

Friendship

When I think of a good example of friendship that most of us will recognize, *The Fox and the Hound* comes to my mind first. In this classic animated movie, a young fox named Tod and hound pup named Copper, though mortal enemies by nature, become the best of friends. When they are young and innocent, they swear that they will always be friends, but as they grow older, they slowly become enemies. At the end of the movie, after Copper has been hunting down Tod, they return to their child-like state of unbreakable friendship and even attempt to lay down their lives for the other's sake while fighting a giant black bear. Having grown up with dogs in the country, this movie about undying loyalty can move me to tears multiple times.

Friendship might be one of your top priorities at the moment. At your age, most of you are spending about as much time with your friends and peers as with your family. You might also be very concerned about having friends at all, or whether your friends really like you or not. Friendship is a great thing, and it should be held carefully, according to what God has decreed. If you remember from last week's lesson on manhood and womanhood, we heard God say in Genesis 2 that it is not good for man to be alone. Every person is made for relationships—and all kinds of them. Man and woman are made for loving each other, mankind is made for ruling the earth, and men and women are made for knowing God. Friendship is another kind of relationship that God has given to us. Friendship is a gift from God, and the companionship, comradery, comfort, and correction we receive in it are all his blessings. It is such a relief to have someone you are comfortable to be yourself around, receive good counsel from, and enjoy life with.

Proverbs 13:20 gives us some familiar advice: **“Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”** Here, the Bible very plainly tells us that we become like the people with whom we spend our time. This undeniable fact will play out before your eyes many times in your life. Little sayings, mannerisms, attitudes, actions, and beliefs become passed around among friends as they rub off on one another. If our friends, whom we admire and respect, do something, we are very likely to do it, too. We have strong desires to fit in and impress others, which often drives us to do things that we would not otherwise do in different settings. The choice of your friends matters greatly. As this proverb says, there are consequences of health and harm from the friends you have.

The classic example of friendship in the Bible is the intense friendship between David and Jonathan, which is told in the book of 1 Samuel. In the book of 1 Samuel, Israel establishes their first king, Saul. Although Saul is their first king, he becomes a bad, disobedient king, which

leads God to choose a different person to be king, which is David. Saul's firstborn son was named Jonathan, who was prince in his kingdom and next in line to the throne. Jonathan was a bold warrior who trusted in the LORD, unlike his father, Saul. David's, Saul's, and Jonathan's paths cross at last whenever David kills Goliath in the name of the LORD to defend Israel. Jonathan meets David for the first time when David kills Goliath, and instantly, Jonathan makes a friendship with David. This event happens in 1 Samuel 18:1-5, which I am asking you to read.

In this passage we learn about what it takes to actually make friends with someone. First, we see that kindness is the first part of making a friendship. David was a great, good-natured, kind, and strong young man, and this drew Jonathan to him like a moth to a light, and he desired to be friends with him. Secondly, we see that being authentic, being yourself, is necessary for a making a true friendship. David did not boast about doing things that he actually could not do, and he did not act like someone he was not. He humbly admitted who he was as genuine person, and this was crucial for the starting of Jonathan and David's friendship. Do not try to become someone else just to have certain friends. Those friendships never turn out well in the end. Finally, we see David and Jonathan's courage to be open and authentic with one another. They both put themselves out there, willing to face embarrassment and awkwardness for the sake of gaining a good friend. It takes courage to make friends. It is hard, but well worth it.

We see from David and Jonathan's example that friendship is about giving and receiving. Friendship—all relationships—require giving yourself to others and receiving them as they are, loving and guiding them. David and Jonathan's friendship was marked by admiration, respect, and appreciation for one another. It was also marked by strong, faithful commitment to one another, even when their lives were on the line. Their friendship was also marked by humble service to one another; they did not try to compete and put each other down, but they sought to strengthen one another. In other words, their friendship was marked by brotherly love. Let their example shape your friendships, and help you become a better friend.

Probably the most dramatic episode in the story of David and Jonathan is in 1 Samuel 20, which you should read. I will not include it or summarize it in detail due to its lengthiness, but I do want to draw out an important point from it concerning friendship. In this chapter we not only see David and Jonathan's unwavering loyalty to one another, but also we see their unwavering loyalty to the LORD. Both David and Jonathan are both first committed to God, and then to one another. We see this throughout their conversation in this turbulent chapter. This is what makes a

good friendship: being foremostly committed to God. You must follow God, and have his friendship if you are to be a good, wise, admirable friend to other people. When you are first committed to God, you might have to make tough decisions, or say hard things to your friends when they might want to do something that is contrary to the Lord. But remember, standing up for what is right and godly is always doing the best thing. It is best for your friendship if you always do what is pleasing to God, even if it makes your friends upset or angry. You are being a true friend to them when you love the Lord first with all of your heart.

One last thing I want us to consider from the example of David and Jonathan is that all friendship is fleeting. David and Jonathan's friendship comes to a sad end in the closing chapters of 1 Samuel when Jonathan is killed in a battle against the Philistines. When David hears of it, he writes a dirge in 2 Samuel 1, lamenting the death of Saul and Jonathan. From year to year, your friendships are subject to change. You may have a friendship that you hold through many years, but there will be certain seasons where you see them more or less often. Making friends, keeping friends, and losing friends is the way things are—the way God has planned things. You probably should know that many people's grade school and high school friends are not usually the friends that they still have throughout their life. If they are still friends when they are adults, then they probably do not see them as often as they used to. I say this to give you some counsel for your friendships now. Do not get caught up and worried sick about the relationships you have now thinking that they are what matter most in the world. Do not feel inferior if you do not have as many friends as other people. Make the friendships you have now count while you still have them. Make the most of them, even if they only last half a school year. Always be a good, kind friend. And be a committed, loyal friend even if there is some new distance between you and your friend. Do not squander the gifts God has given you.

Finally, remember that Jesus has called us his friends in John 15:12-15. As many of our best hymns say, there is no friend like Jesus. He is always faithful, always kind, and always helpful. He is far more admirable than David or Jonathan. Jesus actually laid down his life for us because he loved us so much, with so much loyalty and steadfastness. Whether you have many friends, or none, the best friend that you will ever have is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Our friendship with him will never pass away. Therefore, be committed to him first in your life, and you will have companionship that gives life and gives it abundantly.