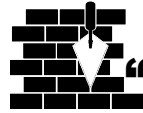


Jonathan - "Ancient Friendship In Modern Times"



“Building Blocks”

1. **(Overall)** This chapter needs to be carefully be seen as the “gold standard” for true friendship. In an era when people have 100 or more “friends” on their Facebook page, or 1 million subscribers to their Twitter feed (Miley Cyrus until Oct 2010), “friendship” is not only being *affected* by technology, it is being *redefined*. This chapter stands as a loud prophetic call back to the type of relationships only available to those who have the Spirit of God.
2. **(Snapshot)** The final sentence captures the only two places in a relationship that God will occupy: the center or the circumference. There is no hierarchy of friendship with God like there is among people. He is either Lord, or He is not.
3. **(Q3)** It is vital, in dealing with this question, to remember that Jonathan’s acceptance of his father’s forfeiture of the throne also had immense consequences for Jonathan himself. He was the crown prince! His own rightful place to the throne was sacrificed by his father and given to someone who had become his best friend. *This* is an amazing insight into the heart of Jonathan. He wanted God’s will for his own life and those he loved more than his own will and desires. (Note: Jonathan was not guaranteed the throne at this time in Israel’s history. The hereditary nature of kings was not yet a rule. But, it would have been expected.)
4. **(Q4)** Covenants are typically made by the greater with the lesser. Jonathan is the crown prince, David a former shepherd and now a military general. It is fitting that Jonathan be the one to make this covenant of friendship. We see David’s recognition of both Jonathan’s status *and* his love in 1 Samuel 20:41.
5. **(Q5 - 18:1)** They were “kindred spirits.” Jonathan could tell this from listening to David talk and observing him. Paul has a term he used to describe his relationship with Timothy in Philippians 2:19-20, *isopsuchē*, which means “same soul.”
6. **(Q5 - 23:17)** David already *knew* he would be king by this time. Samuel had anointed him in the privacy of his own home years before (cf. 1 Sam 16). But, Jonathan was reminding David of how things were going to turn out for David. Unfortunately, he was mistaken about God’s plan for himself. He would soon die alongside his apostate father.
7. **(Q6)** It is likely that Jonathan reminded David of where his strength really lay—in the Lord and not in himself. Perhaps Jonathan even reminded David of what he heard him say to Goliath that day on the battlefield years earlier: *“This day the LORD will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, and that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the LORD’s, and he will give you into our hand.”* **1 Samuel 17:46, 47**
8. **(Q7)** These verses are *not* speaking of minor social interactions, but genuine friendships. In scripture, “walking...” *with* someone was a commitment, not a stroll in the

park (cf. Amos 3:3). These verses in this question are references to who we “hang with,” *not* who we “work with” or “run into.”

9. **(Q8 - Ex 33)** Intimacy is dependent upon face-to-face relationships. Even in our own era, we become intimate with God and others in private, not in public, in a group, or online. God tells us, “*Seek my face...*” (Ps 27:8). Modern technology and social-networking is actually destroying intimacy by nurturing a type of non-sexual promiscuity.

“We are witnessing high and rising rates of depression, anxiety, attention deficit, conduct disorders, thoughts of suicide, and other serious mental, emotional and behavioral problems among U.S. children and adolescents. “In large measure, what is causing this crisis of American childhood is a lack of connectedness. We mean two kinds of connectedness — close connections to other people, and deep connections to moral and spiritual meaning.”
—Hardwired to Connect, 2003—

“Many people are looking for an ear that will listen. They do not find it among Christians, because these Christians are talking where they should be listening. But he who can no longer listen to his brother will soon be no longer be listening to God either, he will be doing nothing but prattle in the presence of God too. This is the beginning of the death of the spiritual life...One who cannot listen long and patiently will presently be talking beside the point and never be really speaking to others...”
— Dietrich Bonhoeffer in, Life Together, 1938 —

“Although information technologies increase our capacity for acquiring and disseminating information, the resulting informational practices actually foster individualism and self-interest over community and responsibility...“...Unless we focus as much on the quality of our character as we do on technological innovation, potentially good informational techniques will ultimately reduce our capacity to love one another.”
—Quentin Schultz, Habits of the High-Tech Heart

10. **(Q8 - Ps 119)** This is *not* merely a verse about having “Christian friends.” It’s a verse about a *type* of friend whose very relationship encourages me to obey God *because they obey God* (“who fear you...” “who keep your precepts...”). In short, godly friends are the *opposite* of those described in Deut 13 earlier.
11. **(Q8 - Prov 27)** Postmodernism’s “whatever!” when an attribute of a friendship, is contrary to this verse. A godly friend isn’t content to allow her/his friend to think “drunk” anymore than to allow them to drive drunk.
12. **(Q8 - Ecc 4)** People typically fall because they are careless, are on unfamiliar terrain, or have been knocked down by someone else (cf. 2 Cor 4:9). A godly friend is present “at all times,” and *willing* to lift up the brother/sister who *wants* to be lifted up.
13. **(Q9 - Jn16)** Only the Father will be totally faithful. Friends, even though they might never intend it, will eventually fail me, and I them. God is the only One who has promised to never leave or abandon me, and who has the ability to be faithful to that promise. Expecting others to be “God” in my life is a prescription for ruining both the friendship and the friend.



“Stumbling Stones”

1. **(Q1)** Be careful *not* to let David’s victory eclipse his motivation. It was his unrelenting love for God that drew him onto the battlefield that day. He would never had seen God’s amazing victory otherwise.

2. **(Q2)** Jonathan would have been attracted to the *heart* of David of which the things he said to Saul were only a reflection. Be careful *not* to miss the man behind the words. “God talk” is not always an indicator of a “God heart.”
3. **(Q7)** It would be easy to be distracted by the severity of the punishment in the Deut 13 passage and fail to see the reason behind it. The choice of an individual to abandon God is the necessary prerequisite for a family, a city, or even a nation to abandon God. The point here is the *direction* a relationship carries someone. This, is very important to God and should be to His children as well.

I should be careful also not to miss the *implied* teaching of this passage that I too can be either one of these two types of friends: the one being affected or the one doing the affecting. I need to be alert for the former, and have a sober fear of becoming the latter.

4. **(Q8 - Ex 33)** This “face-to-face” is *not* a reference to honesty, considering that Yahweh is the one doing the talking! He doesn’t speak any other way than “honest.” The context of this verse (33:7-11) contrasts God’s relationship with Moses and that with the rest of Israel. This is a statement about intimacy, not honesty. There was a *quality* of relationship here vastly different from how Yahweh related to the nation as a whole.
5. **(Q8 - Prov17)** “Love” is seeking someone’s highest good when it’s in my power to do so. “All times” here must be understood in the context of “adversity.” This is *not* saying “love” is always “there” to support someone who is living a lifestyle opposed to God. Love demands presence *and* honesty.
6. **(Q8 - Heb13)** In this age that has deified “tolerance,” failing to confront (i.e. “exhort”) my friend about the sin I see that they do not (“deceitfulness of sin”) is to set them up for sin’s foulest fruit — a hardened heart. We each have a responsibility before God for the sanctification of our friends, not just our own.
7. **(Q9 - Deut31)** We must be careful to see this verse teaching us that *God* is our model for the loyalty of friendship, rather than seeing it as saying that God wants to be *our* “loyal friend.” He is the standard to which we should strive.



“Going Deeper”

1. **(Overall)** “In 1 Samuel 18:28-29, a very significant statement is made about what was at the root of Saul’s enmity towards David. What emotion fueled Saul’s hatred, and how is true friendship the opposite of this?”
2. **(Q5 - 23:18)** “How often do you pray with (or for) friends when you part?” Consider making a “parting prayer of blessing and safety” a signature of your home — whoever visits will be prayed over before they leave. What a wonderful thing for guests to anticipate.
3. **(Q8 - Ex 33)** “How much of your communication with your friends this past week was face-to-face versus pixel-to-pixel?”
4. **(Q11)** Have group members share responses here. Be especially attentive to their use of, and time given to technological and social-networking methods of nurturing friendships. Encourage more face-to-face meetings.