

Love and Devotion to Others

Bible Background • 1 Samuel 19:1-7; 23:1-18; 2 Samuel 9

Printed Text • 1 Samuel 19:1-7 | Devotional Reading • MATTHEW 5:43-48

Aim for Change

By the end of this lesson, we will EXPLORE the story of Jonathan’s defense of David when David was opposed by Saul, LONG for love and justice within the family and beyond, and GROW in love and devotion for justice for others.

In Focus

“Why are you always so much harder on Khai than me?” Dean asked. John was surprised by the question. He usually prided himself on how he treated the teenage boys equally, even though only Dean was his biological son. He showed up to their games equally; he bought them gifts of equal value; he spent equal time with each of them. But tonight when he talked with the boys about their report cards, his stepson Khai had exploded at him and stormed out. Dean continued, “You always rag on him for making bad grades, even when my grades are basically the same. He tries really hard in school, even in Advanced Physics, but it’s never enough for you.” John was shocked that Dean would speak so bluntly to him. Usually, Dean was the sensible one, unlike Khai who... John realized what he was thinking. Maybe Dean was onto something. John promised Dean he would keep better watch on how he treated them. “I’m sorry Dean,” John said. “Please go get Khai so I can apologize to him, too.” It took a minute, but Dean convinced Khai to come back and speak with their dad. John told Khai how Dean had stood up for him. “Thanks, bro,” Khai said. “I’m glad you’ve got my back.”

When have you taken a stand for a friend or family member? How has a particularly deep friendship blessed your life?

Keep in Mind

“The next morning Jonathan spoke with his father about David, saying many good things about him. ‘The king must not sin against his servant David,’ Jonathan said. ‘He’s never done anything to harm you. He has always helped you in any way he could.’” (1 Samuel 19:4, NLT)

Words You Should Know

A. Innocent (v. 5) naqi (Heb.) — Clean, clear, exempt from obligations

B. Without a cause (v. 5) chinnam (Heb.) — Without reason, gratuitously, undeservedly

Say It Correctly

Ashkelon. ASH-keh-lon.

Ekron. EHK-ron.

KJV

1 Samuel 19:1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself:

3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good:

5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.

7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

NLT

1 Samuel 19:1 Saul now urged his servants and his son Jonathan to assassinate David. But Jonathan, because of his strong affection for David,

2 told him what his father was planning. "Tomorrow morning," he warned him, "you must find a hiding place out in the fields.

3 I'll ask my father to go out there with me, and I'll talk to him about you. Then I'll tell you everything I can find out."

4 The next morning Jonathan spoke with his father about David, saying many good things about him. "The king must not sin against his servant David," Jonathan said. "He's never done anything to harm you. He has always helped you in any way he could.

5 Have you forgotten about the time he risked his life to kill the Philistine giant and how the LORD brought a great victory to all Israel as a result? You were certainly happy about it then. Why should you murder an innocent man like David? There is no reason for it at all!"

6 So Saul listened to Jonathan and vowed, "As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be killed."

7 Afterward Jonathan called David and told him what had happened. Then he brought David to Saul, and David served in the court as before.

The People, Places, and Times

David. Born in Bethlehem, David as the youngest son of Jesse was a shepherd over his father's flock. As a young man, with one smooth stone David killed Goliath, a much feared giant Philistine warrior. David was a poet and musician, loyal to King Saul and close friends with Saul's heir Jonathan. God said that David was a man after His own heart (1 Samuel 13:14; Acts 13:22). Ruling according to God's principles, David was the first king to unite in the entire territory of Judah and Israel. God promised David that he would have royalty in his lineage forever. Although David had many accomplishments, he was imperfect; therefore, he stumbled and fell into sin. David recognized his sins and repented; he found forgiveness and restoration through God.

Philistines. Originally these people were seafarers until they were defeated by the Egyptians. Then they settled along with coastal areas at the southern part of Palestine, where they became the enemy of nearby Israel. The five main Philistine cities were Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Gath, and Ekron. The Philistines and the Israelites constantly fought over land. On several occasions, God allowed the Israelites to be overtaken by the Philistines as punishment for their disobedience toward Him (cf. Judges 13:1). Once a monarchy was established for Israel

with Saul as king, Israel started to prevail over the Philistines, turning the tide of the war by killing the Philistines' champion warrior, Goliath. The giant Goliath was so fierce and famous a warrior that Jonathan refers to him as "the Philistine" (v. 5).

Background

God stripped the kingdom of Israel from Saul because he did not follow God's direct orders and sought to justify his decision with half-hearted obedience (1 Samuel 15). But God is never without or in lack, so He raised and anointed David to succeed Saul as the next king of Israel (1 Samuel 16). David was the least likely among his brothers to be king. Although a young boy, David had a heart for God, and because he was a shepherd, David spent many hours alone with His Creator in intimate fellowship. Also, as a shepherd, he fought to protect his sheep, and God developed his skill as a warrior. David went from fighting animal predators tending his father's flock, to the battlefield as a man of war, fighting most notably the Philistines starting with their nine-foot champion Goliath (1 Samuel 17). As a reward for his brave fight in the name of the Lord, King Saul asked David to live in the palace, where he played the harp for him and served in his army (1 Samuel 18). Feelings of love and honor would soon shift as King Saul exhibited irrational behavior because of David's growing success in battle and fame.

Are you able to celebrate others? How do you handle the success of those around you?

At-A-Glance

1. Love Tested (1 Samuel 19:1-3)
2. Love Intercedes (vv. 4-7)

In Depth

1. Love Tested (1 Samuel 19:1-3)

David became famous throughout Israel for his skill as a warrior and was put in a high position in Saul's house. One of the greatest blessings from David's service to Saul was the friendship he developed with his son Jonathan. The two young men became fast friends and to signify this covenant relationship, Jonathan gave David his royal robe as the son of the king, his military tunic, sword, bow and belt as a commander and leader in the king's army (1 Samuel 18:1-4). Because of his humility, the Spirit of the Lord was with David, and He compelled Jonathan and Saul to acknowledge God's power in him. However, King Saul also grew jealous and more fearful of David's fame. A tormenting spirit drove the king to make multiple attempts on David's life (1 Samuel 18:6-11, 21-25). King Saul ordered his son Jonathan and all of his servants to kill David. Jonathan recognized his father's erratic behavior. Rather than follow through with his father's plot, Jonathan warned David. He met with David secretly and because of their covenant friendship, he vowed to speak to his father on his behalf. Jonathan knew David was honorable and hoped he could respectfully disagree with his father and bring peace to Saul's soul.

Should you confront someone you love when they are wrong?

2. Love Intercedes (vv. 4-7)

Jonathan met with his father Saul, and as he said he would. He spoke well of David, pleading for his safety. He pointed out that David had in no way wronged the king and that his actions had been nothing but honorable. Jonathan went on to remind the king of all the good David had done for him, and the nation, by risking his life to defeat Goliath. Through David, the Lord had blessed Israel. He reminded his father how he too rejoiced as David triumphed. Jonathan could not understand why his father was so enraged to shed innocent blood for no

valid reason. The prince hoped that his bond with his father would be enough to convince him to rethink his actions. Jonathan, for a moment, was successful in reaching his father, and Saul listened to his advice. The king swore to his son before the Lord that he would not have David killed. However, Saul's promise would be short lived and broken.

Recall a situation where you had to be the peacemaker and settle disputes with a relative or church members. How did you handle it?

Search the Scriptures

1. What did Saul order Jonathan and his servants to do (1 Samuel 19:1)?
2. What did Jonathan say to his father in response to his plans to kill his best friend (vv. 4-5)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. What was the significance of David and Jonathan's relationship? What does it mean to have a friend who sticks closer than a brother?
2. How did Saul's jealousy drive his actions toward David? How did he relate to his own son?

Liberating Lesson

No matter the relationship, as Christians, we must not be silent when someone is wrong, because it affects the whole. We can disagree respectfully, and if the parties are in Christ, there should be avenues to gain quick and peaceful resolution. Paul admonishes the church at Corinth in matters of dispute to forgive and comfort those who have offended as well as to reaffirm love, in this way the devil is not allowed a foothold to cause further damage in relationships or to the whole (2 Corinthians 2:5-11). Those in leadership in the home, church, work, and community should serve as models for reconciling behavior to support the well being of others.

Application for Activation

As believers, our loyalty must align with biblical principles. It is a disservice to the offender not to call attention to the error, but correction must be orderly and respectful, not judgmental and self-righteous. A process is necessary to resolve issues and concerns: hold a meeting, and invite an objective and trusted mediator to help deal with hurt feelings and misunderstood words. Seek to understand each other's perspective; be quick to recognize your role in communication breakdown, and set up some norms for future interaction. The foundation of every relationship should be love for God and each other.

Follow the Spirit

What God wants me to do:

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned:

More Light on the Text

1 Samuel 19:1-7

David had become far too popular for Saul's liking. After David killed the great giant Goliath and ended the war with the Philistines, the song sung in the streets was "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7). From that time on, Saul mistrusted David. In a murderous rage, Saul twice tried to spear David as he again took up his post as the court musician. Then Saul sent David out as a commander of the army, hoping the Philistines would kill him. David, however, carried the Lord's blessing and prospered as a military leader, gaining much popular support. Saul feared David would usurp his throne, either from himself or from his son (cf. 1 Samuel 20:30). Saul's son Jonathan, however, loved David dearly and was happy for David to rule after Saul. Saul had lost the Lord's blessing as king because of disobedience. When the prophet Samuel told Saul of God's decision, Saul accidentally tore Samuel's robe. The prophet explained that the robe (Heb. me'il, meh-EEL) symbolized Saul's torn kingship (1 Samuel 15:27-28). When David first became well known at court, Jonathan gave him many gifts to symbolize their covenanted friendship, including his royal robe, me'il (1 Samuel 18:4). With that gift, Jonathan has already assured David by action (and later will by word, 1 Samuel 23:17) that David is going to be the next king, and Jonathan looks forward to that divinely appointed reign. Saul is the only one upset by God's guidance of the nation.

1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

After failing several times to either kill David himself or send him into danger where he could be killed, Saul tells others about his desire that David should die. Many translations render the Hebrew here along the lines of "they should kill David," implying that Saul is commanding his son and servants to do his dirty work for him. However, the Hebrew is not explicit as to whom Saul intends to do the killing. The verbal form allows a translation of "he spoke to [them] about killing David." He is letting them in on the objective, hoping for their help with the planning and execution.

2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret place, and hide thyself: 3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou art, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

Jonathan, however, has no interest in killing his best friend. Jonathan reminded the king that he had previously claimed to delight in David's victories against the Philistines (19:5) as Jonathan had (18:22). Jonathan is uniquely qualified to be a mediator between David and Saul since he is close to both of them, one by blood and one by choice. Both men trust Jonathan and Jonathan knows the importance of communication. He begins the mediation by speaking privately with David and sharing his plan to speak privately with Saul. Jonathan's words show how seriously he takes this situation. He pleads earnestly for his friend to seek safety, adding "I pray thee" to his instructions. In sharing his plan to talk with his father, he emphasizes the personal pronouns: "I myself will go out" and "I myself will commune (i.e. talk)" with Saul. He will not trust this touchy part of the plan to anyone less knowledgeable of the situation or less ingratiated with both parties. Jonathan himself will look after his friend. As soon as he hears Saul's desire to murder David, Jonathan comes up with a plan to stop him. Jonathan hopes to talk sense into his father. This is the first time David goes to hide in the field while Jonathan tries to talk Saul out of killing him. This time it works. Next time, David will have to live as an outcast for the rest of Saul's reign (20:5, 42).

Jonathan shows great courage in standing up for David against Saul. Saul has already thrown spears at David (18:11). Saul believes that David opposes his political power. Saul is the king; he is within his legal rights to order a subject's death, even without cause. Further, Saul is Jonathan's father, the patriarch and elder in a society very much still reliant on family ties for strength. It is presumptuous for Jonathan to even think he has a better plan than Saul. To actually follow through and speak against his father's plans is courageous. Jonathan allows his desire for justice to override his social role as a son. Jonathan's plan is to take Saul out into a field to

talk with him about David. He will remove Saul from his court and its distractions. The throne room would physically remind Saul of his recent attempt on David's life and would remind Saul of David's presumed threat to the throne. Most importantly, speaking out in the field takes Saul away from all his court officials, who expect Saul to lead in a certain way. Jonathan lets Saul have space to change his mind about David privately so the king can save face, making him more likely to agree with Jonathan.

4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works have been to thee-ward very good: 5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest it, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

Jonathan takes Saul out in private and has the courage to call it like it is, even to his own father, even to his king. He gives his father many reasons for not killing "his servant." Jonathan warns Saul that killing David would be a sin. David is innocent and has in no way earned death (Deuteronomy 19:10, 21:8, 27:25). Jonathan reminds Saul that he has nothing to fault David on, no outright sins and no faulty work in his service. David has shown his usefulness to Saul both with his music, which soothes Saul when he is plagued by an evil spirit and with his sword, which has killed Goliath and many other Philistines. Just as all Sunday School children know the story of David and Goliath, the story seems to be popular even soon after it first occurred. Significant time has passed since that battle with the Philistines. David has won military honor in many other fights, including killing two hundred Philistines as a bride-price to marry Saul's daughter. Yet, Jonathan speaks of how David "slew the Philistine," meaning Goliath. Even without the other military exploits, David would have won lasting fame and goodwill in Israel. Showing great wisdom, Jonathan brings the whole situation back to God. David did the killing, but "the LORD wrought a great salvation" (v. 5). In this way, Jonathan urges Saul to forget his petty squabble and trust in God's plan for the country. Every God-follower's main goal should be to glorify God and do His work. How important it is to surround ourselves with godly friends, who lead us to accept God's will rather than continue in bitterness that our blood-family might model. Jonathan reminds Saul that instead of hating David for his military victories, he should be glad that God has been helping Saul's nation survive. Jonathan knows not to mention how all the people of Israel support David, but he does remind Saul of the times when he too loved David and David's actions. Saul himself "didst rejoice" because of David's actions. Jonathan asks, "Wherefore then..." or "So why..." did Saul want to punish David for those same actions now? In his last question to Saul, Jonathan returns to his first point, that killing David would be a sin. Jonathan does not strictly appeal to the law, though. "Innocent" (Heb. naqi, naw-KEY) and "without a cause" (Heb. chinnam, kheen-NOM) are not legal terms. Jonathan does not mean to clear David as though in a court of law. He speaks with Saul informally. He has not built up an air-tight case for David; he has spoken out of his heart. He speaks about a friend, not a defendant. Jonathan knows Saul's change of heart against David is a move of emotion, rather than logic. Therefore, he makes an emotional appeal to Saul to change his mind. Much could be praised in Jonathan's show of devotion to his friend. Don't we all want a friend who can sing our praises like Jonathan does David's? Even though our friends hold so much sway in our lives as children and teenagers, adults often struggle to gain and maintain friendships with their peers. This leads to unhealthy isolation. Adult responsibilities of caring for a house, a household, and a job outside of these mean we must consciously take time to foster friendships. The good thing, though, is that all it takes is time. You do not have to maintain a certain activity, schedule, or setting; you simply need to mindfully spend time with people to grow deep friendships.

6 And Saul hearkened unto the voice of Jonathan: and Saul sware, As the LORD liveth, he shall not be slain.

Saul has listened to all of Jonathan's arguments: killing David would be a sin, he has treated Saul well, he has risked his life for the nation, he is a war-hero, God has used him, Saul himself has appreciated David's work in the past, shedding innocent blood is—again—a sin, and Saul has nothing to fear from David. Faced with this mountain of reasoning, Saul relents. He "hearkened" (Heb. shema', shaw-MAH) to Jonathan's voice. This word implies that one not only hears what is spoken but also obeys it. Saul swears not to kill David. "As the LORD

liveth” was a common oath formula, especially during the monarchical period. It is an oath calling God as a witness to this promise Saul is making with Jonathan. This oath formula does not explicitly name a consequence for failing to fulfill the oath, but since God takes oaths so seriously (Numbers 30:2), it is sure to be severe. Jonathan will use this phrase in a later episode with David and uphold his oath (1 Samuel 20:21). Hearing this oath from Saul does not guarantee David’s safety, though. Saul has previously broken an oath he swore: “as the LORD liveth” (1 Samuel 14:39, 45). That time it was in Jonathan’s favor. This current vow will eventually be broken also. For the time being, however, Saul promises not to kill David. In fact, he not only promises that he himself will not kill David, but that David “shall not be slain.” The use of passive voice here keeps Saul honest from trying to skirt the law later on. Had he merely promised that he would not kill David, he still could have ordered someone else to kill David for him. This is exactly what he tried to do earlier without success as he sent David to fight Philistines. This oath now commits Saul from trying to harm David, even indirectly.

7 And Jonathan called David, and Jonathan shewed him all those things. And Jonathan brought David to Saul, and he was in his presence, as in times past.

Only open communication can bring about an open reconciliation. Jonathan calls to his friend and reports the outcome of his conversation with Saul. With Saul having promised David’s safety, both can return to Saul’s court with everything back “as in times past.” This phrase means David has returned to his position playing his harp for Saul. Saul continues to keep David at the royal house, to keep an eye on him instead of letting him go to his hometown where he can raise up a village of people who might support David rather than Saul (1 Samuel 18:9). As the last step in his work as a mediator, Jonathan presents David to Saul himself. Jonathan’s presence affects both men. It reminds Saul of the promise the king made to Jonathan before God, and it reassures David that nothing bad will happen since Saul would not challenge both of them. The peace Jonathan has achieved here is only temporary. Just two verses after this episode, Saul will again try to spear David as he plays for the court, and David will have to flee for his life. Even a temporary peace, however, is worthwhile. Jesus promises

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9). Jonathan has proven himself to be a child of God in this matter. He knows his position as the child of Saul is far less important than being marked as a child of God.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Timothy, My Brother, and Coworker
(1 Thessalonians 3:1-6)

TUESDAY

David Slays Philistine with a Stone
(1 Samuel 17:41-51)

WEDNESDAY

David and Jonathan Bond Together
(1 Samuel 18:1-5)

THURSDAY

Saul Jealous of and Fears David
(1 Samuel 18:12-18)

FRIDAY

Jonathan Asserts David as Next King
(1 Samuel 23:14-18)

SATURDAY

David Provides for Jonathan's Son Mephibosheth
(2 Samuel 9:1-10)

SUNDAY

Saul Promises to Preserve David's Life
(1 Samuel 19:1-7)