

March 20, 2016  
Sunday Morning Service  
Series: The Life of David  
Community Baptist Church  
643 S. Suber Road  
Greer, SC 29650  
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## CONTRASTING RESPONSES TO A GODLY MAN 1 Samuel 18:1-16

This part of David's story is a great study in relationships and a study in contrasts. On one hand, we have Jonathan whose heart was knit to David's heart. On the other hand, we have Saul, Jonathan's father, who knew a quality guy when he saw him, but at the same time grew jealous of David and rejected him. Jonathan quickly decided to be on David's team even though it meant self-sacrifice to do so. Saul chose the downward route of jealousy, which led to anger, which led to suspicion, which led to fear and finally death.

The lessons of the text are rather obvious and very useful. We will make or not make relationships all our lives. At times we will be forced into various levels of relationships, some of which will make us uncomfortable. How do we manage these things? What if someone makes us angry? What if we have to work with someone who looks like a celebrity, has the intellect of Einstein, the talent of Beethoven, the wealth of Croesus, and yet loves the Lord?

People who really trust the LORD (not just talk about faith) are comfortable with how God made them, and how God chooses to use them. I have said on various occasions in the past that most of the problems I have encountered in the Body of Christ are Romans 12:3 problems. Remember that Paul warned us in that text, *For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned (Romans 12:3).*

Jonathan was a Romans 12:1-2 kind of guy. It would appear from the brief biographical information the Bible gives that he loved God, meditated on God, and conformed his life to God's will because

he trusted God. He really enjoyed his relationship with David, the man who God was using in very special ways to become the new king of Israel. Like Jonathan, if we are walking in trusting fellowship with God, we will probably be rightly related to other people who are walking in trusting fellowship with God.

Father Saul, on the other hand, practiced a different kind of relationship with David. He was out of sorts with God and so he was out of sorts with David. He thought more highly of himself than he should have. He was of the humble opinion that he should remain king of Israel and the Jonathan should take his place when he died. That pride was in conflict with God's plan. Therefore, Saul didn't relate well with the man who God was blessing.

The lesson is simple. We need to stay in right relationship with God if we want to be in right relationships with God's people.

### Some People Love Godly People (vv.1-5).

In a miracle of His grace, God knit the hearts of David and Jonathan (vv.1-4). On the surface it appeared that both father Saul and son Jonathan had a like heart for David (vv.1-2). As we work through the story, we will discover that such was not the case. Jonathan truly loved God's servant. *As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul (v.1).*

Jonathan's response to David is a prime example of the very important principle Jesus taught. When asked to state the greatest command Jesus said it was "Love God supremely and love your neighbor like yourself." In the text before us, it is pretty clear that Jonathan loved David as he loved his own soul. What was there about David that drew this incredible love out of Jonathan?

First, as an aside, it is likely that Jonathan was some years older than David. It is likely that David was about eighteen years old at this time and Jonathan was near thirty. In spite of the age difference, they were of like mind and like heart. Though the Scripture does not identify Jonathan as a man after God's own heart yet they share deep faith in God. David demonstrated great faith in God when he told Goliath that he was going down because God would deliver His people (17:46-47). A few months before that, Jonathan demonstrated

the same kind of faith in God when he and his armor-bearer approached the Philistine encampment. He told his armor-bearer, *“If they say, ‘Come up to us,’ then we will go up, for the LORD has given them into our hand. And this shall be the sign to us” (1 Samuel 14:10).*

When deep faith in God is the common denominator, individuals are going to find it easy to love each other. But sometimes folks talk about faith in God and talk about love for others, but there never seems to be any evidence of a mutually helpful relationship. Such was the case here as Saul appeared to love David. *And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father’s house (v.2).* Jonathan’s soul was irresistibly drawn to David. But in his relationship with David, Saul simply did the pragmatic thing. David was skillful and gifted. He would be an asset to the king. Therefore, Saul exercised his authority as the king to “take.” He “would not allow” David to return home. King Saul was in charge, he was the controller of circumstances. Or so he thought.

Using people to your personal advantage is not at all like loving them. Even if we are in a situation of employing people, we should be so related to them as to help them achieve what is best for them. And what is best for every person is to become more like Christ. Do you love people enough to help them become like Christ, or do you just “take” people and use them for your own advantage?

Jonathan proved his heart by making a covenant with David (vv.3-4). *Then Jonathan made a covenant with David, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt (v.3-4).* A covenant was something serious. God requires people to keep the covenants we make. God’s complaint against Israel, His bride, was that she didn’t keep her covenant with Him. The New Testament writer reminded his readers, *For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord (Hebrews 8:9)*

Better for us not to make a covenant we will break than to flippantly make and break promises. James warned us, *But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, so that*

*you may not fall under condemnation (James 5:12).* God intends for us to keep our covenants, regardless of the circumstances.

In the story before us, it really looks as though Jonathan made this covenant almost impulsively. David killed Goliath and in response Jonathan made this amazing covenant. But the rest of the story proves that Jonathan kept his covenant to his own hurt. That is what real faith in God looks like. Faith in God knows that if it is right to make an agreement then it right to keep it.

Of course if the agreement is truly foolish, wisdom does not expect the person to keep it. As was the case with our four-year-old granddaughter who came home from kindergarten last week and announced to her father that she had met the man she is going to marry. Matt was quite interested and wondered who the lucky man was. He found out he is a fellow classmate in K-4. So Matt asked, “When did he ask you to marry him?” Eva said, “Oh, he didn’t ask me. I asked him.” Okay, we’re not going to enforce this covenant.

This covenant was so serious because it involved a symbol of transferring authority. This transfer of royal garments and armor seems to convey a prophetic tone in the David story. For example, earlier we read that Saul gave his armor to David who would replace him. Then David took the Philistine’s armor after he killed him. Now Jonathan, heir to the throne gave his armor to David. We see the same principle illustrated when Aaron’s priestly garments were transferred to Eleazar in anticipation of his death (Num. 20:24). Also, when Elijah gave his mantle to Elisha just before God took the elder prophet to heaven (1 Kings 19:19-21).

Somehow Jonathan understood that David was his replacement. The stuff he gave David was the best stuff available. That is what loving your neighbor looks like. The stuff he gave David actually exalted David over Jonathan in the eyes of the army. That is what great love looks like. The giving of the stuff showed Jonathan’s willingness to keep his word even to his own sacrifice. How do our relationships compare? That kind of relationship requires deep trust in God’s will.

God caused His servant to have favor with people (v.5). Even Saul seemed to favor the servant. *And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war (v.5a).* God made David successful. Saul at least recognized

the success even if he didn't see God behind it. Therefore, Saul promoted David to General when he was at the most in his early twenties.

The people agreed with the king. *And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants (v.5b)*. This statement does not imply that majority rule is always right. It does indicate that God's blessing on David was obvious to everyone. But we can see a problem beginning to brew in that everyone, including Saul's servants, really like David. Can we say, "Jealousy"?

### **Different People Respond to the Godly Person's Success Differently (vv.6-11).**

People often praise God's servant (vv.6-7). In this case a bevy of cheerleaders met the victorious army. *As they were coming home, when David returned from striking down the Philistine, the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with songs of joy, and with musical instruments (v.6)*. Apparently, along the way as the army was returning to Gibeah (Saul's home), the women in the towns and cities along the way came out singing and dancing. This was a common sight in Israel if and when something very positive happened.

As the victorious warriors walked through the towns, cheerleaders exalted the servant. *And the women sang to one another as they celebrated, "Saul has struck down his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (v.7)*. To sing a song that praised the warriors was also common. We saw the people singing and dancing and praising God when He drowned the Egyptians in the Red Sea. Many of the Psalms are praise to God for delivering His people, even individuals. Praise for victory is common, expected, normal, but it might not always be good. What? Everyone praises the hero. That is true. But these were supposedly God's people. They should have known who really won the battle, gave victory, by giving strength and wisdom to Saul and David. So why weren't the people praising God? They should have understood that God chose David, God gifted David, God guided David, God gave strength and wisdom to David.

At this point, let's make an application that seems a bit picky and definitely out of touch with modern worship. Who are people

applauding in a worship service? Isn't our worship supposed to be God-focused? So if we hear a song that reminds us of God's greatness or teaches us a new truth about God, why do we applaud the performer? If we hear a truth from the preacher that resonates with us or encourages us in the truth of God, why applaud the preacher? I understand that kind of response at a concert or a ball game or a play. I personally applaud with great enthusiasm in such venues. But isn't worshipping God a much more sacred venue than throwing balls? Maybe the root issue is that too many "worship" services are actually about worshipping the creature not the Creator.

Notice the problem that arose in David's circumstances. The cheerleaders praised Saul for killing thousands. That was figurative because he didn't kill that many. Though it was figurative, it was still praise. But in comparison, the same cheerleaders praised David for killing ten thousands. Again this figure is definitely figurative. Figurative or not, how the words must have stung the older, more experienced king. This was not wise on the cheerleaders' part. Comparison always tends to create that terrible sin of jealousy.

We are not surprised to read in this story that some people respond angrily to God's servant (vv.8-11). An angry eye is a dangerous response (vv.8-9). Jealousy causes displeasure. *And Saul was very angry, and this saying displeased him. He said, "They have ascribed to David ten thousands, and to me they have ascribed thousands, and what more can he have but the kingdom?" (v.8)*.

On the first day of Saul's and David's return from battle, the anger set in. The people's comparison caused Saul to be angry. Anger is the emotion God gave us to indicate there is a problem. God's intent is that we will deal with the problem. Either go to the other person and discuss the problem to make it go away – or determine that the problem is not that important and forget about it. Anger not dealt with leads to jealousy. Jealousy desires what someone else has. Jealousy is sin that can infect anyone.

So how do you deal with it? Back in the early 1900's G. Campbell Morgan was pastor at Westminster Chapel in London. Morgan was a wordsmith whose sermons still inspire me to this day. As a result of his spiritual gifts, people flocked to Westminster every Sunday. At the same time, F. B. Meyer was preaching at Regent Park Chapel. He confessed that the attendance at his church was meager in

comparison with Westminster caused him to be jealous of Morgan. When it became obvious to him that he was jealous, he was ashamed and confessed the sin to God. Then instead of criticizing Morgan as he had in the past, Meyer complimented him to other people and even prayed that God would bless his ministry more. God answered Meyer's prayer with the result that there was no more room for people at Westminster, and the overflow all went to hear Meyer preach which filled the seats at Regent Park. That is how you handle jealousy.

Saul didn't pray for David. Instead his jealousy caused suspicion. *And Saul eyed David from that day on (v.9)*. Saul did not share Jonathan's and David's faith in God. In the same setting where Jonathan gave the LORD credit for victory, Saul wondered why God didn't hear his prayers. *Therefore Saul said, "O LORD God of Israel, why have you not answered your servant this day?" (1 Samuel 14:41)*.

Jealousy leading to suspicion leads to major problems in any local assembly and between assemblies. We are wise to identify it quickly and deal with it. How? When someone criticizes a fellow believer, or member, or fellow pastor stop them and ask, "Why are you criticizing so and so? Are you jealous of them? Do you wish you looked like they look? Do you wish you were as intelligent as they are? Do you want their position? Do you want their popularity or acceptance? Do you want their possessions? Just what is it about the victim of your criticism that you wish you had?"

An angry spirit is even more dangerous than jealousy (vv.10-11). Saul's anger led to jealousy, which led to suspicion, which led to deep-seated anger or we might call it bitterness. God's troubling spirit combined with Saul's angry spirit was deadly. *The next day a harmful spirit from God rushed upon Saul, and he raved within his house while David was playing the lyre, as he did day by day. Saul had his spear in his hand. And Saul hurled the spear, for he thought, "I will pin David to the wall."*

Saul was very much in the flesh, but the God of salvation delivered His servant. The text says that *David evaded him twice*. Granted, David was probably pretty agile. But the fact is, God delivered David because it was His will for David to be king.

## **Some People Fear Godly People (vv.12-16).**

There are times when God's blessing on His servant causes fear (vv.12-13). Saul was afraid of David. *Saul was afraid of David because the LORD was with him but had departed from Saul (v.12)*. Different relationships with God spelled the difference here. David loved the Lord, had a heart fixed on God's will, trusted God, and God was dwelling in him. Saul was devoid of God's presence and blessing and knew it. He knew what God's blessing was like because before his rebellion against God, he too experienced it.

Saul knew what God was doing with David. *And when Saul saw that he had great success, he stood in fearful awe of him (v.15)*. How should he have responded? He should have confessed his sin of rebellion to God and repented of it. He should have humbled himself to the will of God, even though it meant losing the kingdom. He should have trusted God to do right.

Instead of doing these good and right things, Saul took steps to eliminate his fear. *So Saul removed him from his presence and made him a commander of a thousand. And he went out and came in before the people (v.13)*. This was a move of human wisdom. It made sense for Saul to try to keep David "out of town." Certainly in light of Saul's jealousy, "out of sight, out of mind" was the way to go. Making David the commander of a thousand might even have been an attempt to kill David. That is certainly in keeping with God's warning that the end of jealousy is murder. *You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask (James 4:2)*.

Saul kind of people not withstanding, God's blessing on His servant causes love (vv.14-16). The story reiterates that God made David successful. *And David had success in all his undertakings, for the LORD was with him (v.14)*. God's people loved God's servant. *But all Israel and Judah loved David, for he went out and came in before them (v.16)*. The lesson is clear, if we are God's people, we delight to see God make other people successful. Because we are God's people, we love to build relationships with others who also trust God. If we are trusting God to work in our own life, it is easier for us to trust God as He works in the lives of others.