

Friendship: David & Jonathan

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Preacher: James Tang

[0:00] Thank you, Alex. Sorry, actually, last week I started sharing, and it was about fair weather men, right?

! I said there's something about the faith that if we truly believe what we say we believe, then we should be built different. There should be something different about the way we go about life. And of course, I didn't know the Lord was going to give me an opportunity to exercise that. And actually, if I'm honest, just before Alex and Cara and Dari came, I had a low moment. I was like, man, this is it. I can't play in the NBA anymore. Like, at least not this season, but maybe next season.

And actually, I'd got off the bed because, again, I was a troublemaker to the nurses, by the way. If there's ever any nurses, I apologise. I don't repent. Because I couldn't sit still.

[1:00] And they needed me to do my business in the bed. And I did not want to do my business in the bed. So as they snuck off, I, like, hobbled. And I was like, I want to get to the toilet before you can catch me.

And I hope I don't die in the process. But actually, I got off the bed because I was just... I actually knelt down. I was like, Lord, what is it that you want to teach me in this? What is it that is pleasing to you?

How I go about this? If I truly am different, set apart, built different, what does that actually mean? What does that look like? And I was in 2 Corinthians 4, and he talks about these jars of clay. Like, we are jars of clay, which are common household items back then, but brittle. And if you dropped it, it would smash. But the whole point of it is that... And there was just this... Of course, there's the encouraging part, which says, We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed. Perplexed, but not driven to despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken. Struck down, but not destroyed. Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

[2:06] In me, I'm carrying the death of Jesus, but also then the life of Jesus that is displayed through this.

And then later, it's the passage that is one of my favorites. It says, So we do not lose heart, for our outer selves may be wasting away, but our inner selves are being renewed day by day, so that the light momentary afflictions that we're experiencing now are nothing compared to the eternal weight of glory that awaits us.

And I was like, man, that's it, Lord. There's something that you want to show me here. There's something about this time. I'm going to look back on it and go, I'm not going to regret this at all. In fact, I'm not going to change it for the world.

And I've told you this before. My hospital visits, and it's not my first rodeo. I've been in plenty of hospital moments. They've always been my favorite ones, because at some point, I get my act together. I change my mindset, and I realize, man, this is what it means to be human.

This is what reliving truly is. And actually, my daughter reminded me of 2 Corinthians 5, 7. You know, for we walk by faith and not by sight or by might.

[3:11] And I realize we can't walk a step without God at all anyway. And so for me, that's been the encouragement. And so I feel as though, man, I can't have a fair-weathered kind of faith, because that's not really a kind of faith.

But maybe just to tie into what we're going to be talking about today, the reason why I don't think I have a fair-weathered kind of faith by the grace of God, and it's his gift, is also because I don't have fair-weathered friends. Because we're going to talk about friends today.

And I even just look back on this week. From the moment it happened last Sunday, when I dunked on that guy, and then to the Monday morning, I went to go find Wes, who offered me his expertise. And well, because I was hoping Wes would tell me that everything was going to be okay, and he'd do a little Jesus thing, and maybe he'll heal. But he's like, no, dude, you've got to go see a doctor. And then we called Lusanda, who's an orthopedist.

She was like, because I was supposed to go on a trip with Aaron to Cambodia on Tuesdays. I was like, Lusanda, can I still go? She was like, Pastor James, you should not go. Anyway, I go to the doctors, and I asked the doctor, can I still go?

[4:20] And maybe we'll come back and do the stuff afterwards. He's like, forget Cambodia, you're not going home, you're staying here. I was like, oh, oh, so no, what about the airport?

I don't have fair-weathered friends. After that, I had Jay and Emily. They came and dropped off things, a jacket and some macadamia. No, that was you, Teresa. And Trevor, Terrence.

Hi, Terrence. I'm on some pretty heavy meds. But no, don't worry, Trevor, she did not come with Terrence. But man, no fair-weathered friends here.

You know what Trevor did? He had annual leave, he had Wednesday, Thursday, Friday half. Every morning, he drove to my house to pick up my kids at 7am to take them to school in Laiji Kok, and then drive back home again.

And still had the energy to go to Shenzhen for a massage afterwards. No fair way through. I had Dr. Alex come. So I wasn't allowed down to the canteen.

[5:28] And if you've heard that the hospital canteen is pretty famous for its high-lam gay van. But it wasn't delivering up to my room. And I was like, well, the nurses, can I go down? She's like, that's a stupid question.

But then, but then, Dr. Alex comes to visit. And Dr. Alex, who's actually a big deal in the hospital, I was surprised by that, if I'm honest.

They were like, oh, Dr. Alex, Dr. Alex. I was like, oh, they know you, Dr. Alex. Can you take me down to the canteen? And he was like, no problem. He got a wheelchair and he pushed me down to the canteen. No fair-weathered friends here.

No fair-weathered friends. Just blessed. And it made me experience a little bit. And maybe that's what the Lord had in store for me, a little bit. I think there's loads more that I still need to download. But that's what a community should be. And I remember when our friend and their child got sick. And suddenly there's people around going, how can we help? Because we're not here just for the fair weather.

[6:29] We're not just here for the beach volleyball when it's sunny. We're here to go and play when it's raining. We're here to just, we're here with you. Do we have those kind of friends?

And I think that's something that I'm learning and experiencing myself. And as we talk about when we gather for a relationship, first and foremost is we gather for friendship.

We talked about last week the Live to 100 show or the old ladies that Jojo goes to Yamcha with now because she's a ripe old age. Why do people live to 100?

It's because they have community. And what is community really? It's friends. It's friends. It's friends who will be there with you through all the times because we can't do life alone.

African theologian St. Augustine says this, Friendship is one of those interesting things that I think we don't put that much value on anymore.

[7:43] And it's probably Facebook's fault because now Facebook has told you what a friend is. A friend is someone who unfollows you on Facebook so they don't get to see your news anymore. But every now and again they may give you a little like and that's it.

But we have completely undersold what friendship truly, truly is. C.S. Lewis, and I'll tell you a little bit about his friendship that he had that still inspires me. He says this, Friends, I think we need friendship more than anything in this day and age.

In this day and age where everything's private and COVID kind of highlighted all of this.

Everything's individualistic. What we think our friends are actually just acquaintances.

What we think our brothers and sisters are actually just acquaintances and connections. When we say we're making friends, we're actually just networking. We're actually just trying to find people who when we need something from, we can get something from.

That's not the kind of friendship that we're talking about. Because actually one of the biggest problems in the whole world right now is the loneliness epidemic. Apparently over half the people

that did a study on this in America, Over half the people in the United States would say that they do not have three friends or more.

[9:06] Just three friends that you can count on to talk about, to share about anything with. This life is hard. It's long. But we do not lose heart.

Our outer selves are wasting away. Because our inner selves are being renewed day by day. How do we do that? Hebrews 10. Because we encourage one another. Because we don't stop meeting. Do you have those people?

Apparently they said within a church context, only one in five people would say they have one close friend within the church. That's what we're trying to push back on.

Because we're like, no, we must. Friendship is so key. So key. Adding value to survival. So I want to encourage us today. We're going to open up the word and we're going to look about that.

And I'm going to ask, maybe the first question is, how are you and your friends? What friends do you have? If friends are really that important, do you have any really good ones? You might look at me and go, oh, but James, you don't need friends.

[10:06] You've got Joe. You've got Christina. You're married. How do you think my marriage even works? My marriage works because my wife is my best friend. Once the romantic side goes, once I stop looking like Achilles, it's going to be the friendship that remains.

Do you think we started the gathering, me and Joe, because we were brothers? Which of you would start a church gathering with your sibling? I started the gathering with Joe because he's my friend. Because we believe there's a spirituality in our friendship that encourages us to spur each other on. C.S. Lewis says this, a friendship is born when one person says to another, what?

You too? I thought you were the only one. Friends are people who look at each other and go, oh, you too. You feel the same way too. I look at my brother and go, wow.

You love God the same way that I do. Oh, you're discipling people the way that I like to disciple people. Wow. We're friends.

[11:14] What about you? See, the interesting thing about friends, though, of course, is the ancients would call it the school of virtue. It's basically where you learn all the good things.

But the truth is you can learn all the good things. It can be a school of virtue, but it could also be the school of vice where you learn all the bad things. There's a quote that I came across, which is basically friendship makes good men better and bad men worse.

Good men better and bad men worse. And we talked about this maybe a year or two ago. And Kuban was the one that taught me this. You're an average of the five people that you spend time with, that spend the most time with.

Have a think. Who are the five people you spend the most time with? And if you're an average of those five people, does that terrify you or does that relieve you? Does that comfort you?

Does that encourage you? When Chandler Bing looks around at his five friends, that's the average. And of course, you see they made a whole 10 series out of just what friendship looks like when everyone's around the same level, thinking about the same things, doing the same things.

[12:19] Friendship makes good men better and bad men worse. I want to encourage us today to look a little bit about what that might look like. And the beauty of the Christian life is friendship and family.

There's just this beautiful mix that comes together. We have friends who are as close as family. We have family who are friends. Of course, this week during my less than fair weather week, I've experienced the blessing of having friends around when maybe family can't get to me as easily. There's the Chinese saying, I'm a yun chan, but you can don't. Having people who are around you, who are friends, is better than having relatives who are far away. Who are the friends that you have?

Of course, you always know that my favorite theologian is Dominic Toretto. In his long series, The Fast and the Furious, he would say time and time again, I don't have friends.

I got family. It's the people right here, right now. Man, love that guy. I look like that guy now.

[13:26] It's like a mini version. Like his child. The people right here, right now is what he says.

It reminds me a little bit of maybe what Jesus says in Matthew 12. He says, they said, Jesus, your mother and your brother are looking for you. What does he say? Who are my mother and my brother? It's you guys.

Those who do the will of God are my mother and my brother. The beauty of the Christian life is the family and friendship mix. Do you have that? There's a quote that I just kept going on and on. I think I read it from somewhere. It was like, friends let you in, but they don't let you down. Friends let you in, and they don't let you down. And so I want to really go into scripture about that. But before I go into scripture, in this series, I wanted to have other people come and share a little bit about their experience. And here is I'm going to invite my friend. I was once his boss. Then I became his pastor.

[14:25] But most of all, I am his friend. We both hail from the Great Britain, the United Kingdom, where all the good things have come from in the past. And I want to invite Gabs to come up.

Give him a round of applause. Do you want to grab that mic? So actually, Gabs and I were talking a little bit about that. So he came over as well.

He came to visit me in the hospital. But his main role was just to come and laugh at me. And to get this. And to steal my phone from me. That's all you were doing. Long story. Long story. But we were talking because we grew up in the UK in a much simpler place, I must say.

Because we had a group of friends, like separate groups of friends. Mine were much smarter than his. We'd have a group of friends.

And that would be it. Because you only, Francis is just chuckling. Because that's all you have. You have no choice in your friendships. Especially if you're in a church context or in school.

[15:26] You're with the same group of friends all the time. Coming to Hong Kong was the biggest shift for us. Because suddenly, everyone's moving around. Everyone's changing churches. Everyone's changing cities.

And so all your friendships are just constantly swirling. And so, mate, why don't you share with us the first thing. Which is just kind of, what's been your experience of friendship coming from the UK to Hong Kong?

I would boil it down to two things. So, in the UK, I think it's very much proximity. And I'm sure it's like this in a lot of places. It's just, who is around you? Like, who are the closest four people that you see the most often?

Those are going to be your closest friends. That is basically the description of my friendships in the UK. You know, so when I was growing up, in the first area I lived, I literally had a group of three friends who I don't keep in contact with.

But because I lived in that area, those were my best friends. And then I moved. Didn't talk to those friends anymore. And I made friends with the people around me in this new area. So, it really was just based on proximity.

[16:30] And I think about, like, what did we have in common? Other than the fact that we grew up in the same area, not much. We did the same things, but it's because we grew up in the same area. So, it really was just a case of proximity as opposed to any other deeper meaning.

Yeah. Yeah. And I've talked about that, actually. Sometimes we confuse community with proximity. There's the people, oh, just the people who are close enough to you. Oh, that's your community.

No, actually, there's a couple more steps you need to get to in order to have real community.

But in the UK, that's all you had. And you made do. Yeah. And that was it, right? Yeah. And it was fine. So, what was the shock then when you came to Hong Kong? Okay. Yeah. So, a bit of context, I came to Hong Kong on exchange in 2015.

I was at HKU for a year. And obviously, the city itself was a huge experience for me. It was like taking London. So, I grew up in London. I was taking London, condensing it, turning the heat up, and everything was just intense, that's what it felt like.

And I remember feeling kind of out of place, feeling quite lost, feeling kind of confused. It was kind of overwhelming. But what I realized quite quickly is that because of the intensity of this city, I think you can go both ways with friendships.

[17:37] I think you can have very surface-level friendships that kind of just stay, okay, I'm never going to see you again. Have a great time. See you later. And that could happen very easily. But then on the other side of the spectrum, I think there was a lot of opportunity for depth.

It was almost like, I don't know how long this will last. So, let's go all in. And I think I was blessed to have a lot of those experiences in my first year. And it's quite cool because, funnily enough, a lot of the people I met that year are in our church now.

So, it's kind of cool to think about. I met them eight, nine years ago. Trevor's one of them. Josh is one of them. But people who I met all those years ago, and I'm still connected to now because there was this intentionality where I was like, let's go all in.

Let's be close. Let's find out what doing life together looks like in this season because we don't know how long that will be. Yeah. No, that's good. And we've all been in those kind of gatherings where you talk to people. You're like, hey, hey, hey.

You're like, I'm never going to speak to you ever again. Let's try to get out of this conversation as quick as we can. But then there's other ones where you're like, actually, no, there's something that I need to do. You mentioned the word intentionality. Yes. Actually, we were going to bring one of his best friends up, Josh Shum, to come up to share about it together.

[18:43] But then we got our dates wrong and he's in Australia right now. So, he let us down. Josh, if you're listening, you let us down. I'm not going to talk about you, Josh. You say intentionality.

Tell us what that means. Why are you still friends with Josh and why are you still friends with Trevor? What steps did you take to actually go to the next level? So, Josh and I had a very interesting start to our friendship.

We were both in the same university dorm. And I remember we were waiting for the dorm initiation where they do something weird to initiate you into the floor. So, I was waiting in the pantry.

And Josh was also waiting in the pantry. And it was just us two in the pantry sitting there. We weren't talking to each other. And then he looks over at me and he's like, hey, what's your name? And I'm like, okay, weird start.

Gabriel. And then he asked me, I don't know what prompted him to ask me this. And I'm sure there was some stuff in the middle. But from what I can remember, the next question, one of the next few questions was, hey, are you a Christian?

[19:43] And I was like, what a strange thing to jump into, Josh. I didn't know his name at this point. But thinking back, I'm like, what an interesting thing to jump into at this point. Bear in mind, I'd been in Hong Kong maybe three months at this point.

I was sitting in this pantry. I hadn't really connected with anyone else on my floor. My roommate was this other, you know, guy from France. Everyone else on the floor was kind of local students. So, I hadn't really connected with anyone. But as I sat there and Josh asked me this question, we ended up having this really deep conversation. And it was about life. It was about my background. It was about my experiences growing up.

It was about the answer I gave him to if I was a Christian at that point was, yeah. And there was a lot of story behind that. But it was like, yeah. And we ended up going into that.

But I think that was a big step of the intentionality that he showed on his side. It was just this willingness to step in and to ask those hard questions. And I think it was just from that point where a lot of it was actually on his side.

[20:42] He was pursuing. You know, there was a sense of pursuit in this friendship. There was a sense of pursuit in this intentionality. And it was reciprocated on my side because I was thinking to myself, hadn't been connected to anyone.

And I was really valuing this depth. I was really valuing, wow, the conversations I'm having with this guy, I haven't had with anyone else. You know, so I think there was just a lot of experiences that I hadn't had before that were beginning to sort of cultivate with this relationship with Josh.

Yeah. And it just requires someone to start asking questions to actually take it to the next level. I think Joe and Jay probably met around the same time, too, maybe a little bit earlier than you guys. And again, it was a Young Life thing. And then they just shared a bus ride together. And now they're leading a midweek group together. So maybe one more thing.

Tell us about how you and Josh work in the sense that how do you spur each other on? Like, what does the spirituality of your friendship look like? And how do you guys kind of encourage one another?

[21:44] Right. So, you know, the Proverbs 27, 17 verse, as iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend. I think that verse, as I've often listened to it, it's very like, yeah, we're going to sharpen each other.

Let's go. You know, it feels like very, yeah, let's sharpen each other. Let's be strong. But actually, when I think about that verse, I think about the discomfort.

I think about the pain. I think about the chipping. You know, for something to be sharpened, there's a grating. It's like pushing against each other. Sometimes it's not always comfortable. The sound that it creates, a lot of that experience isn't actually comfortable.

And I think that's something I've really valued about my friendships with Josh, but also with a lot of the brothers I have here. And I'm blessed to say that I have here. It's not always easy. And that's a part of why it's so great.

I think what we do see is that there's a commitment. There's a loyalty and there's a trust to one another. Especially as we look at each other and we say, I see that you love God. And that's the direction you're going.

[22:44] And you know that that's my desire. We know that we're both on the same path. So when these situations come up, I know I can trust what you're saying to me. And I hope you can trust what I'm saying to you. But that doesn't take away from the fact that sometimes it's hard.

Sometimes it's difficult. Sometimes it grates you. But that's what I think is the refining part of it. You know, that's what I can look at. And there's been various moments I've had with a lot of the brothers here.

But specifically talking about Josh, we've had moments where it's just like, we are so different, dude. Like, why are we friends? But like in the best way, it's just like, what about us makes us close?

What about us makes us want to commit this to this friendship? Because we're so different in so many ways. But time and time again, there's always these moments where it's just like, man, he's got my back. And I know that he will call me out and I can call him out and we're going to be there for each other.

You know, I've like lived at his house so many times for various reasons. You know, I'm like very integrated into his family just because of the case of him bringing me in, his parents bringing me in.

[23:43] But I know that he's always got my back. So even when those moments come where it's like there's some grating and there's some difficulty. And I just trust that he cares about me. He's loyal to me, but he's also more importantly loyal to God.

And that's where his love for me and his care for me is coming from, which is true for all of the brothers I can say that I have here, which I'm very blessed to. So, yeah. That's good. Hey, one final question. As we figure out what it means together for a relationship with him and with each other, there's no doubt people sat here who are like, you know what?

Actually, I'm the four out of the five who don't have a close friend in this place right now. So what's I mean, again, it's not as simple and easy of this and it's not as universal as this.

But what's what are what's some thoughts that come to your mind as to actually what encouragement would you give or what tips would you might give to people who are trying to find meaningful friendships here? Yeah. I think firstly, I would say trusting that God has something for you here.

Trusting that God does desire for you to have these close relationships. You know, I think it's easy. I don't know what your backgrounds are, where you're coming from. I think it might be easy to step into an environment and feel like, ah, I don't know what's really going to be here for me.

[24:53] Let me just coast. Let me stay at this level. And whatever happens, happens. I'm fine with it. But almost expecting that God wants depth for you. He wants these relationships to be at this level where it's not just surface level, because that's where the growth comes from.

So I'd say it's almost just like a heart posture where you're expecting that from the Lord. I'd say showing up. Showing up in the spaces where God can show up through people for you.

I think a big part of my story is not trusting, actually. It's not knowing how to trust community, not knowing how to trust people. And I think a big shift and perspective change for me came in vulnerability and allowing myself to be vulnerable in front of bros, in front of the people that God had put around me, and letting them into that space, which I wouldn't usually let people into.

That's not my normal way of functioning. So I think that was a big step for me as well. It was letting people into that vulnerability and saying, it's okay, because God has something for me in this space.

But then, final thing, I would say it's on your side as well. It's you sometimes taking that initiation. You taking that initiative to step into a relationship and saying, hey, what's going on? Like, I want to build something here.

[26:08] I desire to know you the way God knows you. I desire to be a part of how he's building you up. And taking that step of initiative can do so much for, not just for you, but for the people around you.

Yeah. Thank you. Thank you very much. Thanks, Gabs. Round of applause for Gabs. I remember I was having lunch with Danny the other week, and we were like, hey, how do we build friendships? And I was like, you know what I think the main thing is? It's hanging out with people outside of the times that you're supposed to be hanging out. Does that make sense? Like, if you just use this time on Sundays to meet people and make friends, that's going to be hard.

If you take one step and go, okay, well, I'll go and join a midweek, that's better. But actually, that's still going to be hard. The best way to really make friends is to hang out in all the dead space, in all the dead time.

Or just go around to each other's houses for dinner. That's seriously, it's the times where you don't need to be together, but you're still together. That's how friendship is really born. And Gab said something interesting there, which is him and Shum are so different.

[27:10] And they are. They're so different. And that's one of the key things that you have to remember here. The world has not cracked what a differentiated friendship system looks like, but the church must.

The church must be a place where you can be friends with people who are so different from you. That's the nature of the gospel. So we have to be a type of people where we're like, we're going to be friends with people who are so different from us.

Why? Because we, what, you too, you love Jesus too? Wow, the way you love Jesus looks different to the way I love Jesus. But that's encouraging to me. And as a pastor, one thing that's super encouraging to me is people have often said, people go to church for many reasons.

Some go for worship. Some go for the sermon. Some go for the convenience or wherever it is, or the time, wherever it is. But most people stay because of friends. That's why you stay in a church. So finding friends is really that important. I'm going to jump in to scripture now. And I want you to have a think and maybe give you a little bit of a panic moment just to kind of raise your heart rate a little bit. I want to ask you, I'm talking about friendship.

[28:15] And I was looking for examples in the Bible about friendship. Prize to the person who can guess which friendship I was, I'm going to be talking about. Huh?

Jonathan and David. Oh, Jonathan and David. Jonathan and David. Absolutely. It's a fascinating friendship that I want to uncrack and just open up a little bit.

So it's in 1 Samuel 18. And again, this is a little interval here. It's only going to be a short passage, but I want to, but it's just so rich. There's just, even in the short few verses, there's something here for us that tells us a little bit about how God designed friendship and what it's used for.

So as always, can I invite you to stand for the word of God? God, as we're talking about friendship, we open up your word now.

Your word has so much power and truth. And as we look at the words here written in 1 Samuel, we ask that you would speak.

[29:22] You would move. Your Holy Spirit would move in our hearts and you would show us your heart for what friendship is. Thank you, Lord, for these words.

1 Samuel chapter 18, verse 1 to 4. David and Jonathan's friendship. As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David.

And Jonathan loved him as his own soul. And Saul took him that day and would not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as his own soul.

And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David and his armor and even his sword and his bow and his belt. This is the word of the Lord.

Please take a seat. It's fascinating. So when we talk about friendship and we talk about the Bible, we've got these two examples right here. Jonathan and David, these bros.

[30:22] Just a little bit of context here. 1 Samuel 17, something important has happened.

Friendship has happened because of what? It came through battle. The chapter just before is about Goliath.

Okay? So David, the shepherd boy, kills Goliath, rescues the Israelites, beats the Philistines. And then chapter 18, we jump straight into the response.

And there's a couple of interesting things that happen in this response here. The crowd are just in awe of David. They even sing a song. They sing a song that maybe football hooligans would sing in the stadium.

Saul has struck down his thousands and David his ten thousands. And they're singing. Now, unfortunately, that little song right there, that little chant right there, gets Saul jealous. Now, they're just singing it just because it rhymes and because it's a nice song to sing.

But Saul's like, what? You're saying that I only did thousands and David did ten thousands? So then Saul starts to feel this jealousy in his heart. And this starts a whole journey, epic journey, where ultimately Saul is trying to kill David.

[31 : 23] But Jonathan, but Jonathan, Saul's son, reacts completely differently. He sees this young man and loves him in a way.

The soul of Jonathan is knit to the soul of David. Something interesting here is just a bit about Jonathan. Actually, if you think about Jonathan and David, what do you think?

I'm thinking a little bit, maybe an image like Gabs and Shum. Just two guys, maybe similar age, similar hellbees, similar things. This was not the case. Jonathan was a prince.

He was going to be king. And he was actually, if the scholars have looked at this and have kind of broken down the timeline, most people think that actually Jonathan was about probably 20 to 30 years older than David.

So this wasn't just two bros hanging out doing fist bumps and all that kind of stuff. This was an older man who actually was a prince, who was going to be king, looks at this young man, looks at this shepherd and goes, man, I love this kid.

[32 : 26] Why does he love this kid? Because he just saw this little kid face up to this giant when all the other warriors were scared. And out of his love for God, out of his trust for God that comes with the courage from that, kills this giant.

And Jonathan's like, man, that's cool. I love that. What I see in him. Am I painting a different picture as to what Jonathan and David look like?

Only a couple of chapters before in 1 Samuel 14. Actually, Jonathan himself, him and his armor bearer, just the two guys, they kill 20 Philistines. So the ratio is 1 to 10. He's like, it, man.

So he kills. Yeah, God, that's up, God. Maybe his armor bearer. I don't know who. Like, Jonathan is a warrior. He's going to be king. And yet he looks at this young shepherd boy and goes, man, I love the heart of this young man.

That's the context, which at least tells me one thing. We can have friends across different age groups. We don't have to have friends who are exactly the same as us, who like the same things as us.

[33 : 34] Those are called sports teams. Those are called chess clubs. Church is not that. Church is where we hang out. It's okay. Juju's still learning what friends are.

So churches where there are intergenerational friendships that exist because of a joint focus and a love for something else.

Does that make sense? Some of my closest friends, actually two of my closest friends in Hong Kong that I've had the pleasure of making are two people who are a fair bit older than me. Their names are Jonathan and David.

And actually, I find they are of encouragement to me. And we have no business being together. Yet because of the gospel, we are. So there's something about that.

And there's something more. This is a prince. I want you to understand the political nature of this.

And he takes off his robe and he puts it around David. This isn't, oh, the air con is quite cold.

[34 : 33] Hey, here, you're still in your fighting vest. It's not that. Do you know what that robe meant? Jonathan looks. He himself, who can kill many soldiers, many Philistines, says, I see God's hand on you.

I see God's favor on you. I see your love for God. And even though I should be king, I know you are going to be king. And I'm going to take that off.

And I'm going to put it around. Can you see how significant that step is? And I don't know what the equivalent is. Maybe it's two presidential candidates gunning for the presidency in the U.S.

And then one of them going, you know what? I want the job, but you're better at the job. I resign. I quit. I'm going to give the job to you. Can you see how preposterous it is what Jonathan did?

And that friendship cost him. And ultimately, it ends up costing him his life. The world has no answer for that kind of friendship. And then he gives him his sword.

[35:37] So he gives him his robe and says, hey, I should be king, but you should be king. Imagine you fighting for a role in your company and you look at someone else and you're like, okay, I think God wants that person to take the job that I want.

And you say, I'm going to, how hard that is. And then he gives him his sword, which is saying, I'm going to be completely vulnerable to you. I'm going to serve you to the death, which is what he does. This kind of friendship is not just a cool, lighthearted bromance with fist bumps.

This one is one of intentionality and it costs him. And then the next two chapters, what happens is Saul, Jonathan's dad, is trying to chase him down, trying to kill David because he's jealous.

And what does Jonathan do? He actually, he does this great thing, which he's trying to stay in between both. He's still honoring his dad, but then he's also trying to protect his friend. And so 1 Samuel 19 to 20, he's basically talking to David about how he can protect him, how he's going to receive intel and help him and protect him and those kinds of things.

And then there's this passage later on, 1 Samuel 23. If you're just in your Bibles, I want you just to follow along with me. 1 Samuel 20, they make a covenant with each other. So chapter 20, verse 4, Jonathan says to David, whatever you say, I will do for you.

[36:59] Man, having that kind of friend. And we've had so many of those friends even this week. Hey, what do you need? I'll come. 6.30, I need to wake up to come and get your kids. I'll come.

I need to come pick you up from the hospital. I'll come. Whatever you say, I'll do for you. Can we be those kinds of friends to each other? And can we actually build that kind of relationship here?

And then chapter 20, verse 15, they make a covenant with each other. And Jonathan says, hey, if I'm still alive, show me the steadfast love of the Lord that I may not die. And do not cut off your steadfast love from my house forever when the Lord cuts off every one of the enemies of David from the face of the earth.

So they make a covenant together. Jonathan's like, hey, hey, don't forget me when I die. If I die, doing whatever I'm doing, don't cut off my house. And actually what's going to happen is if my dad dies and my kingdom falls and David, you're going to be king.

Actually, the next thing that you should be doing that every king before you has done is to hunt down all of my family and kill all of my family to make sure that no one comes to fight against you. But don't cut off the steadfast love.

[38:06] That's the covenant that they make together. And chapter 23, David's in the wilderness. He's in the wilderness. He's running away from Saul. And actually people are betraying him left, right and center.

They're telling Saul where David is. And then Jonathan does this incredible thing. 1 Samuel 23 verse 15. 23 verse 15.

David saw that Saul had come out to seek his life. David was in the wilderness of Ziph at Horesh. And Jonathan, Saul's son, rose and went to David at Horesh and strengthened his hand in God. And strengthened his hand. So David's on the run. People are betraying him. He doesn't know who to trust anymore. Jonathan in the palace hears about this and leaves and rises and goes to the wilderness to find David and strengthens his hand in God and encourages him and points him to God.

What a friend that is. Who's had a friend that has gone out of their way when you were in the wilderness has come to find you in the wilderness and to strengthen your hand in God. Put your hand up.

[39:14] Put your hand up if you've had that friend. Man, those are good friends. Those are essential for us on this journey of life because we are all in the wilderness at some point.

And yet we have this friend who left the comfort of his palace and goes out of his way to find you and to strengthen you. And what does he say? Do not fear.

Verse 17. For the hand of Saul, my father, shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel and I shall be next to you. Doesn't that blow your mind? I'm supposed to be king.

Actually, if I just stayed in my palace, I could be king because my dad could kill you. And actually, whatever promises we made back then, whatever hand signs we made back then, we can forget about that because I can be king now. But yeah, he says, no.

No, I'm going to go out of my way. I'm going to come and find you myself in the wilderness. I'm going to remind you, do not fear. You shall be king over Israel and I shall be next to you.
[40:14] I won't be king. You will be king. He reminds David of the truth. He reminds David of what God has promised him. Do you have that friend who reminds you of God's promises on your life?

Some of you are here, even in Hong Kong, you're pursuing a dream. You're pursuing something and actually you have landmarks so you remember why God has brought you here. But sometimes you forget. Sometimes I forget.

Do you have that friend who reminds you, hey, this was God's truth. This remains to be God's truth on your life. And because you need that friend. And if you don't have that friend, you need to ask for that friend.

You can actually, just like Sean, reach out to God and go, hey, we need to be more than just acquaintances here. I want to hold you accountable. I want to remind you of the truths of God. Do you have that friend who strengthens you, strengthens his hand in God? It's just this beautiful thing. Proverbs 17, 17 says, a friend loves at all times. A brother is born for adversity.

[41:12] He goes out of his way. Because unfortunately, friendship costs something. It costs something. Most of all, often it costs time. Those of you who came to visit me in the hospital, you didn't need to come to the hospital.

And the sanatorium is an inconvenient place to try and find your way there. Unless you have a doctor's parking space like Dr. Alex. Then you're all good. Friendship costs.

Because we say we want friendship. And we say we want these things. And we want these people who would do these things for us. But often we're like, oh, but I'm tired. And that's what Gav said. Showing up. Showing up is important.

Even when you don't feel like, you know, no, I'm going to show up. Because, well, this is what I want friends to do for me too. But you don't do it from that idea. And you see, this is the idea that actually the world has lost.

This covenantal relationship. We have these user-based relationships where we will network with one another. And we will keep going on this merry-go-round with people who we think can help us in some way to further something, to get somewhere.

[42:17] But those will change. But a covenantal one is going, hey, I see your love for God. And I want to be part of that. And I want to be the one that helps you when you're in the wilderness.

Even if you're God's chosen one. Can you imagine David being God's chosen one? I feel this sometimes. I'm like, oh, man, God, why did you ask me to do all these things? And with all these things come all these challenges.

Like, maybe it's better to just be a lukewarm Christian. Maybe it's better if I just keep my head low and just kind of pretend to follow Jesus but not. Then the enemy won't really pay me much attention.

I can imagine David just going, I don't want to be king. You know what? I'm done. I don't want to be the chosen one. And then his friend comes, seeks him out in the wilderness, goes out of his way and says, you will be king and I will be next to you.

There's a friend that we all need who can remind us of that. And it's a covenantal friendship and it's not a user-based one. The other thing is for a friendship to really work, it can't just be about the friendship.

[43:23] It can't just be about them two. The reason why a spiritual, godly, biblical friendship works is because there's something bigger. C.S. Lewis says this. And C.S. Lewis is fascinating because he had a great friendship.

Who was his friend? Does anyone know? Tolkien. So Tolkien actually went to my school back in Birmingham and he was a Christ follower. And of course he wrote The Lord of the Rings.

And then he meets Clive Staples Lewis. And actually he's an atheist. And then they spend time talking. The two of them completely change the fantasy genre in literature, right?

Completely. And so these two end up starting to talk. And then what happens is Tolkien starts to answer a lot of the questions that C.S. Lewis had. And of course C.S. Lewis becomes one of the prominent writers of Christian literature here.

And he says this interesting thing, which sounds a little bit harsh, so bear with me. But I promise you it has a somewhat encouraging reminder at the end. He says this. That is why those pathetic people who simply want friends can never make any.

[44:27] The very condition of having friends is that we should want something else besides friends. Where the truthful answer to the question, do you see the same truth, would be, I see nothing and I don't care about the truth.

I only want friendship. No real friendship can arise. There would be nothing for the friendship to be about. Those who have nothing can share nothing. Those who are going nowhere can have no fellow travelers.

Those who are going nowhere can have no fellow travelers. The kind of friendship we're going for here isn't the type of friend who watches Brooklyn Nine-Nine with you, so has the same kind of sense of humor as you.

It's the kind of friendship where we are all sojourning together towards God and like, man, I want to go with you. I need to go with you. That's the kind of friendship that we're looking for here.

And your friendship has to be bigger than just the two of you. That's what it is. Friends let you in, but they won't let you down. Now, when I say don't let you down, it doesn't mean they're perfect.

[45:34] We all have friends and we all know people who have let us down in some way. It's not about that. We are not looking for perfect friendships. Every person, every single person you meet here will not be perfect and will let you down and will annoy you in some way.

When I say friends let you in and they don't let you down, it's that they are there for you. It's, hey, I may not be perfect. I may not even know what to say. But I'm going to be there.

I'm just going to be there. I might be speechless. I might only be able to take you out for lunch because there's nothing else I can do here. I can't help you, but I'm just going to be there. We're not looking for perfect friendships, but we're looking for friends who let you in and do not let you down. I want to finish with this story here. And this is the bit that really blew my mind. Maybe part of it was the meds as well. But so Jonathan makes David promise. Hey, when you're king, look after my family.

Years later, Saul dies. Jonathan dies. David is king. And there's this fascinating passage. If you jump to 2 Samuel now.

[46:40] 2 Samuel. Chapter 9. 2 Samuel chapter 9. David says this. Again, David actually can hunt all of Saul's descendants down and say, I'm going to kill you all because I don't want any uprising to come back.

You see this in all the Chinese TVB shows of the ancient times where it's all about just revenge. He's saying, actually, if there's one way I can stop this, I'm going to kill all of you. But David here remembers his covenant to Jonathan, remembers his friendship, and he says, is there still anyone left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness for Jonathan's sake?

And there was. Jonathan had a son. Jonathan had a son that was in hiding. His name was Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth.

We're just going to call him M from now on. M was in hiding. M heard about his dad dying on the battlefield.

Heard about his grandfather Saul dying. Surely everyone around M is like, dude, you best get away. It's not looking good for you. What's worse, M was a cripple.

[47:57] M's like, I want to get away, but I'm not going to be able to get away. It's kind of like when Ellen was putting cake on my face last night in the cake fight and attacking the defenseless.

He was like, I can't get away. And anyway, David's summoning me. And so David finds him. And then he finds him.

And verse four says this. David says, the king said to him, where is he? And then he replied, he's in the house of Machia, the son of Amiel at Lodabar. So they get him. And verse six, and Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and paid homage.

And David said, Mephibosheth. And he answered, behold, I am your servant. And then David said to him, verse seven, do not fear for I will show you kindness for the sake of your father, Jonathan. And I will restore to you all the land of Saul, your father, and you shall eat at my table always.

And he paid homage and said, what is your servant that you should show regard for a dead dog such as this? Can you imagine what M is going through? Hey, King David is looking for you.

[49:06] Crap. He's going to find, okay, he's found me. He takes me to him. First thing I'll do is fall flat on my face because I'm like, this guy's going to kill me. And then David says, hey, you're safe here.

I was your dad's friend. And actually, all the land that your grandfather and your dad had, I'm going to give to you. I'm not going to kill you. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

You're going to have a seat at my table. Always. Always. And then M just, he doesn't even know what he said, but I'm just a dead dog.

Why would you do this? Why would you do this for me? It's because of the covenant relationship that Jonathan and David had.

That's the kind of friendship that David isn't afraid of what might happen. But he had a promise to his friend, to his bro. And now this son who could threaten his kingdom, he's like, no, you're going to eat at my table always.

[50:11] And I want to give you what is yours. That's the kind of friendship. The problem is, I don't think many of us, I definitely am not capable of this kind of friendship. His grandfather chased me into the wilderness for years trying to kill me.

Now I have a chance to cut it all off completely. And this guy is deflensis. He's not going to give me any problems. Actually, if he dies, no one will even remember. And yet he's going to eat at my table always.

How do you have that kind of friendship? How do we be those kind of friends to each other? I'll tell you why. I'll tell you how. When we realize that we are all M. We are all Mephibosheth.

We are all people who cannot save ourselves. We are all lame and crippled. We are all in hiding. We are all separated from the king.

Yet Jesus comes to us and says, you will have a seat at my table. You don't deserve it. But you will have a seat at my table because I paid for it.

[51:17] If that doesn't move your heart, I pray. You'll mull over this and pray over this this next week. How do we become the friends that the Bible talks about? By remembering that we weren't supposed to be friends with God.

And yet he invited us to our table. And if he invited us to his table, we'll invite anyone to our table. That's the gospel. That's the gospel right there.

We are all Mephibosheth. But because of a friendship, because of a covenant made, because a prince took off his robe and put it around us. Because he subjected himself to the sword.

We get to be princes. We get to sit at the table. We don't deserve it. We need help sitting at the table. Mephibosheth was crippled in both legs. He needed help to get to the table. And yet Jesus scooped down and does it for us in the same way.

I hope that inspires you to go out and reach out to the people who need friends. That we gather and then we scatter. Because we are recipients of that.

[52:22] John 15. Jesus says, there is no greater love than this. That someone would lay down their lives for their friends. And then he says, I have chosen you. I have chosen you. And it makes me think, maybe that's why we're here.

Maybe in this time, the Lord has chosen us to be the kind of friends that we're supposed to be. I'll finish with one last quote. Again, it's C.S. Lewis.

In friendship, we think we have chosen our peers. In reality, a few years difference in the dates of our births, a few more miles between certain houses, the choice of one university instead of another, the accident of a topic being raised or not raised at a first meeting, any of these chances might have kept us apart.

But for a Christian, there are, strictly speaking, no chances. A secret master of ceremonies has been at work. Christ, who said to the disciples, you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, can truly say to every group of Christian friends, you have not chosen one another, but I have chosen you for one another.

Do you realize that just, it's not a coincidence. Do you realize that we're all sat here because God has chosen us to be a community, to be his body together? Can we have the heart for one another where we look at each other and go, actually, if you're hurting, I'm with you.

[53:50] I'll tell you right now, my left Achilles is in pain because it's not, it's only just been repaired, but that's affected every part of my body. I've got a wristband because I'm doing this.

My knee on my right, I'm putting here. I've got an ankle support on my right because I'm overcompensating because of the weakness of this left Achilles. As we, as a body, can we look at each other and go, okay, you're hurting.

I'm going to come around you. I'm going to support you. I'm going to go out of my way to support you. That's the kind of friendship that we're praying for.

That's the kind of community that we wish to be. Once again, I've ran out of time here. Can I just finish this in a word of prayer? Actually, can I ask you to ask God yourself?

Who are the people that he's placed in front of you right here, right now? I mean, maybe just do a look now. Just look around you. Who are the people who are right here, right now?

[54:51] Well, okay. It would have been one change and we would not even be here. That you and I would not be friends. Look at John and think about the things that happen for us to be friends, for us to be friends.

And yet we're here. And we have no choice in the matter. But we can choose how we respond to each other. How we become friends to one another.

Can we spend 60 seconds? It's not enough, but God is powerful. Lord, who are the people that you've placed around me right here, right now, who I need to take that step with?

Who do I need to let in? And who can I not let down? Lord, we all come to you as Mephibosheth. Unable to get to you, cripple. Fearful, hiding, separated. Singing the song yesterday, goodness of God on that bridge, that your goodness is running after us.

[56:14] It was beautiful in the sense that it reminded me that we've been invited to your table and then we were helped up there.

We have no business being there. Yet you said we are no longer your servants, but we are your friends. And you laid down your life for us. And so we are forever grateful because we should be as dead dogs.

And yet we are not. We have a seat at the king's table. Surely your goodness and mercy will follow us all the days of our lives, even when we can't pursue you.

Thank you for that good news. And now show us how to be friends to one another. Show us how to love one another as we have been loved by you. What do you have for us here?

As Gab said, what do you have for us here? Would you show us, Lord? Would you remove any fear or anxiety or laziness? What do you have for us here?

[57:18] We make room for you. And for the friendships that you ordain. Thank you, Lord. Show us and let us not just be hearers of the word.

Let us be doers. Let us act right now. Let us be laser focused in how we make friends. Thank you, Lord.

In your name we pray. Amen.