

Spiritual Friendships
1 Samuel 18-20
Small Group Discussion

Opening question:

- Other than someone in your family, who is the best friend you ever had? What made that person a great friend?

READ: During this small group, we're continuing in our series called "Rhythm of Life"; exploring together aspects of our everyday lives that help us further understand and enjoy our relationship with the Living God. This series is prompted by a book called *God In My Everything: How an Ancient Rhythm Helps Busy People Enjoy God*, by Ken Shigematsu. Last week we talked about **being nurtured by the life-giving "food" of Scripture**. Today we're talking about the importance and benefit of friendships – specifically, what we'll call **SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIPS**.

1. First, what do you already know about Jonathan & David from the Bible? Who were they?¹

TAKE TURNS READING 1 SAMUEL 18:1-4

2. What could possibly be common ground for these two? What could possibly make Jonathan "love David as himself," which it states twice just in this passage alone?
3. What is the significance of Jonathan removing his weapons and handing them to David? Is there anything practical that we might take from this example with regard to deepening our friendships?
4. Why do you think the Bible records the depth of David and Jonathan's friendship? What purpose does it serve?

TAKE TURNS READING 1 SAMUEL 20:12-17

5. What do you learn about Jonathan's character from this passage? (Hints: What does he recognize about David's future? What does he acknowledge about God?)
6. The specific nature of Jonathan's request in vv. 14-15 is very important in the overarching story of Scripture. What do you think is the significance of Jonathan requesting from David "unfailing kindness *like the LORD's kindness*?" Hint: Why does God show kindness to people? (Throughout the Old Testament, God shows kindness to his people because of his promises to their ancestors, and simply because he is gracious and compassionate. So if David is going to show kindness to Jonathan's family, it will be because of the promise made in this moment, and not necessarily because of any of their merits).

¹ From Andy Boucher's sermon: "Let's take a moment to consider some background: Jonathan was the eldest son of King Saul. That means that by birthright, Jonathan is essentially the next King over the nation of Israel. David is the 8th and youngest son of a sheep farmer from Bethlehem...! Furthermore, they were direct competitors for the throne – as we said it was Jonathan's destiny, but David had recently been anointed by the prophet Samuel, whom God had directly told that David was indeed to succeed Saul as King."

READ 2 Samuel 9:1-7. This takes place after Jonathan and King Saul have died in battle, and David has assumed the throne.

7. Out of what motivation does David seek a descendant of Saul? (v. 1) What does this show you about David's love for Jonathan and David's character?
 - a. How could we view David here as a "type" of Christ? How does his interaction with Mephibosheth throw light on the way that God treats us in Christ?
8. In Sunday's sermon, Andy Boutcher made this claim: "There are some people you will meet in this life who can satisfy the longings of your SOUL in a way that a spouse, a boyfriend or girlfriend doesn't."
 - a. Do you agree or disagree?
 - b. What role does gender play in this type of spiritual friendship? In other words, is there any danger to having close opposite sex relationships aside from your spouse? Explain.
9. The author of 1 Samuel uses the term "one in spirit" to describe how David and Jonathan related to one another.
 - a. What do you think it means to be "one in spirit" with someone? What does that look like?
 - b. Have you ever had this type of "spiritual friendship with someone"? Describe.
10. Andy Boutcher quoted Ken Shigematsu during his sermon, "No one has a 360-degree perspective in life. Just as there is a blind spot in the retina of the eye, there is also a blind spot in the soul where we cannot see the truth about ourselves. A spiritual friend will identify our blind spot with love, but they *will* identify it... A true friend will name the attitudes and actions that are causing us to drift *from* God even as they actively point us *to* God."
 - a. Do you have this type of friend who can point out your blind spots?
 - b. How can we better invite people to point out our blind spots?
 - c. How do you feel about doing this? Does it make you anxious, uncomfortable, peaceful, supported?
11. It's been said, "You can't give what you don't have." How can we better connect with the love of our friend Jesus? How does our friendship with him enable us to pursue deep, authentic friendships with others?
12. Practical steps: Andy suggested 4 practical ways of cultivating spiritual friendships: 1) Face to face contact; 2) Play together; 3) Serve together; 4) Pray together. Is there some friend in your life with whom you should pursue one or more of these activities?

SHARE AND PRAY

- Among our usual prayer requests, let's pray that we will take the risk to seek out spiritual friendships as well as offer those to others as trust grows.

RESOURCES (opportunities to develop deeper friendships):

- Ministry fair right here at TVC after church on Sunday October 25th.
- Small groups (almost every night of the week around the Three Village area).
- Men's group each Saturday morning.
- Women's bible studies.
- Our annual women's retreat.
- The upcoming men's retreat (NOVEMBER 5-6!).