

Lesson 5 25 November 2012

Jonathan—a Godly Prince

Lesson Scope: [1 Samuel 13; 14; 18-20; 23:16-18](#)

Lesson Focus

This broad study of Jonathan's life reveals a stark contrast to the character of his father, Saul. As we saw in Lesson 1, Saul began his rule righteously, earnestly seeking God and the best for his people. Saul quickly turned from God, however, and began a downward course.

Today's lesson focuses on Jonathan, who led a godly life, humble and submitted to the will of the Lord. From the first mention of Jonathan until his death, the Bible record portrays a man of outstanding character.

The relationship between Jonathan and David sets an example for others to follow. Despite an age difference of perhaps thirty years, these men established a friendship that provided mutual support, respect, and counsel. David was in line for the throne, a position Jonathan would have expected to fill. Instead of becoming bitter, Jonathan filled the role of mentor and adviser; he was instrumental in aiding one of the greatest kings in history.

God has a place for every person in His kingdom. Those with right convictions who serve in obscurity often do the most in advancing God's kingdom.

Jonathan provides us a good example of faithfulness in adversity. He repeatedly needed to choose between what was right and what his father planned for him. He suffered because of his father's unfaithfulness. But through all this, Jonathan made his choice for God, submitting to God's plan for his life and for the prosperity of Israel.

Focus on Jonathan's victories as he faced each test. We all face similar tests today. The spiritual battle looms large, and each of us has a part. We cannot rely on others to fill our role in conquering the enemy of our souls. Some face tests created by family members who choose a different path. This puts loyalty to God under test. We all face the test of humility, sometimes on a daily basis. Through it all, we must keep God first, submitting to His direction and His plan for His people.

Lesson Aim: To portray qualities of one who humbly fills his role in God's kingdom.

Theme Verse: [1 Corinthians 4:7](#). For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?

Lesson Text

`Jonathan Said.... There Is No Restraint to the LORD''

[1 Samuel 14:6](#) ⁶ And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for *there is* no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

[1 Samuel 14:9-10](#) ⁹ If they say thus unto us, Tarry until we come to you; then we will stand still in our place, and will not go up unto them. ¹⁰ But if they say thus, Come up unto us; then we will go up: for the LORD hath delivered them into our hand: and this *shall be* a sign unto us.

[1 Samuel 14:13](#) ¹³ And Jonathan climbed up upon his hands and upon his feet, and his armourbearer after him: and they fell before Jonathan; and his armourbearer slew after him.

[1 Samuel 14:20](#) ²⁰ And Saul and all the people that *were* with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, *and there was* a very great discomfiture.

`Jonathan and David Made a Covenant''

[1 Samuel 18:1-4](#) ¹ And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. ² And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house. ³ Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. ⁴ And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

`Jonathan Spake Good of David''

[1 Samuel 19:1-4](#) ¹ And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David. ² But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father

seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret *place*, and hide thyself: ³ And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou *art*, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee. ⁴ And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works *have been* to thee-ward very good:

1 Samuel 20:30-34 ³⁰ Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious *woman*, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion, and unto the confusion of thy mother's nakedness? ³¹ For as long as the son of Jesse liveth upon the ground, thou shalt not be established, nor thy kingdom. Wherefore now send and fetch him unto me, for he shall surely die. ³² And Jonathan answered Saul his father, and said unto him, Wherefore shall he be slain? what hath he done? ³³ And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David. ³⁴ So Jonathan arose from the table in fierce anger, and did eat no meat the second day of the month: for he was grieved for David, because his father had done him shame.

`Jonathan ... Strengthened His Hand in God''

1 Samuel 23:16-18 ¹⁶ And Jonathan Saul's son arose, and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God. ¹⁷ And he said unto him, Fear not: for the hand of Saul my father shall not find thee; and thou shalt be king over Israel, and I shall be next unto thee; and that also Saul my father knoweth. ¹⁸ And they two made a covenant before the LORD: and David abode in the wood, and Jonathan went to his house.

Questions for Study

`Jonathan Said.... There Is No Restraint to the LORD''

1. In what ways did Jonathan express faith?
2. Explain the dual roles of zeal and humility in the life of the believer.

`Jonathan and David Made a Covenant''

3. What drew Jonathan and David together?
4. What sacrifices can we make for our brethren?

`Jonathan Spake Good of David''

5. What price did Jonathan pay for his friendship with David?
 6. What responsibility do we have in defending our brethren?
- `Jonathan ... Strengthened His Hand in God'**
7. How did Jonathan strengthen David's hand in God?
 8. How might we encourage one another in the Lord?

Analyzing the Passage

By calling the Philistines "these uncircumcised" (1 Samuel 14:6), Jonathan recognized that they had no claim on the Lord or His protection. Jonathan was a man of God, and he drew from Him strength, wisdom, and protection. Jonathan did not doubt the Lord's ability to give him victory, but neither did he act presumptuously.

The test in 1 Samuel 14:9-10 allowed Jonathan's opponents to choose the place of their demise. The reservation of verse 6 is replaced with absolute confidence and trust: "the LORD hath delivered them into our hand."

Jonathan and David made three covenants with each other. The first, recorded in 1 Samuel 18:3-4, was Jonathan's recognition that David was God's chosen successor to Saul. The second, not printed in the lesson text, is in 1 Samuel 20:12-17, where David pledges to show kindness to Jonathan and his descendants. The third is recorded in 1 Samuel 23:16-18. Here, Jonathan again recognizes that David is God's anointed and that Jonathan would serve next to him.

Saul's displeasure with Jonathan's relationship with David is revealed in 1 Samuel 20:30-34. Saul was so angry that he threw his javelin at Jonathan. Immediately following this is the account of Jonathan shooting arrows in the meadow to warn David.

Principles and Applications

`Jonathan Said.... There Is No Restraint to the LORD'

1. Complete confidence in the Lord motivates one who humbly fills a role in God's kingdom (1 Samuel 14:6). This is the courage of faith. Without the Lord, we are hopelessly weak and ineffective. But when we humbly acknowledge our weakness, the Lord banishes fear and gives the needed strength to perform the task He assigns us. Without God, we cannot succeed: with Him we cannot fail.
2. A godly person depends on divine direction (1 Samuel 14:9-10). Jon-

athan and his helper waited on the Lord to give direction as to whether they should act defensively or aggressively. Victory would be theirs if they followed the Lord's plan of action.

The Lord offers us direction through the Scriptures and His Holy Spirit. God speaks in His still, small voice to listening believers as they pray to Him. God also uses circumstances and other godly people to help guide our way.

3. A humble person can face danger with confidence (1 Samuel 14:13). He is not defensive in relation to his reputation, his position, or his possessions. God is in full control; therefore all is safe. The fragile security of worldly insurance offers little appeal to one who has committed everything to the Lord. He sees even his own life as expendable for the Lord's cause.

4. One who humbly fills his role often inspires others to become involved in the work (1 Samuel 14:20). When Jonathan's attack had caused the Philistines to break and flee, Israel's army joined the battle and completed the task at hand. Our work for the Lord may seem insignificant, but if our faithfulness inspires others to follow our example, great things can happen. No work done for the Lord is in vain.

`Jonathan and David Made a Covenant'

5. A godly person is drawn to others who share his vision and convictions (1 Samuel 18:1). The souls of Jonathan and David were knit together in a common spiritual bond. Both men had faced the Philistine enemy single-handedly through faith.

God intends that all in the church experience "the unity of the Spirit." When we are thinking together, we are in a good position to benefit from one another's counsel, example, and spiritual gifts.

6. Humbly filling a role in God's kingdom involves sacrificial love and loyalty (1 Samuel 18:3-4). Jonathan gave to David the earthly symbols of his position and authority. He was loyal to David as God's anointed, even though he himself was the apparent heir to the throne.

Serving humbly in God's kingdom includes supporting others in the roles that the Lord has given them—ministers, schoolteachers, foreign mission personnel, and so forth. How much are you willing to sacrifice for the success of your fellow workers?

`Jonathan Spake Good of David'

7. A humble person shoulders responsibility for his brother's safety (1

Samuel 19:1-3). A friend in need is a friend indeed. Every one of us in this ungodly world lives in spiritual jeopardy. Often our natural shortsightedness and biases blind us to the snares that Satan lays for us. We can more easily perceive the dangers that confront others; therefore we are responsible to both warn them and accept the warning that others may give us.

8. The role of peacemaker is an important one in God's kingdom (1 Samuel 19:4). Jonathan extended his love for David by his humble approach in his discussion with Saul. He did not accuse Saul or use angry words. He simply laid out his case and allowed the truth to penetrate Saul's heart. In so doing, he kept his friend and temporarily effected peace between David and his father. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

9. A godly person is willing to place his life on the line for his brethren (1 Samuel 20:32-34). Jonathan declared himself publicly in favor of David, and Saul sought to kill him for doing so. The persecuted early Anabaptists expected a similar commitment from their members. Many suffered severely because they refused to reveal the identity of their brethren. What are we willing to sacrifice to protect the reputation of a fellow church member?

`Jonathan ... Strengthened His Hand in God''

10. Humbly filling a role in God's kingdom involves encouraging each other to focus on God and on His sovereign purposes (1 Samuel 23:16-18). Not one of us is spiritually self-sufficient; we need the varied strengths, talents, experiences, and perspectives of others. Together we face the enemy and claim the victory.

Important Teachings

1. Complete confidence in the Lord motivates one who humbly fills a role in God's kingdom (1 Samuel 14:6).

2. A godly person depends on divine direction (1 Samuel 14:9-10).

3. A humble person can face danger with confidence (1 Samuel 14:13).

4. One who humbly fills his role often inspires others to become involved in the work (1 Samuel 14:20).

5. A godly person is drawn to others who share his vision and convictions (1 Samuel 18:1).

6. Humbly filling a role in God's kingdom involves sacrificial love and loyalty (1 Samuel 18:3-4).
7. A humble person shoulders responsibility for his brother's safety (1 Samuel 19:1-3).
8. The role of peacemaker is an important one in God's kingdom (1 Samuel 19:4).
9. A godly person is willing to place his life on the line for his brethren (1 Samuel 20:32-34).
10. Humbly filling a role in God's kingdom involves encouraging each other to focus on God and on His sovereign purposes (1 Samuel 23:16-18).

Answers to Questions

1. In what ways did Jonathan express faith?

By referring to the Philistines as "these uncircumcised," Jonathan identified with God's side in the conflict. He believed that God could achieve a great victory through only two people. Jonathan devised a plan based on that faith. He was not presumptuous, however, but waited for the sign indicating how to proceed.

Explain the dual roles of zeal and humility in the life of the believer.

Zeal should motivate continuing commitment to and action for the Lord. Humility is how we should present ourselves in carrying out our charge. Jonathan was very zealous for the Lord, but he kept himself in check before the Philistines until the time was right. The result was victory. Conversely, after the conquest of the Promised Land, the tribes west of Jordan were very zealous for the Lord, but they were rash in their response when the two and one-half tribes erected the monumental altar. Civil war was narrowly averted.

2. What drew Jonathan and David together?

Their meeting in 1 Samuel 18:1 immediately followed David's victory over Goliath. Both of these men had, against overwhelming odds, gone against the Philistines and won a great victory. Jonathan saw David as a man of strong faith and courage in a time when most of the people were weak and fearful. Truly David and Jonathan possessed kindred spirits.

3. What sacrifices can we make for our brethren?

We can give of our time to our brethren and be there when needed. We can lend our talents to their labors. We can give financially to those in

need. Someone may have need of a material possession that we can give or loan.

4. What price did Jonathan pay for his friendship with David? Jonathan willingly laid aside the prospect of succeeding his father to the throne because he knew that God had chosen David for that role. By befriending David, Jonathan brought his father's suspicion and hatred upon himself, to the point that his own life was endangered. Jonathan exerted considerable effort to effect peace between Saul and David.

5. What responsibility do we have in defending our brethren?

Our first responsibility is to seek the truth. We should give our brethren the benefit of the doubt when a questionable situation arises. A positive word in their favor when they are under attack will go a long way. We should not portray our brethren in a negative light.

6. How did Jonathan strengthen David's hand in God?

Jonathan encouraged David to "fear not," even though his life was in danger. He assured David that the Lord would preserve his life and give him the office for which Samuel had anointed him. Perhaps Jonathan also reminded David of many occasions when God had already delivered him and rewarded his faith.

7. How might we encourage one another in the Lord?

We encourage others as we maintain a positive outlook on the Christian life, as we are transparent in our motives and actions, and as we live consistently. We can minister to needs within the church and offer words of appreciation.

Summarizing the Lesson

We face many tests and trials throughout life. How we respond to them will either strengthen or weaken our Christian faith. Can we, like Jonathan, stay committed to the Lord in the face of battle? The foe is strong, but the Lord is stronger. We must stand together in the Lord, as Jonathan and David did, to remain strong and obtain the victory. To the committed in faith, God promises victory, rest, and eternal life.

Research Guide

1. To gain additional context and meaning, read the entire lesson scope.
2. Meditate on the Beatitudes and Christian graces (Matthew 5:3-12; Luke 6:20-23; Romans 5:3-5; Galatians 5:22, 23; 2 Peter 1:5-9).

3. Consider 1 Corinthians 13 in light of the relationship between Jonathan and David.