

Life Lesson 66  
*David and Jonathan*  
Text: I Samuel 20

Introduction

“What have I done to make your father hate me?” David asked his friend, Jonathan.  
“Why does he want to kill me?”

“I think he’s over being mad at you,” Jonathan replied. “If he planned to kill you, he would tell me about it.”

“I think he won’t tell you because he knows we are best friends. There is just a step between me and death, Jonathan,” David answered.

David and Jonathan were close friends. They were friends even though Jonathan’s father Saul had tried to kill David several times. Once David climbed out the window to escape death. Another time Saul sent messengers to kill him. God made the messengers prophesy, or preach, instead. Saul sent another group of soldiers. They wound up preaching, too. Even when Saul went himself to try to kill David, he found he couldn’t. Now they had a sort of truce, but David wasn’t sure he could trust King Saul.

The Story

“Tomorrow is a special feast day and King Saul will expect me to be there,” David said. “If he asks you where I am, tell him I’ve gone to have a special feast with my family in Bethlehem. If he doesn’t mind, that means he didn’t have plans to kill me tomorrow. If he gets mad, then we’ll know he planned to do something terrible to me.”

“All right,” Jonathan said. “If my father is mad, I’ll tell you.”

They promised each other once again that they would be friends, no matter what. They promised they would always be kind to each other’s families. They were such good friends that a promise like that wasn’t hard for them.

“We need a code,” Jonathan said. “You stay here in this field and hide. I’ll shoot three arrows into the field. If I say to the boy with me, ‘The arrows are on this side of you,’ you will know that you are safe. My father isn’t mad at you. If I say, ‘The arrows are behind you,’ you’ll know that your life is in danger. You must run and hide.”

David agreed and hid in the field to wait for Jonathan’s signal.

That night David’s place at the table was empty. Saul didn’t think much about it. David could have been delayed. When the second night of the feast came, Saul looked at David’s place. It was empty again.

‘Where is David?’ King Saul asked Jonathan.

“He has gone to a special feast with his family in Bethlehem,” Jonathan replied. He watched his father anxiously. How would he react? Would he be angry? Did he still want to kill David?

“You idiot!” Saul screamed. “Don’t you think I know you are protecting him? What are you – stupid or something? Don’t you know that as long as David is alive, you won’t be king? Go get him and bring him here so that I can kill him!”

“Why should you kill him?” Jonathan asked. “What has he ever done to you?”

That made Saul so angry that he took his javelin and threw it at Jonathan. He tried to kill his own son!

Jonathan dodged the javelin and left the room in a rage. He was so sad and ashamed of his father.

The next morning he went to the field and shot one, two, three arrows into the air.

“The arrows are beyond you, lad,” Jonathan called out sadly. “Hurry up and get them.”

He sent the boy back to the house with the arrows and waited to see if David would come out of hiding.

David came out as soon as the coast was clear. He and Jonathan hugged one another and cried.

Go in peace,” Jonathan said sorrowfully. “We will be friends forever no matter what, just like we promised.”

And so they parted, knowing they would never see each other again.

### The Life Lesson

That’s a sad story, but it shows us a good example of true friendship. Jonathan saw David taking the honor and position of leadership that he assumed to be his own. After all, Jonathan was the prince, the one in line to be king next. He was a brave warrior, too. Was he jealous? No, because a true friend isn’t jealous. A true friend is glad to see his friends become successful.

David could have blamed Jonathan for King Saul’s meanness to him. King Saul was Jonathan’s father. But, no, true friends don’t blame each other unfairly.

Jonathan saw that he would have to side with either his father or his friend. He knew his father was wrong, so he endangered his own life and his future position to warn David. That’s true friendship!

I hope you, too, are a true friend. Are you loyal to your friends or do you talk about them behind their backs? Do you blame them when things go wrong? Will you stick with them when everyone else is mad at them?

What would you do if your best friends made a stupid mistake in a ball game. The crowd was booing and everyone on the team was furious. Would you stick up for him and encourage him? You would if you were a true friend.

What would you do if you heard some people gossiping about a friend of yours? Would you listen or would you defend him? You would defend him if you were a true friend.

The Bible says that a friend loveth at all times. That means when things go well and when they don’t. When your friend is in a good mood and when he is cross. When everyone else likes your friend, and when everyone else is mad at him.

The same Bible verse says that “There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”

Who do you think that might be? Jesus. He showed what a true friend is. He loved us so much, he gave up his own life for us and took the punishment we deserved. Not only did he do that, but He did it while we were still fighting against him.

I hope you have Jesus as your best friend. I hope, too, that you are a true friend like Jonathan and David were.

## Review Questions

Who was David's best friend?

*Prince Jonathan*

Why didn't David trust Saul?

*Saul was jealous and kept trying to kill David.*

What did Saul do when he found out that David wasn't coming to the feast?

*He became so angry he tried to kill Jonathan, his own son.*

What the code that Jonathan used to let David know if his father was mad or not?

*He shot arrows in the field. If he said, "The arrows are on this side of you, lad" to the boy who helped him during archery practice, it was safe. If he said, "The arrows are beyond you," it wasn't safe for David to come back.*

What did David and Jonathan promise to each other?

*That they would always be friends and would be kind to the families of the other.*

Did Jonathan hate David because David would be the king?

*No*

Who is our very best example of a true friend?

*Jesus*