

**May 19, 2019**  
**Everything Money CAN'T Buy**  
**1 Samuel 18:1-4**

Do you want to be happy? Of course we all do. But what is the secret of happiness? We may SAY all sorts of nice things about what makes us content, but when we look at our lives, it often looks like we believe happiness rests in having all the right things – the right house, the right car, the right job, the right vacation, etc.

But the Bible, again, and again, reminds us that what is really important are our relationships. When Jesus was asked what was the most important commandment of all he responded: *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind ... Love your neighbour as yourself"* (Matthew 22:37-39). It's all about relationships. With God. And with people. Those are what matter most.

Intuitively we know that. But our relationships are not always that great. There is stress. There are disagreements. We have been hurt. We hold grudges. We're busy people. We're tired. We're not sure how to make them better.

One of the great healthy relationships in the Bible is the friendship between David and Jonathan. This morning let's look at what makes a great friendship. It can be an encouragement for us as we try to build stronger bonds with our friends and family, as we look for ways to start over again in broken relationships, or as we make new friends.

Some background. Saul was King of Israel. During one of many wars with Israel's neighbours, a young man, David, slew the giant Goliath. From then on, David and Saul's eldest son, Jonathan, became close friends. David was a shepherd. Jonathan was the commander of a thousand soldiers in Saul's army. But something "clicked" between them and they became firm friends.

Despite very different backgrounds, they shared some things in common. Both were brave and successful soldiers and leaders. On a more sombre note, Saul tried to have both of them killed at various points (1 Samuel 14:24-45, 19:1-16).

What made their friendship work so well ...?

***1. David and Jonathon loved one another as brothers***

The kind of love described in 1 Samuel 18:1 is not romantic or sexual. In the same way, when Jesus tells us to "love our neighbour as ourselves," He is not talking about romance. We do not have romantic feelings about ourselves (I hope). But we do have a deep, abiding, commitment to care for ourselves and to do what's best for ourselves.

English, unfortunately, has only word for love – the word “love” covers romance, sex, family love, and self-sacrificing love. Other languages have multiple words for love, from romantic/sexual love (eros), to brotherly love (philia), to unconditional, sacrificial love (agapé). We know those are different.

David and Jonathon’s love is this latter kind – a deep, sacrificial commitment to care for one another – a commitment to what’s best for the other in all circumstances.

What does this kind of love look like? Our ultimate model is Jesus Himself. The story of God’s love is that when people were unlovable (verbally and physically abusing Jesus, falsely accusing Him, ultimately killing Him), God still loved us. *“While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:7). God’s love is unconditional, unlimited, unrelenting, and unending. It’s not about feelings (I don’t think Jesus “felt” love-y feelings on the cross). It is about action: *“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:12-13).

Our love for others is not so much about feelings as action, too. C.S. Lewis advises: *“Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbour; act as if you did. As soon as we do we discover one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.”*

Love of this sort means we choose, as an act of the will, to have a commitment to do what’s best for others, no matter what the cost. Our love is unconditional, unlimited, unrelenting, and unending. This doesn’t come naturally. With God’s help we *can* do it.

In practical terms it may mean taking the first step toward reconciliation with someone else (even though the other person may be in the wrong). It may mean forgiving. It may mean reprioritizing our time. It may mean making a phone call or writing a letter. It may mean biting your tongue when you’re tempted to criticize. It may mean avoiding the tendency to argue. It may mean choosing to say less and listen more.

True friends have an unconditional, unlimited, unrelenting, and unending love.

## ***2. David and Jonathon shared their lives***

Relationships grow when people share. Jonathan gave his deep, sincere friendship to David even risking his own life to care for his friend (1 Samuel 20).

We all have things we can share with our family and friends. That’s why we give gifts at Christmas and birthdays. (Don’t we say, *“the best gifts are those that come from the heart”* or *“it is more blessed to give than to receive”*). The best gifts are symbols, expressing the depth of love that’s in our relationship. We don’t care what we get as much as we care about what the gift says about our relationship with the giver.

Gifts are most precious when we know they cost the other person something. That's what's so precious about the gift of forgiveness and life God gives us in Jesus Christ. It cost Jesus his life. It cost God everything. That's as precious and deep a love as humanly (and divinely) possible.

The most precious thing some of us have to give may not be something we can buy – it may be time. One of the greatest gifts we can give our spouse, our children, our parents, our friends may be our time.

One of the ways we grow that committed kind of love is when we do things together – praying, walking, drinking coffee, painting, philosophizing, working shoulder to shoulder. When we're with someone, we are side by side, looking in the same direction.

This is one of the progressions that happens in a romantic relationship. It begins with a man and a woman looking at each other (in opposite directions); it grows stronger as they share together so they find themselves shoulder to shoulder (looking in the same direction, moving in the same direction).

How can we share life with other people in meaningful ways?

### ***3. David and Jonathan are loyal and trustworthy friends***

David and Jonathon promise to be loyal friends (1 Samuel 18:3). That's easy in good times when we agree, and our families agree. But life involves hard times, too. Those can be the real tests. David and Saul, Jonathon's Dad, become enemies. David will need to trust Jonathan with his life (1 Samuel 20, 12-13). Many years later, David will prove how trustworthy he is by helping one of Jonathan's sons (2 Samuel 9:1-3).

Loyalty. Jesus' promise to us is that He will never leave us or forsake us; He is with us always (Matthew 28:20, John 10:28, 14:16). No matter what our circumstances, we know He is always with us. He is loyal to us. We can always trust Him.

Proverbs 17:17 reads: *"A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for adversity."* Those are words that sound wonderful in good times, but are a tremendous challenge when times are stressful. But there is great wisdom in them. Loyalty and trust mean that our spouse, our family and friends know that when the storms come – as they inevitably will – we will not sit on the sidelines, hoping someone else will do something to help. We will be there for them.

Proverbs 27:6 adds: *"Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses."* Out of loyalty and love, friends can help us become better people.

Proverbs 18:24 reads: *"A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."* This can be interpreted as a description of our relationship with God: *"You are my friends if you do what I command," says Jesus, "I no longer call you servants ... I have called you friends"* (John 15:14-15). Certainly that is very, very true. Jesus does stick closely to us, closer than a brother.

But the proverb is also intended as an encouragement to us – to be that kind of a closer-than-a-brother friend in our relationships with other people.

### ***True friends are precious***

- For which friends/family members do you thank God with all your heart today? Take time to truly thank God. True friends are precious.
- Is there a friend/family member who needs your encouragement or help through a difficult time? Ask God to help you know how you can best help. True friends are precious.
- Is there a problem in one of your relationships with a friend/family member? Pray about how you can work through the difficulties in your relationship. True friends are precious.
- Do you know someone in the church/community who needs a friend like you? True friends are precious.

Do you want to be happy? Happiness means knowing you have friends. The greatest friend you have, of course, is Jesus. Jesus is the perfect friend. He has loved you through the whole of your life. His friendship is perfect ... and it has been tested even to the point of death. He will always be there for you, always loyal, always trustworthy.

But good family and friend relationships here and now are genuine blessings as well.

Do you want to be happy? Happiness also comes from being a good friend. Jesus says, *"Love one another as I have loved you"* (John 15:12-13). It is even more blessed to give (friendship) than to receive (friendship).

- Who can you encourage today?
- Who can you call today?
- Who can you be a blessing to, today?

True friends are precious.

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First Baptist Church  
1614 – 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Lethbridge, AB T1J 0W3  
(403) 327-2082  
[bruce@firstb.net](mailto:bruce@firstb.net)