

Strengthen one another in God

David & Saul Pt.14
David & Jonathan Pt.2
1 Samuel 20:35-42, 23:16

Summary: Having friends is a matter of wisdom. They are a means of grace, so find the time. To attract a Jonathan, be a David (pursue God, not a friend). Be attracted to, not intimidated by, superior faith. And in the meantime be a Jonathan to the people in your small group. Love by faith in God's promises about what is so wonderful about the person. Help each other find strength in God by pointing to God's promises.

³⁵ In the morning Jonathan went out to the field for his meeting with David. He had a small boy with him, ³⁶ and he said to the boy, "Run and find the arrows I shoot." As the boy ran, he shot an arrow beyond him. ³⁷ When the boy came to the place where Jonathan's arrow had fallen, Jonathan called out after him, "Isn't the arrow beyond you?" ³⁸ Then he shouted, "Hurry! Go quickly! Don't stop!" The boy picked up the arrow and returned to his master. ³⁹ (The boy knew nothing of all this; only Jonathan and David knew.) ⁴⁰ Then Jonathan gave his weapons to the boy and said, "Go, carry them back to town."

⁴¹ After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together--but David wept the most. ⁴² Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'" Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

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Review

You need friends (it's a matter of wisdom)

The focus of this chapter is on the friendship of David and Jonathan and the degree to which they enjoy this friendship is amazing. From day one of the friendship Jonathan's heart was knit to David's.

1 Sam.18:1 After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David

20:17 And Jonathan ... loved [David] as he loved himself.

Jonathan was more upset about Saul's shameful treatment of David than about what he did to Jonathan. (v.34)

When they parted in v.41 there was a display of affection and warmth that was reserved in that culture only for family and your closest friends. Last week I said it was one of the purest displays of human love and loyalty in the annals of human history, and the really amazing thing is, as much as Jonathan loved David, David loved Jonathan even more! When they say goodbye in v.41 it is David who weeps the most. After Jonathan died, David said Jonathan's love was more wonderful to him even than the love of women. (2 Sam.1:26)¹ The friendship of Jonathan was deeper and more wonderful even than romantic and sexual love. So if Jonathan's love for David is one of the purest displays of human love and loyalty in the annals of human history, and David's love for Jonathan was even greater – that is some friendship.

Most don't have a Jonathan because they think it's not worth it

I think it is safe to say that most people do not have a Jonathan in their lives. Very few people have a friend who is that good a friend, and for most of us, that is by design. We are really not looking to find a friend like that. We do not have the time or the energy or the inclination. We feel we are doing just fine with our lone ranger approach, and while a good friend would be nice, it is not worth the energy and time and risk it would require to develop. We have run a cost/benefit analysis and decided that it is not

¹ The homosexual movement within the church reads this and can only see a sexual relationship between David and Jonathan.

1. The passage does not compare Jonathan's love with the love of women – it contrasts them. The point isn't that they are similar, but that they are distinct, and one was more delightful than the other. The friendship of Jonathan was not a romantic or sexual kind of love – it was deeper and more wonderful even than romantic and sexual love.

2. No scholar without a homosexual agenda can see that interpretation. Even secular, unbelieving OT scholars agree that nothing sexual is implied in this relationship. If you know anything at all about the culture of the Jewish people in David's time, and the people who were the original readers of 1 Samuel, you know they would not have taken this as a description of a sexual relationship. And whatever the original authors intended to convey to the original readers is the only thing a passage ever means. A passage can never mean what it never meant.

3. The fact that they read about one of the purest and most godly friendships ever written about in all of human literature, and they see a description of something the Bible calls wickedness, is an illustration of the truth of Titus 1:15.

Titus 1:15 To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted.

Nothing is pure to them. Nothing – not even the Holy Scriptures themselves. Their hearts are so corrupted that they defile everything they touch and everything they read, and they turn the sweetest, purest, most pristine truths into the same base, ugly, corrupted machinations of their own depraved hearts.

Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.

2 Peter 3:16 ...ignorant and unstable people distort ... the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Don't ever use the Scriptures to justify something that the Scriptures do not actually justify.

worth it. We can hardly get all our work done as it is, we are neglecting our spouse and kids and time with the Lord, so adding the burden of a time-consuming friendship into that mix right now is impossible. Most people think of friendships like that as a luxury or bonus, not an essential.

It is worth it (grace)

Which is it? We saw last week that if you read in the Psalms about the grace David received from God, you will see that it matches up with the things he received from Jonathan. God's grace came to him through Jonathan. There are times when God offers grace through people that is not offered in other ways. Is our need for the grace of God that comes only through these kinds of friendships great enough to make it worth all the trouble? Or can we live without that grace?

Any time you find yourself comparing the benefits of something to the cost to see if it is a good idea, you are seeking wisdom. So what is the wisest course when it comes to friendships? Is it wiser to go at it alone so we protect ourselves from getting hurt, and we save our time for ministry and other things? Or is it wiser to pay the price involved in pouring ourselves into friendships? The answer is in Pr.18:1.

Pr.18:1 One who isolates himself pursues selfish desires; he rebels against all sound judgment.

Anyone who decides it is not worth it to pursue deep friendships is rebelling against all sound judgment. Isolation from people, according to this proverb, is selfishness. Friendship is a matter of wisdom. The friends that are in your life are an indicator of how wise or unwise you are. (Pr.13:20, Ps.119:63)

When people are not good friends to us our tendency is to blame everyone but ourselves. We leave our church because the people are not loving enough. We point the finger at everyone else, when in reality, if you do not have Jonathan-type friends when your time of need arrives, it may very well be because of a lack of wisdom on your part. That is not always the case, but it may very well be.

Bottom line: Scripture speaks so highly about the grace of God that comes into your life through friendships that if you are not pursuing them it is not only a lack of wisdom; it is also a lack of faith. If God holds something out to us as a wonderful gift and we decide it is not worth the trouble that is unbelief. God would not offer it to us if it were not worth the trouble.

God has commanded it – so make time

God has commanded that we follow Jonathan's example and befriend people in need. He has commanded that we reach out in love and do the kinds of things that can only be done when you really know someone well (like admonish them on issues of the heart, or confess your sins to them, or help them find strength in their particular areas of weakness). God commands us to do things that cannot be done without a considerably deep level of friendship and knowledge of one another.

If you do not have time for that, remember that God does not require of us more each day than we can get done in 24 hours. So if I am neglecting some things I should be doing that means I must have some things on my plate that God did not put there. That means if you went through your schedule and dropped everything from your daily routine that God has not required of you, you would have enough time to do everything God has required of you – including investing yourself in godly friendships. If you spend the time wisely you can build a great friendship with just a couple hours a week.

But maybe you are thinking, "The problem isn't just time. I would be willing to go over and hang out with my friend...if I had a friend. My problem is I'm still waiting for Jonathan to come along."

Be a David

David found Jonathan just by being faithful

So how do you find a Jonathan? How did David do it? Did he fill out a profile on E-friendship.com? The record of how this friendship started is in the opening verses of 1 Sam.18. In chapter 17 David kills Goliath, and at the end of that chapter he is summoned to come speak with Saul. And so he has this conversation with Saul, and Jonathan is listening in on the conversation. Verse one of chapter 18 picks up right at the end of that conversation.

1 Sam.18:1 After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself.

The way David ended up with a Jonathan was by just being him self while talking to Saul. Instead of seeking a friend, seek God and watch for fellow seekers. You usually do not find a friend by looking for a friend. More often you find a friend when you are seeking something else you are passionate about, and suddenly you notice someone right next to you seeking hard after that same thing. C.S. Lewis said that friendships usually start with someone saying, “What? You too? I thought I was the only one.”

When all you are seeking is a friend, you make the friend the source that has to supply your joy, and that puts so much pressure on the other person that it usually creates frustration on both sides. But when you are seeking some other source of joy, and you find a fellow seeker who is going after that same thing right along side you, that mutual pursuit is friendship. The healthiest friendship is not when two people are seeking one another, but when they are seeking a common goal side by side.

And for the Christian that common goal is nearness to God. I heard someone this week say that the reason Jonathan and David were such good friends is because they had so much in common. David and Jonathan, aside from their faith, had almost nothing in common. The reason they instantly became such great friends is because Jonathan was seeking hard – not after a friend, but after God, and in the midst of that pursuit one day he overheard a conversation between his dad and a young man who had great faith and a heart after God’s own heart, and immediately they were kindred spirits because they were both seeking hard after the same goal.

Attracted to (rather than intimidated by) superior faith

Jonathan was a man of great faith. He had the faith to take on a whole Philistine garrison by himself at Micmash. No doubt life was pretty lonely for Jonathan growing up in the house of Saul. It is hard when you love the Lord and no one else around you does. I doubt Jonathan had ever met anyone who had as much faith in God as he did. That is a lonely, hard existence.

Then one day Jonathan goes out and there is Goliath and, possibly for the first time in his military career, Jonathan finds himself paralyzed by fear. This is too much even for his great faith. But then out of nowhere comes this amazing young shepherd who is so full of faith in God that he just energizes everyone around him. He does not hesitate for a second to go fight Goliath, and more importantly he gives all the glory and honor to God, and he loves God like no one Jonathan had ever seen. Afterward he spends some extended time talking with Saul, and Jonathan is there, listening to this great man of faith - a man whose faith was even greater than his own and his heart was immediately drawn to him.

Righteous men and women *love* being around those who are advanced beyond them spiritually. When you are around someone whose faith and whose gifts surpass yours – what is the response inside your heart? Is it a response of delight and love and attraction to that person? (If so, rejoice and thank God for those kinds of godly affections, because they are not natural. If they are in your heart they were put there by the Holy Spirit, and they should be cause of great joy.) Or is the response of your heart that of suspicion or jealousy? Do you find yourself thinking, “*Nobody is that righteous; he’s probably a phony*”? Or do you jump into justifying yourself? *I would be like that too if it weren’t for _____.*

And I'm probably better than him in the area of _____. And at least I don't _____ like I've seen him do." When you meet someone who is advanced beyond you is it delightful or is it an unpleasant experience? Are you attracted or threatened? Is your heart drawn to learn from him or do you try to imagine you are already at his level?

Pay careful attention to who your heart is drawn to – and why. That is an important indicator of love for God or the world in your heart. The heart of faith loves to see what William Blaikie called "The unseen invincible power of a righteous man in a righteous cause"² Saul saw that in David and was threatened by it; Jonathan saw that in David and loved it. He was delighted to be around a man who was his spiritual superior.

So do you want to find a Jonathan? Be a David. Do not go out looking for a Jonathan. Go out seeking hard after God, and become a man or woman after God's own heart. And if you do that you will be hated by the Sauls along the way, but sooner or later you will catch the eye of a Jonathan.

Be a Jonathan in your small group

Solves the problem of not having a friend and of time

But what about in the meantime? The arrival of Jonathan in your life may not happen for several years – what should you do about friendship right now? If you do not have Jonathan in your life, and if you do not have a lot of spare time for friendship building right now, I have an idea – a solution that addresses both the time problem and the lack of a friend problem. How about this: If you don't have a Jonathan, be a Jonathan in your small group. If God has not supplied a Jonathan in your life, then stop looking for a Jonathan and just be a Jonathan. Finding someone who would make the ideal friend for you is hard. What is not hard is coming to church and finding someone who needs a good friend. There are plenty of lonely people who would love to have you as a friend.

Even if you cannot carve out one single hour of your week to invest in a friendship, at the very least you could pour yourself into the people in your small group, and be the best possible Jonathan you can to them while you are in their group. Do not worry about finding that perfect, ideal person. All you need to find is someone who needs the kind of grace that God is pleased to pour out through you. And the people in your small group will do just fine.

Love by faith

And if no one in your small group is really your type, and they do not seem to have much offer you – all the better, because from an earthly standpoint, a Jonathan–David type friendship is a very lopsided one. You do not get that feeling when you read about it in Samuel, because Jonathan's attitude is so humble. But if you had been there at the time it would have been very obvious which was the greater and which was the lesser. David was a poor man from a poor family; Jonathan was the prince and the highest authority in the royal family. David had a shepherding background; Jonathan had a military career and Jonathan was probably quite a bit older than David. In ch.17 David was considered too young to even be enlisted in the army, and way back in ch.13 Jonathan is already the #1 general in the Israelite army. It is conceivable that Jonathan could have been 20 years older than David. And in that culture age was a mark of honor.

Think about it – from an earthly standpoint, what did David have to offer Jonathan? Nothing. During Jonathan's life, what did David ever give Jonathan or do for Jonathan? Nothing (except for getting him in trouble with Saul). It looked like a totally one-way friendship. The son of the king befriends the poor, lowly shepherd, and gives him his royal robes, his sword, armor, bow, and belt.

² An Exposition of the Bible, vol.2, p.76.

What did David ever give Jonathan? Nothing that we know of. He did not have anything. Twice Jonathan saved David's life. He spoke up for David, went out on a limb for David, risked his life for David. He traveled 30 miles to go encourage David one time. What did David ever do for Jonathan? From an earthly standpoint, it was a totally one-sided friendship where a guy with everything condescended to give sacrificially to a much younger guy with nothing to offer.

And if that comes as a surprise to you – if you were thinking of those guys as being pretty much at the same level, that is because of Jonathan's faith. Here is what I mean: From Jonathan's point of view, Jonathan was the lucky one and David was the one who had everything to offer. Jonathan knew that God had chosen David to someday be the king of Israel, and for Jonathan, a promise from God was the same thing as reality. In everyone else's eyes Jonathan's behavior was bizarre. Why would the prince give all his robes and armor to a shepherd boy? Why would the son of the king and the commander of the army beg this young kid to make a covenant with him and promise to be kind to him and his descendents? It was because when Jonathan looked at David he saw a king. The promise of God was the same as reality, and in his eyes David was the Lord's anointed. From a human standpoint it looked like it would never happen, but in Jonathan's eyes it was already true.

In fact, he seemed to have more faith in that promise even than David. That is why all through chapter 20 when David wants to talk about the problem of Saul trying to kill him, Jonathan keeps wanting to change the subject and talk about the future when David would sit on the throne.

¹³ ... May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. ¹⁴ But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, ¹⁵ and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family-- not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth." ¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." ¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath

That does not sound like a prince talking to a fugitive. It sounds like a humble subject talking to a king. And it sounds that way because that really was Jonathan's perspective. Then, in verses 18-22 they talk some more about David's crises, and then in verse 23 he reverts right back into talking about what he wanted to talk about.

²³ And about the matter you and I discussed-- remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever."

Then at the end of the chapter when they are saying their goodbyes he brings it up again. "I will do what you want with this whole 'Saul being out to kill you' thing, but make sure you do not forget to show me kindness when you become king." When Jonathan talks to David it sounds like a subject talking to a king.

Politeness

David was respectful to Jonathan too. David is the Lord's anointed, but he calls himself Jonathan's servant.

⁸ As for you, show kindness to your servant

We tend to be very polite and respectful when we talk to strangers, but when we talk to family and close friends politeness and respect go out the window. You might think, "Oh, my friend doesn't mind it when I call him a bonehead all the time. He thinks it's funny." Maybe he does, but why not use terms of honor and respect? They may not be as funny, but maybe they would be a better expression of love.

Maybe we would do better to do a little less joking around and a little more honoring. Why not have our speech around the house be at least as respectful and polite as it is with strangers?

People as fountainheads of grace

David's respect would have made sense in that culture from a human point of view. Jonathan's would not have. What enabled Jonathan to have the perspective he had? It was because when he looked at David he saw what God said David was instead of what it looked like David was from an earthly standpoint. I call that friendship by faith. If you look through your natural eyes it will seem like you are doing all the giving, and the other person has nothing to offer. But if you look through the eyes of faith you will see that person as a fountainhead of God's grace. If someone interviewed Jonathan and asked how he could be so selfless, he probably would have said, "Selfless? I'm not being selfless. I'm being greedy for grace. God has promised that grace will come through David, and I want to be in on it."

Every Christian in your small group is a fountainhead of grace from God.

1 Cor.12:7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

Do not ever look at a Christian who is not your type and say, "I don't delight in what's there. This person lacks the properties that are appealing to me." The reason that person does not seem desirable to you is NOT because he lacks properties that are appealing to you. If that person is indeed a saint – a servant of the living God, then standing in front of you is something marvelous. And if you cannot see them as marvelous, it just means you are blind to what is there. So instead of thinking you just do not care for the person as a matter of taste, preach to your soul and say: "Right now my eyes are blind to it, but I know that if my eyes were opened and I could see what is really standing here before me, I would be thrilled." Every Christian is a bundle of creative grace from God, and if you could peel down past the outer shell you would find something delightful.

So when we have our small groups today, do what Jonathan did. Look at each person in your small group through the lenses of God's great and precious promises about them. Instead of focusing on their weaknesses or what they are failing to do, look at them through the lens of God's promise to dispense grace through them for the good of the Church. Instead of focusing on their sin, look at them through the lens of God's promise to sanctify them. Instead of focusing on those parts of them that do not resemble God, look at them through the lens of God's promise that His children will bear His character and will be conformed into His image. Instead of seeing them as someone who has nothing to offer you, look at them through the lens of God's promises to make them rich beyond measure. Instead of focusing on that which is not delightful in them, look at them through the lens of God's promises to make them a delight. Look through the eyes of faith so you can get a glimpse of the grace from God that is available through them, and then become greedy for that grace. That is how you learn to delight in people you do not naturally delight in.

It works with your family too. When you look at your spouse instead of saying, "My heart just is not delighted by what he/she is – he/she just does not bring me joy anymore;" instead of saying that, look at where they are standing and say, "I know there is joy to be had right there if my eyes were opened." It is love by faith.

I think that is one thing that makes Phil Cruz such a lover of God's people – he is able to see Christians for what they really are in Christ. One time my dad and I were over at his house visiting with him and someone called on the phone. He answered and talked for a moment and then said to the person, "I can't talk right now – I've got two servants of the living God sitting right here in my living room – I gotta go." He was able to see past the way things seem and look at people the way God says they are.

Commitment to your small group

So commit yourselves to your small group. The reason we have those groups, and the reason we have sacrificed adult Sunday school so that they could take place on a Sunday morning when everyone is here, is because these things we have been talking about are so important, and we want everyone to have an avenue to put them into practice.

I am thankful that in His providence the Lord brought this topic up in our study through Samuel at this time because I see this as a significant need right now. I have been concerned for a while now about our small groups the second hour – especially since we have made the move to this building. There seems to be a bit of an ebb in enthusiasm for the small group ministry, and more and more of you have started leaving after the first hour. When I was preaching the “What is a Church” series and we were reminded week after week of all that a church is supposed to be, it was obvious that if all we do is come and sing together and listen to a sermon and then go home, we are not fulfilling most of what God expects from His Church. But now that it has been a while since we’ve done that study the memory of it has faded a little bit. And when that zeal dies down the laziness of the flesh takes over and just tells you, “The interpersonal interactions with human beings is too hard. Just go home and sit on your couch where you can be comfortable.”

But the one-another commands are a massive part of what a church is and if you leave before the second hour I think it is a bit of a stretch to say that you have even been to church. God’s instruction to us in His Word about friendships is delightful and wonderful, and what better place to pursue all that than in the small groups? Our lazy, rebellious flesh fights so hard to get us to just come here and be passive. We do not want to do anything hard. Building others up, edifying them, praying for them, encouraging them, bearing their burdens – that’s hard work; and exposing our own hearts, risking rejection or embarrassment, confessing our failures – that’s hard too. But our Lord has commanded us to do it, and the rewards He offers, even in this life, make it more than worth it. So I want to urge all of you to not only stay for second hour, but really devote yourself to being a Jonathan to the people in your small group.

Helping one another find strength in God

Now, let’s talk about what that looks like. Last week we went through nine different varieties of God’s grace that come to us in special measure through Jonathan-type friendships. And that list could be expanded almost indefinitely. But instead of going on and on for weeks about that, I think we could summarize a great deal of it with what Jonathan did for David in 1 Sam.23:16. At the end of chapter 20 we see a painful, tearful goodbye between Jonathan and David. They are never going to see each other again for the rest of their lives, except for one encounter that took place at Horesh.

1 Sam.23:16 Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

That is what friends are for. I can think of no better definition of what it means to be a friend than that. That is at once the most basic as well as the highest function of a friend. It is both the minimum and the maximum. Anything less than that can hardly be called Christian friendship – so it is the baseline minimum. And at the same time it is the maximum. What could a friend ever do that would be greater than help you find strength in God? What is your responsibility to your friends? to the people in your small group? *Help them find strength in God.* This is what friendship looks like in action. It is what you are supposed to be doing. If you are not doing it, you are not really being a Christian friend, and if you are doing it you are giving your friend the greatest gift you could possibly give them. This is such an important verse, let’s look at it phrase-by-phrase.

1. Helped him find strength

1 Sam.23:16 Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

The Hebrew phrase is literally, “**strengthened his hand in God.**” Spiritual weakness is a bad thing. God wants us to be strong. God is both our refuge and our strength. Sometimes He shelters us from the storm and other times He strengthens us to go out and withstand the storm and achieve marvelous things for His Kingdom. Strength is better than mere protection. If you imagine two neighbors – one feeble, weak, fragile old man who can trip and fall on the carpet and be hospitalized because he is so weak and his neighbor is 6’2”, 220 lb with 5% body fat – an Olympic athlete. He could fall off his roof and hardly feel it. The first guy is protected in the relative safety of his home. The second guy is out getting knocked around outside in the rough and tumble world of his life. Which guy would you rather be? We always pray for protection from trials, but strength is really a better blessing than mere protection. David is about to face an incredibly hard trial. Some people are going to betray him and tell Saul where he is. Saul is going to catch up to him and find him before he has a chance to escape. Saul will bring his entire army, and will surround David so there is no way out. If David goes into this thing discouraged he is not going to make it. Jonathan knows David is going to need great strength to handle what he is about to face. Strength is important. If you hear about someone who is weak it is worth it to travel 30 miles to go strengthen them.

2. “In God”

Secondly, he helped him find strength **in God**. Jonathan did not come all that way to Horesh to strengthen David's self-confidence. This is the difference between Christian camaraderie and all other support groups and therapy groups and self-help groups. The whole point of Christian friendship is to point each other to Christ, not man, for help and strength.

There is a kind of paradox here. On the one hand I need you. But on the other hand, you do not have what I need. Only God has what I need, but I need you to help me remember that. What I need is not you, but for you to help me find what I need in God. You do not have what I need. So the only way you can help me is by saying or doing something that will cause me to depend on God and not on you.

So Jonathan hears that David is starting to become weak – or, more likely, that he is going to need special strength, and so he says, “OK, I need to travel down to Horesh, take David's hand, place it in God's hand, and then travel back home.”

3. You can help any Christian find strength in God

You may hear all this and think, “I'm not qualified to do this for anyone. I'm not a counselor.” A third observation is that it was Jonathan who strengthened David in God.

1 Sam.23:16 Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

How would you like to have Jonathan's job? God comes to you and says, “Hey, the guy who wrote the 23rd Psalm needs help finding strength in God – go help him.” The man after God's own heart, the man whose life is the example for godliness for all the saints throughout the ages, the man who had the faith to fight Goliath when you didn't, the man who literally wrote the book on prayer and how to find strength in God, the man who probably knew more about finding strength in God by personal experience than just about anyone who has ever lived - your job is to go and help him find strength in God! I doubt Jonathan was more intelligent or more theologically astute than David. David was probably advanced beyond Jonathan in just about every way. But that did not matter because Jonathan was not the source

of the strengthening. When a 300 pound weightlifter forgets that his strength comes from food and exercise and rest, any 90 pound weakling can remind him. You do not have to be stronger than someone else to point that person to God. You just have to have a finger that can point. Any Christian can help any other Christian find strength in God.

4. No one is beyond the need for this

A related observation is that it was David that Jonathan went to help.

1 Sam.23:16 Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

This means no one is beyond needing help. It does not matter how strong you are or how spiritually mature or how knowledgeable – when the hardest moments of life hit, there will be strength available from God that is not accessible to you unless someone comes along side you and helps you find it. Even if you are David. The deepest saints and the strongest leaders need others to help them find strength in God. Do not ever think that a man is so strong or advanced that he does not need someone to help him find strength in God. And do not ever think that the person is so far above you that you cannot be God's instrument to give strength. And if you think you are beyond the need for daily exhortation in the fight of faith, then probably your heart has already fallen prey to the deceitfulness of sin. You never grow out of your need for the ministry of other Christians.

Some of the sweetest, most comforting, most soothing, strengthening, encouraging, strength-giving words that have ever been said to me were things that I knew like the back of my hand... most of the time. But in the pit of despair or in the throws of agonizing pain or in the net of temptation they somehow just don't come to mind. And if you arrive on that day when you are in that condition, lying in the hospital bed unable to so much as read a Psalm on your own; when you are like the woman I prayed with last week, doubled over in pain literally soaking her sheets with tears and loud sobs of agony hour after hour, in times like that you can hardly remember your own name, much less which passages of Scripture will bring you comfort. In times like that you need someone who will not be too busy to come be with you, and who knows Scripture well enough to be able to comfort and strengthen you with God's Word – and whose love for you is established enough that you are not worried about them seeing you at your worst; someone who will be there with you not because they have to but because they want to. If that day comes for you and you have cultivated no friendships with anyone who will be willing and able and eager to come help you find strength in God, you will curse your own foolishness. If David needed this, everyone needs it.

5. “went to David at Horesh” It is a deliberate, conscious effort

Please notice also that Jonathan traveled to Horesh.

1 Sam.23:16 Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

This strengthening of David was intentional. Jonathan made a deliberate, conscious effort. Sometimes we imagine this will be accomplished by itself if we just hang out together as friends. If we just do fun things together, or if we just show up for small group every week, it will happen by itself. No doubt some of it will happen, but being enabled to find strength in God that you could not find before, rarely happens inadvertently. Jonathan made a concerted effort. He heard about David's distress, he knew David would need strengthening, he put the rest of his life on hold, traveled 30 miles or so through rugged country, and then did something his father never seemed to be able to do – he found David and he said things to him that enabled him to find strength in God. What a difference it

would make in our church if 50 of us had spent 30 minutes this week considering and planning and studying about how to help a specific individual in the church find strength in God.

It does not happen by itself because it is not an easy thing to do. If it were easy, they would not need your help – they could find strength in God on their own. Someone gives a prayer request in your small group, and everyone fires out a bunch of advice off the top of their head - “Why don’t you try doing ____...” And the person says, “I’ve tried that. I’ve tried praying about it, I’ve tried reading my Bible, I’ve tried this technique and that technique and I went through this program and read those books, and none of the obvious remedies are helping.” Blurting out some idea off the top of your head after 20 seconds of thought is probably not going to help that person find strength in God. It will require a much more deliberate effort than that. You need to search the Scriptures. And if you still cannot figure out how to help them you may need to ask the advice of someone more skilled than you in the Scriptures. We need to be counselors for one another.

Pr.27:9 Perfume and incense bring joy to the heart, and the pleasantness of one's friend springs from his earnest counsel.

What will make you a pleasant, joy-giving, strength-producing friend is the earnestness of your counsel. When you counsel a friend, try hard! Work at it. Some of you know I am a big proponent of Biblical counseling. I have read and studied a great deal about it, I go to Biblical counseling conferences, I wrote a book about it; and from all my study I think by far the best summary I have ever heard of what counseling is supposed to be is 1 Sam.23:16. Counseling is one person helping another person find strength in God. Counseling should happen every time we get together as a church. It is sad that the world has come up with their Freudian, therapeutic model that portrays the counselor like a doctor – you only go to him if you are mentally ill. Thus there is automatically a stigma attached to counseling, and as a result there are a lot of Christians who are reluctant to seek counseling. But counseling is not going to a professional when you are mentally sick. Counseling is one friend helping another friend find strength in God. Your goal should be to receive and give counseling every single time you come to church. You should help someone find strength in God, and you should seek to be helped in your effort to find strength in God. I guarantee – every single one of you who is married needs marriage counseling. And every one of you who is single needs singleness counseling. We all need someone to help us find strength in God, and it is the job each person in the church to do that. And if you think you’re not qualified...

Ro.15:14 I myself am convinced, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge and competent to instruct one another.

The word “instruct” is *noutheteo*. It means to counsel or exhort. You have the resources. If you put forth the effort, you will be able to help others find strength in God.

Pointing to Promises

So how is that done? Let’s take a look at how Jonathan did it. Take a look at the very next verse – it tells us exactly how Jonathan helped David find strength in God.

1 Sam.23:17 "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this."

Now, we need to be careful at this point in the way we apply this. Would it be legitimate to say, “The way this text teaches us to strengthen one another in God is by just telling each other that everything will work out okay”? If someone is afraid of something you just say, “Don’t be afraid – that thing is not going to happen?” No, that is not a valid application from the text. Jonathan was able to say this to David because God had promised that David would someday be king of Israel. He had anointed David as the chosen king back in chapter 16. You cannot assure someone that a particular danger will not overtake them unless God has specifically promised that it will not.

So how do we follow Jonathan’s example and correctly apply verse 17 to our lives? by using the promises of God to strengthen one another in the Lord. The way you help a brother or sister find strength in God is by pointing that person to the promises of God. Jonathan had repeatedly made this clear to David, but in a time of great trouble he needed to go tell him the same thing again.

The enemy will try to tell you that you are incapable of helping someone who is really struggling. When the immediate remedies that you give off the top of your head do not work, your natural response will be to think, “I cannot help this person.” When the person says to you, “I know God loves me and all things work together for good, but somehow that is not comforting me right now,” your natural response will be to think, “Nothing I say is going to help. I could point out 100 comforting truths from Scripture and it would not help.” That is a lie. God’s Word is powerful, and God’s promises and comforts are soothing to the Christian soul. They are kind of like the professional masseuse who knows how to rub the knots out of the muscles in your back. If the knots are not gone after the first couple of rubs he does not give up. If the person is not comforted immediately, keep applying the soothing balm of God’s Word. Keep reading psalms to the person. Keep reminding them of promises God has made. Keep trying, and eventually you will hit one that will just strike a chord in the person’s heart. God will open the person’s eyes to see the beauty of that promise, and it will bring comfort and joy. And when you call their attention to the promises, give them some compelling arguments for the truthfulness of that promise. I keep that “Promises to trust when...” list³ handy all the time – not only for my own daily walk with the Lord, but also for helping others find strength in God.

Look again at the last verse of chapter 20.

⁴² Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace ... Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

In the midst of David’s most bitter tears, the great crown prince tells the shepherd boy turned fugitive outlaw: “Go in peace.” What peace? This is one of David’s most painful moments. When they parted ways Jonathan would go back to his place in the palace among his family and friends. David would leave his career and friends, family, and wife to go alone into caves in the wilderness indefinitely. Worse than that, he was being treated unjustly with no recourse, his life was in danger, and, with one brief exception, he would never see his friend Jonathan again – perhaps the one person in the world who really understood David. And it is in this moment of the loss of almost everything dear to David that Jonathan says, “Go in peace.”

He can say that because of what he says right after it. He gives a reason for the peace – the promise of God about David’s future reign. He reminds David that it will be a glorious, powerful reign that will go on “forever” and in which the descendents of David would be in a position to show mercy to the descendents of Jonathan. He was pointing David to God’s ultimate plan for him. He helped him through this agonizing moment by helping David see God’s promises as real. Jonathan was not intimidated by the enormity of David’s suffering. He had full confidence that the promises of God’s Word could bring peace even in the midst of such an excruciating ordeal. Do not ever be intimidated by the suffering of others. God’s Word is always more powerful than any suffering. By yourself you have nothing to offer your friends when they are weak. Your greatest motivational speech, in itself, carries

³ This list is in the Articles page of TreasuringGod.com. http://treasuringgod.com/resource_library/articles/

zero power. Your only hope of strengthening your brother is to somehow help him look to God. My goal is to develop such a habit of resting in and being comforted by God's promises, and to develop such a habit of deriving joy from them, that helping others do so will be my most natural reaction when they suffer. I will be able to easily recall a promise or an experience of one of God's attributes that has brought me a great deal of comfort in recent weeks. And I will be able to offer that encouragement to the person from the perspective of someone who knows from experience that this is a wonderful, comforting, strength-giving truth from God's Word. I will be able to show them the beauty of this particular promise, because just days before the eyes of my heart were dazzled and amazed and delighted by it. I am working on memorizing especially comforting passages so I will be able to offer them to people at a moment's notice.

Let's work on two things this week. First, let's take great delight and rejoice in a God who delivers strength to us in such a delightful way – through the loving, compassionate care of good friends. And second, let's resolve to become a church of Jonathans. And let's remember that none of us is stronger than David – we all need grace from God through people. Make sure you are a part of a cluster of Christian friends who have pledged themselves to help each other fight the fight of faith and protect each other from the subtle encroachments of sin. If your small group is offering that and you are not interested, you are out of your mind. And if your small group is not doing that, you be the catalyst to get them back on track.

Benediction: 1 Thes.3:12,13 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. 13 May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.

Devotionals

David and Jonathan

1 Samuel 20 Day 1

1 Sam.18:1-7 After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. 2 From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. 3 And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. 4 Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt.

Jonathan was a man of great faith – he proved that at Micmash. He had the faith to just take on a whole Philistine garrison by himself. No doubt life was pretty lonely for Jonathan growing up in the house of Saul. Life is hard when you love the Lord and no one else around you does. Jonathan had probably never met anyone who had as much faith in God as he did.

One day Jonathan goes out and there's Goliath and, possibly for the first time in his military career, Jonathan finds himself paralyzed by fear. This is too much even for his great faith. Then out of nowhere comes this amazing guy who is so full of faith in God that he just energizes everyone around him. He does not hesitate for a second to go fight Goliath, he gives all the glory and honor to God, and he loves God like no one Jonathan had ever seen.

Afterward he spends some extended time talking with Saul, and Jonathan is there, listening to this great man of faith - a man whose faith was even greater than his own. That is a great thrill to a man of God. It is a threat to Saul, but it is the thrill to Jonathan.

Righteous men and women *love* being around those who are advanced beyond them. When you are around someone whose faith and whose gifts surpass yours – what is the response inside your heart? Is it a response of delight and love and attraction to that person? If so, rejoice and thank God for those kinds of godly affections, because they are not natural! If they are in your heart they were put there by the Holy Spirit, and they should be cause of great joy.

Or is the response of your heart that of suspicion or jealousy? Do you find yourself thinking, “*Nobody is that righteous; he's probably a phony*”? Or do you jump into justifying yourself? *I would be like that too if it weren't for _____ . And I'm probably better than him at _____ . And at least I don't _____ .*”When you meet someone who is advanced beyond you is it delightful or is it an unpleasant experience? Are you attracted or threatened? That says a whole lot about your heart.

Dear Father, Your character and nature are so perfect and beautiful and desirable that the great joy of my life is being around people who are like You. Godly people are amazing. They make me so happy. They are kind to me, generous to me, they love me and care for me, they are humble, honest, trustworthy, genuine; and most of all, they love You and they help my heart love You more. Oh, how I love being around men and women of great faith!

And Father, when I think of how pleasurable it is to be around them, and then I remember that in themselves they are nothing but wickedness and sin, my eyes are opened to how marvelous Your nature really is. Someone who is by nature wretched and wicked to the core, who comes into association with You dear Lord Jesus, is transformed into someone who is an absolute delight. How marvelous is Your nature! How unspeakably thrilling it is going to be on that Day when I see You face to face and experience that character not imperfectly through partially sanctified people, but directly and fully!!! Oh Lord, hasten that day! Come Lord Jesus!

Teach me, dear Lord, to use all of my enjoyment of my favorite people as a tool to teach my heart to long for Your presence, which is the source of everything I love about them. And when people

disappoint me, let that frustration and distress teach my heart that what bothers me about the person is the fact that he lacks some aspect of Your nature, and let that cause me to long for the One who is not lacking in that area.

Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy: The God whose character is so sweet that it is delightful to experience it even in imperfect form through people who are like Him.

Promise to trust: If I make my interactions with people love for Him I will be full of joy.

What will result if I experience this attribute today: Love for God's people

David and Jonathan

1 Samuel 20 Day 2

1 Samuel 20:41-42 After the boy had gone, David got up from the south side of the stone and bowed down before Jonathan three times, with his face to the ground. Then they kissed each other and wept together-- but David wept the most. ⁴² Jonathan said to David, "Go in peace, for we have sworn friendship with each other in the name of the LORD, saying, "The LORD is witness between you and me, and between your descendants and my descendants forever.'" Then David left, and Jonathan went back to the town.

"Go in peace" is a phrase normally spoken by a superior to an inferior as a grace being granted. In the midst of David's most bitter tears the great crown prince tells the shepherd boy turned fugitive outlaw: "Go in peace."

What peace? This is one of David's most bitter moments. When they parted ways Jonathan would go back to his place in the palace among his family and friends. David would leave his career and friends, family, and wife to go alone into caves in the wilderness indefinitely. Worse than that, he was being treated unjustly with no recourse, his life was in danger, and, with one brief exception, he would never see his friend Jonathan again – perhaps the one person in the world who really understood David. And it is in this moment of the loss of almost everything dear to David that Jonathan says, "Go in peace."

Jonathan does not leave it at that. He gives a reason for the peace. He goes on to speak about David's future reign. He pictures it as a glorious, powerful reign that will go on "forever" and in which the descendants of David would be in a position to show mercy to the descendants of Jonathan. He was pointing David to God's ultimate plan for him. He helped him through this agonizing moment by helping David see God's promises as real.

This is the truest and greatest function of a friend. This would happen one more time – the time of David and Jonathan's last recorded meeting.

1 Samuel 23:15-17 While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. ¹⁶ And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God. ¹⁷ "Don't be afraid," he said. "My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You will be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this."

What is the role of a good friend? To help you find strength in God by reminding you of God's promises and helping you see those promises as realities. There is no greater service one human being could offer to another.

Dear Father in heaven, make me like Jonathan. Make me a man who helps people find strength in You. You are the source of all strength. By myself I have nothing to offer my friends when they are weak. My greatest motivational speech, in itself, carries zero power. My only hope of strengthening my brother is to somehow help him look to You. Oh Lord, make me a man who does that. You are the source of all strength and peace. Teach Your servant how to make that strength and peace shine through the dark clouds of discouragement and despair in people's hearts. Teach me to have such a habit of resting in Your great and precious promises and deriving fullness of joy from them that helping others do so will be my most natural reaction when they suffer. Help me learn the passages of great comfort and the promises from Your Word so well that I am able to offer them to people at a moment's notice.

Thank You, dear Father, that peace and strengthening are always available in You. Thank You that there is never any level of suffering that is so extreme that it cannot be overpowered by the peace and strength-giving joy that comes through Your promised grace.

Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy: The God whose promises are so marvelous and sure that pointing people to them will be enough to bring peace and strength even at the time of the most profound suffering.

Promise to trust: He will provide strength and peace

What will result if I experience this attribute today: Desire to point people to His promises, peace, strength.

David and Jonathan

1 Samuel 20 Day 3

From an earthly perspective Jonathan had everything to offer and David had nothing to offer. Yet Jonathan treated David like a superior. He did this not by pretending, but by believing God's promises. And the best service he offered his friend was to point him to God's promises and help him find strength in God through those promises. From Jonathan we learn friendship by faith.

When David wants to talk about the problem of Saul trying to kill him, Jonathan keeps wanting to change the subject and talk about the future when David would sit on the throne.

¹³ But if my father is inclined to harm you, may the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if I do not let you know and send you away safely. May the LORD be with you as he has been with my father. ¹⁴ But show me unfailing kindness like that of the LORD as long as I live, so that I may not be killed, ¹⁵ and do not ever cut off your kindness from my family-- not even when the LORD has cut off every one of David's enemies from the face of the earth." ¹⁶ So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, "May the LORD call David's enemies to account." ¹⁷ And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath

²² But if I say to the boy, 'Look, the arrows are beyond you,' then you must go, because the LORD has sent you away. ²³ And about the matter you and I discussed-- remember, the LORD is witness between you and me forever."

Then in the last verse of the chapter Jonathan reminds David of the covenant once again.

How was Jonathan able to be such a good friend? It was because when he looked at David he saw what God said David was instead of what it looked like David was from an earthly standpoint. Friendship by faith.

According to Scripture, every Christian in your small group is a fountainhead of grace from God (1 Cor.12:7, 1 Pe.4:12). Don't ever look at a Christian who is not your type and say, "I don't delight in

what's there." A much more biblical way to look at it is to say, "If that person is indeed a saint – a servant of the living God, then standing in front of me is something very marvelous. And if I cannot see them as marvelous, it just means I am blind to what is there. Right now my eyes are blind to it, but I know that if my eyes were opened and I could see what is really standing here before me, I would be thrilled." Every Christian is a bundle of creative grace from God, and if you could peel down past the outer shell you would find something delightful.

Dear Father in heaven, and here with me in this room, I bless Your holy name for allowing me this time with You right now. Thank You that I can come before You, even with all the remaining rebellion and wickedness in my heart and my tepid, half-hearted pursuit of You, and You still attend to my prayers and come here to meet with me in these prayer times! Oh dear God, make me a more worthy, more zealous seeker of You.

Open my eyes, dear God, to the treasure that the walking "bundles of grace" all around me really are. When I look at them let me look through the lenses of Your great and precious promises about them. Instead of focusing on their weaknesses or what they are failing to do let me see them through the lens of Your promise to dispense grace through them for the good of the Church. Instead of focusing on their sin let me see them through the lens of Your promise to sanctify them. Instead of focusing on those parts of them that do not resemble You let me look at them through the lens of Your promise that Your children will bear Your character and will be conformed into Your image. Instead of seeing them as someone who has nothing to offer me, let me see them through the lens of Your promises to make them rich beyond measure. Instead of focusing on that which is not delightful in them, let me see them through the lens of Your promises to make them a delight.

Enlighten the eyes of my heart and open my eyes of faith that I might get glimpses of the grace available from You through them, and then make me greedy for that grace, that I might have deep affection for and delight in them.

Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy: The God whose character is so sweet that it is delightful to experience it even in imperfect form through people who are like Him.

Promise to trust: If I make my interactions with people love for Him I will be full of joy.

What will result if I experience this attribute today: Love for God's people

David and Jonathan

1 Samuel 20 Day 4

1 Samuel 23:15-17 While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. ¹⁶ And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

Normal human strength is from God. It is God who enables our hearts to keep beating. But there is also a kind of strengthening that God promises that is only for those who trust Him. And this special strengthening often comes through the efforts of a Jonathan-type friend.

Increased strength is when the same amount of effort produces greater result. A man who strains as hard as he can to lift 50 pounds is weaker than the one who strains and lifts 100. When God strengthens you, you go from trying your hardest to teach your children about God and utterly failing, to trying and having success. You go from straining to build a great marriage and having it collapse in disaster, to straining and having success. You go from making every effort to encourage someone who is brokenhearted and ending up doing more harm than good, to making every effort and seeing the person become greatly encouraged by God's power.

The fact that God's presence has a strengthening effect on our souls is a wonderful attribute because it has an effect on outcomes in all that we do. God does not strengthen us for no purpose. He supplies strength in areas where we need strength in order to accomplish some end or overcome some obstacle, or endure some difficulty. He gives just the strength we need.

People who do not know God have the anxiety that they may face something they should do and find themselves unable. There may be a trial coming that will be too much for them to handle. There is the possibility that they will not be strong enough to build a great marriage or succeed in their work or even provide for their family. Life is a navigation through a maze of powers far greater than any individual. We are like ants in a world of humans who can, at any moment pick us up, move us to another place, fling us into the air, or squash us into nothing. The movements of the creation, the economy, politics, the corporate workings of our employer, diseases, and a thousand other powers far greater than us are like huge cogs in a machine that, if we get in their way, will grind us to powder. The unbeliever has no assurance that his life will not be ruined by a random collision with some greater power. But the Christian can rejoice, because the Lord has promised power equal to anything He has in mind for us to face! God does not just shelter us from trouble. He is both our refuge and our strength. Sometimes He shelters us and other times He empowers us to stand out in the storm and withstand it. He does not treat us only as infants, but often as adults – men and women who can go out into the storm and achieve great things through God-given power.

This strength from God comes by turning to God and resting in quiet trust. The man whose confidence is in God can rest in quiet trust even while laboring hard for Him. It is the quietness of heart that comes from knowing the efforts are going to be successful. If two men are each handed a shovel, and one is told, "You can keep as much of this pile of gold as you can shovel into your truck," and the other is told, "If you start digging here you may or may not find some gold" the first man will probably work harder, because he knows that every shovel full enriches him a great deal. His heart is at rest. He has no worry that his efforts may be wasted or prove not to be worth it like the other man has.

Is there anxiety or stress in your life that comes from the fear that your efforts might come to nothing? That kind of a stress comes from a failure to trust and rest in promises like...

1 Corinthians 15:58 Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

2 Chronicles 15:7 But as for you, be strong and do not give up, for your work will be rewarded.

Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Hebrews 6:10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

1 Corinthians 3:8 The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

Thank You, dear Father, for Your many promises to strengthen Your servant! Oh forgive me for taking lightly the offer of receiving power from on high. Your enabling power is exceedingly precious; awaken my heart that it may be as precious to me as it should be. Dear Father, teach me to work like a man filling a truck with gold, not like a man whose efforts may or may not prove profitable.

And give me a heart of love for my brothers and sisters, so that I will passionately beseech You for power because I so desperately want them to experience the benefits they will experience when Your power flows through me.

And give me a heart of love for You, so that when You offer me an experience of Your grace that offer excites and motivates my heart more than any other desire.

Take a few minutes to consider all the strength the Lord supplied you just yesterday. Think about what it would have been like to have been too weak to handle what happened yesterday. Let your memory of each instance of strengthening delight your heart in God.

Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy: The giver of strength

Promise to trust: He will provide strength

What will result if I experience this attribute today: Strength, endurance, courage

David and Jonathan

1 Samuel 20 Day 5

1 Samuel 23:15-17 While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. ¹⁶ And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him find strength in God.

Spiritual weakness is a bad thing. God wants us to be strong. And if you hear about someone who is weak it is worth it to travel 30 miles to go strengthen them. But do not try to do it through human wisdom. Jonathan did not come all that way to Horesh to strengthen David's self-confidence. This is the difference between Christian camaraderie and all other support groups and therapy groups and self-help groups. The whole point of Christian friendship is to point each other to Christ, not man, for help and strength.

There is a kind of paradox here. On the one hand I need you. But on the other hand, you do not have what I need. Only God has what I need, but I need you to help me remember that by saying or doing something that will cause me to depend on God and not you.

So Jonathan hears that David is starting to become weak – or, more likely, that he is going to need special strength, and so he says, “Okay, I need to travel down to Horesh, take David’s hand, place it in God’s hand, and then travel back home.”

It does not matter how strong you are or how spiritually mature or how knowledgeable – when the hardest moments of life hit, there will be strength available from God that is not accessible to you unless someone comes along side you and helps you find it, even if you are David. The deepest saints and the strongest leaders need others to help them find strength in God. Do not ever think that a man is so strong or advanced that he does not need someone to help him find strength in God. And do not ever think that the person is so far above you that you cannot be God's instrument to give strength. And if you think you are beyond the need for daily exhortation in the fight of faith, then probably your heart has already fallen prey to the deceitfulness of sin.

Oh dear Lord God, Author and Giver of all strength, thank You for the strength You have supplied to Your servant. And thank You for the means of delivery! Instead of choosing to impart this strength to me by means of a needle in the arm, or some bitter pill I have to swallow, or through painful, arduous exercise, or some difficult, costly religious ritual; You give me strength through the sweet and delightful delivery method of a loving friend. I love You, dear Lord. Thank You for dealing tenderly with Your servant.

Attribute to behold, desire, experience & enjoy: The God who gives strength through the wonderful agency of friends.

Promise to trust: He will provide strength

What will result if I experience this attribute today: Strength, encouragement, perseverance