father in horror. He had his answer, and he knew he had a duty to perform.

The next day Jonathan hurried out to the field. One, two, three arrows went into the sky toward the large rock in the field. “Run! Run farther, for it is beyond you!” Jonathan shouted to his helper.

“Please, David, run for your life and never forget our friendship. May God be with you as our next king!” he whispered to himself.

Footwork

This isn’t the last we hear of Jonathan helping David. Read 1 Samuel 23:15-16 in your Bible.

Saul had been pursuing David and giving him no rest. Then suddenly, Jonathan appeared. What did he do for David? (See verse 16.) Is this something you would do for a friend?



Too often we think of friendship as just having someone to hang around with or talk to. But Jonathan and David show us what true friendship means. It's making a commitment to respect, serve, and help the other person. True friendship doesn't look for what it can gain; it looks for what it can give to another. Evaluate your friendships. Are they just surface acquaintances, or are they committed friendships? It's okay to be friendly with as many people as you can, but don't confuse that with true friendship. Being a true friend is a rare quality. What type of friend are you? Could you be called a Jonathan? Use the acrostic below to test yourself.

A true FRIEND ...

F – Forgets about trying to meet his or her own needs.

R – Relies on God's love, not his or her own.

I – Isn't one to give conditions, saying, "If you do this, then ..."

E – Encourages you to grow in the Lord.

N – Never gives up on you—and stays committed, even when you don't deserve it.

D – Doesn't mind being a servant.