

Flawed Hero: The friend before the Friend

Matt Hessel | 1 Samuel 18:1-5

How's everyone doing? Good. Good to see you.

Hey, quick. Two updates on multisite before we jump in. The reason that we are doing multisite is to see more baptisms like just happened earlier. To see people come to Christ. To see people sanctified and growing in Christ because, ultimately, the gospel is very urgent. Jesus is coming back and eternity is a very long time. So, that's why we are going.

Here's where I need you to step up. If you are a member or if you are a regular attendee and you consider this place home, here's what I need you to do. I need you to take one of these Commitment Cards if you have not already done so. There should be one in the seatback in front of you. Take this home. Pray over it. And then fill this out and bring it back next week and tell us, "Hey, here's what I feel like the Lord is calling me to give for the next two years. This is just going to inform us of the speed and the scale in which we can go. So, if you're a member and you haven't done this, if you are all in, if this is you then take one of these and fill it out and help us figure out what speed and what scale that the Lord is driving us through multisite and bring it back next week.

Second: If you are interested in going to our north-side campus, if you feel like the Lord has called you there, if you want go and serve there—and we need lots of you to do that—next weekend, next Sunday at 9 o'clock in the Block there is going to be a call-out meeting. If you've said, "Hey, I'm going to go. Hey, I'm curious about what's it's going to be like. I'm curious to see how I can serve there." Go to the call out meeting at 9 o'clock next week in the Block. Got it? Are you with me? Cool, four people are with me. Awesome.

Hey, let's go ahead and pray and then jump in.

Father, thank You that we have the freedom to come and worship You today. That we can open Your word and see what You say. You are a relational God, a God who want us to know You. I pray that your Spirit moves right now. That Your presence is here. Father, I pray that Your words speak. That Your words are remembered and if there are any of my words heard that they are forgotten. We love You. It's in Jesus name, Amen.

Hey go ahead and open your Bibles to 1 Samuel 18, 1 Samuel 18. We're going to jump back and forth between chapter 18 and chapter 20.

If you're a guest today, welcome. My name is Matt. I'm one of the pastors here and we are in part three of our series called *Flawed Hero*. If you've missed any of this you can catch up on the website or on the app. And things are a little bit different this weekend. Let me tell you what's going on.

Our lead pastor, Aaron, is off on his sabbatical break with his family. Every seven years our elders give all of our pastors a sabbatical break. The intention of that is to get away. To get away with family, to pour into them, to invest in family, rejuvenate, recharge, refuel, study and then come back ready to go for the

next ministry season. This is Aaron's sabbatical summer so he is away on his sabbatical right now which is just a huge blessing and a gift that our elders give our pastors. I have three more years but who's counting?

Let me ask you this. What's the definition of a friend? How do you define friendship? What does friendship look like? Here are a couple of quotes about friendship. Listen to these. Here's what Benjamin Franklin said about friendship. He said, "Be slow in choosing a friend and slower in changing." That's pretty good. Here's another, "Some people make enemies instead of friends because it's less trouble." Kind of depressing.

Here's what George Washington said about friendship, "Associate yourself with men of good quality if you esteem your own reputation, for it is better to be alone than in bad company." That's good advice. Thank you George.

Here's one more. This is anonymous, "A friend is the one who comes in when the whole world has gone out." That's deep isn't it? You know that that was written in some dark corner of a coffee shop.

Those are all great attempts in defining friendship. They are great attempts but in my life experience I've found the better definition. I found a better measuring stick for what friendship really is. Real friends are identified around a particular event that might happen for you multiple times in your life. Here it is. Are you ready for this? You'll know who your friends are when it is time to move. Right?

Forget about what Benjamin Franklin or some poet said. When the moving truck pulls up to your house, it's time for you to pack up, clean parts of your house that haven't seen a dust rag in years, and move incredible amounts of large and heavy furniture that would give the Incredible Hulk a hernia—when that happens you'll know who your friends are. That's real friendship.

The posers are the ones who say, "Oh, yeah. I'd love to help but I'm going to be gone that day."

"Oh, really? It's like two months away. You're going to be gone? Where are you going to be?"

"Not here."

Those are the posers. You're real friends are the ones who show up with work gloves on, they hurt their backs because they carry so much furniture, and then they ask you, "Hey, man. Do you need help tomorrow?" That's friendship.

The Bible speaks quite a bit about friendship. It talks about the importance of it, and the purpose of it, and how friendship is a gift. Maybe the Bible's best definition of a friend is actually the description of a person. So today we're going to look at, in my opinion, one of the most underrated and overlooked people in all of Scripture, Jonathan. And we'll look at what may be the greatest friendship in all of Scripture.

See, here's the back story on Jonathan. Jonathan was king Saul's oldest son. He was first in line for the throne. He was going to be king. He had a ton of popularity with the people. He was a very likable guy. He just wasn't into himself. And Jonathan had reason to be. He didn't have that stereotypical, royal entitlement complex you would expect in someone like him. That just wasn't him.

He had a lot of reasons to think highly of himself. Besides being the next in line for the throne, Jonathan was kind of a stud on the battlefield. He did some crazy things. You can read what he does in battle throughout 1 Samuel. The guy was legit. There was one point when he finds a bunch of Philistines up on a cliff and the Philistines start talking trash to Jonathan. And he looks up at them, “Oh, okay. You want to talk smack? Alright.” Then he turns into a Navy Seal. He climbs up the side of this cliff with his bare hands and kills 20 of them while the rest take off.

The guy was no average soldier. And he wasn’t the kind of military leader who was just off behind the troops, disconnected. No, he was the guy out in front, leading up front, and he always cared about the men. And the Israelite army—they loved him for it.

He had reasons to be entitled, he had reasons to be selfish but he just wasn’t. He was the kind of guy where you are like, “Hey, man. Are you too good to be true?” That was Jonathan. He was just true. He was royalty. He was a great leader. He was a great warrior. He was loved by all. But more than anything, Jonathan loved the Lord. He was faithful to the Lord. He was dependent upon God. His loyalty ran very deep. He was a loyal guy. And his loyalty was always rooted in the Lord.

Jonathan was a very successful military leader but what he is most well known for is his friendship with David. Jonathan and David meet for the very first time right after David kills Goliath. So Jonathan would have been there in the tent when David comes to Saul and says, “Hey, let me go fight this guy. This uncircumcised Philistine—who does he think he is? The guy who keeps defying the army of the Living God. Let me go fight him.” Which is very interesting because that language was some of the exact same language that Jonathan used prior in fighting the Philistines.

When David is talking to Saul about fighting Goliath he sounded just like Jonathan. Jonathan would have been there and he would have seen David walk out by himself in front of tens-of-thousands of grown and experienced soldiers. He would have heard the Israelite army groaning and complaining that their fate was in the hands of a shepherd because remember, if he loses, they become slaves.

Jonathan would have heard how the Philistine army just laughed at David as he walked out to fight Goliath. They were like, “Are you serious? Do you not really know who Goliath is? Do we need to introduce you to Goliath? You’re really going to send this guy? Okay.” And he would have heard the taunts and the vulgarity just spewing out of Goliath’s mouth as David approached.

And then he heard how David responded. David responded to that vulgarity, those taunts by simply calling upon the name of the Lord. And then Jonathan saw what unfolded. He saw Goliath collapse after David dropped him. Not with a sword, not with a spear, not with a bow, with a rock. And then he saw David walk over and take Goliath’s sword and cut his head off.

Then Jonathan would have been in the tent when David was brought back in front of Saul holding the head of Goliath. That’s how Jonathan meets David for the very first time. He’s holding the decapitated head of a giant—please don’t ever tell me that the Bible is boring.

Look at verse 1 in chapter 18. In Saul’s tent, right after David has killed Goliath, this is when David and Jonathan meet for the first time, “As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul,” that’s David, “the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”

That's pretty strong language, right? That's not saying that Jonathan was going to buy the David fan-club t-shirt. It's not saying that he's going to start following him on Twitter. It's much stronger than that. It says that his soul was knit to the soul of David. He loved David as himself. Why? Why would someone be so immediately inclined to another person? We can all agree that Jonathan doesn't want to be the enemy of David. It's not a good idea to tick off a guy who killed ornery giants. But why the knitting of the souls? Why?

Was Jonathan so impressed by David that he wanted to be around someone who did the impossible? Eh—I mean Jonathan is no stranger to some pretty amazing things on the battlefield. He doesn't kill Goliath but he did some pretty crazy things in war. Was Jonathan just doing it for political gain? You know David just did the work of a king. The king is supposed to protect the army. And Saul did promise that whoever killed Goliath would get to marry into the royal family and would then have a seat at his court. So if Jonathan was just trying to gain a political ally with someone who was going to have immense popularity—he was just playing politics. Nothing in his past suggests that that is the kind of guy he was and the language is much too strong for that here.

What is it here that gives birth to one of the greatest friendships in Scripture? What is it? What Jonathan is drawn to in David is David's bold faith and his dependence upon God. Jonathan is like, "Here's somebody else who's loyal. Here's somebody else who has faith in Lord, somebody else who is bold enough to trust the Lord and know that, in all humility, it is the Lord's might not his own. Just like me. Jonathan is drawn to David because of a common passion.

C. S. Lewis said that a friendship is born the moment when one man says to another, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one." So Jonathan meets David for the very first time and his response is, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one. I thought I was the only one who had faith in the Lord. I thought I was the only one who was dependent upon the Lord."

Common passion can be the starting point of a friendship, "You're into that too? You like to do that also? Oh, that's how you're wired too? That's what gets you fired up also? Me too." Common passion is often the starting point of a friendship and our friendships—our closest friendships—can often tell us what our deepest passions are. Your closest friendships will reflect your deepest passions.

So, what are you really passionate about? What do your friendships indicate about that? With your closest friends what do your conversations get dominated by? What's the common theme when you get together, when you talk? Do your conversations usually center around things like sports, TV shows, movies, working out, shopping, Pinterest—if you're a dude, I hope not—your kids, your faith? What's the dominant theme of your conversations?

Now, don't get me wrong. All of those things are great things. All of those things can have a great part in friendships. In fact, those things should be a part of your friendships. You better believe that this fall I'm going to be talking to my friends about the Colts. And we're going to talk about shows like *Friday Night Lights* because I can't be your friend if you don't like *Friday Night Lights*—the series, not the movie. All great things but if those are the things, the common passion that friendships are built upon the friendships won't last. They just won't. They're not going to implode. They're not going to collapse or fall apart but eventually they are just going to fade away.

I've had friendships where the common passion was built upon sports or a hobby and eventually they just kind of fade away. You can call those people a hobby partner, but a friendship is built around a

common passion that has depth, transparency, vulnerability, and consistency. What do your deepest friendships say about your deepest passions?

Jonathan loved the Lord. That was his deepest passion. That's why he was drawn to David because David's deepest passion was for the Lord. Love for the Lord will bind together friendships tighter than any other common passion in the world. Love for the Lord is the common passion that makes friendships eternal.

You can have friendships that are eternal. I hope that you know that. You can develop and cultivate friendships right now that will last and that you can enjoy throughout eternity but you have to be intentional. And the common passion has to be based upon love for the Lord.

When you're part of one of these friendships, when you're with people who share that same passion—those types of friendships the people in them will do things for each other that nobody else on this planet will.

Flip over to chapter 20. I want to look at how one of these friendships plays out. A friendship that is built upon the common passion of love for the Lord, this is just one example with Jonathan and David. So, this is right after David kills Goliath. As soon as David kills Goliath Saul immediately puts David to use.

That's what Saul did. He saw somebody who could be advantageous to him so he would use him because he just cared about himself. So he puts David to use but he becomes jealous very quickly. Saul gets paranoid about David and then he starts to think that David is just a threat even though David has done nothing but serve him and honor him faithfully.

Because Saul looks at David and sees him as a threat, Saul tries to kill him. He tries to kill him more than once. A couple of times they are at dinner and Saul throws a spear at David. He sends out assassins to try and kill David. That's what is going on starting in chapter 20. David is running for his life, literally. You and I might have stressful lives, David was afraid that he might get hit with a spear at any moment. So, I'm going to read through verse 17 and I want us to see what one of these friendships looks like.

Verse 1, "Then David fled from Naioth in Ramah and came and said before Jonathan, 'What have I done? What is my guilt? And what is my sin before your father, that he seeks my life?' And he said to him, 'Far from it! You shall not die. Behold, my father does nothing either great or small without disclosing it to me. And why should my father hide this from me? It is not so.' But David vowed again, saying, 'Your father knows well that I have found favor in your eyes, and he thinks, "Do not let Jonathan know this, lest he be grieved." But truly, as the Lord lives and as your soul lives, there is but a step between me and death.' Then Jonathan said to David, 'Whatever you say, I will do for you.'

"David said to Jonathan, 'Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit at table with the king. But let me go, that I may hide myself in the field till the third day at evening. If your father misses me at all, then say, "David earnestly asked leave of me to run to Bethlehem his city, for there is a yearly sacrifice there for all the clan." If he says, "Good!" it will be well with your servant, but if he is angry, then know that harm is determined by him. Therefore deal kindly with your servant, for you have brought your servant into a covenant of the Lord with you. But if there is guilt in me, kill me yourself, for why should you bring me to your father?' And Jonathan said, 'Far be it from you! If I knew that it was determined by my father that harm should come to you, would I not tell you?'"

Verse 12, “And Jonathan said to David, ‘The Lord, the God of Israel, be witness! When I have sounded out my father, about this time tomorrow, or the third day, behold, if he is well disposed toward David, shall I not then send and disclose it to you? But should it please my father to do you harm, the Lord do so to Jonathan and more also if I do not disclose it to you and send you away, that you may go in safety. May the Lord be with you, as He has been with my father. If I am 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.’ And Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, ‘May the Lord take vengeance on David's enemies.’ And Jonathan made David swear again by his love for him, for he loved him as he loved his own soul.”

So David is having a pretty bad day, right? He’s like, “Hey, Jonathan your dad has lost his mind. He’s trying to kill me. And could you please tell me what I’ve done wrong? Because if I’ve done something wrong just kill me yourself, but I don’t think that I have done anything wrong. Is it just me or is he taking crazy pills?”

What does Jonathan do? Well Jonathan reassures his friend of his innocence. He calms him down and he says, “I will serve you, I will help you. I will keep you safe.” Jonathan gives his friend peace. In a moment of great trouble he gives his friend peace. Jonathan is siding with David, not his own father. And it’s not because he’s mad at his dad because he didn’t buy him a car on his 16th birthday, he’s siding with David because, number one he’s a man of character. Number two, he knows that David is innocent. Number three, and most importantly, Jonathan knows that it would please the Lord to serve the righteous over the evil.

And if the son of a king has a dad who is trying to kill you, if the son of that king steps up into your corner to help you, to serve you, to protect you—that has to bring a lot of comfort, right? In this conversation between two friends I have to think that Jonathan is giving David a lot of comfort because that’s what friends do. A good friend makes the good days twice and good and the bad days half as bad. That’s what Jonathan is doing. He’s making the bad day half as bad.

Have you ever experienced that before with your friends? You love those types of friends, right? You praise God for those friends because when the bullets start flying, when everything is going to hell in a hand basket, your real friends are the ones who show up and jump in the trenches. When everything is going great, when you are just winning at life, your friends are the ones who show up and celebrate. Are you the type of friend who makes the good days twice as good and the bad days half as bad?

Are you the type of friend who jumps into the trenches? Do your friends know that they can call on you? Are you the type of friend who shows up and just celebrates when your friends are winning? When your friends are winning, when they are doing great, when they are more successful than you, when they are being used in more ways that you are, when they have different gifts than you have, do you rejoice with them or do you resent them? However you respond to the successes and the failures of your friends and other people, however you respond will be an indication of what your heart is really fixated upon.

Saul looked at David and saw a pawn. Here’s somebody that I can use for my own benefit because that’s what Saul did. He just cared about himself. He never looked outward. He always looked inward, “Here’s somebody that I can use for my own benefit.” Then he got jealous of David. Then he got paranoid. Then he saw him as a threat.

Jonathan saw David and rejoiced over his faith, a faith that even he lacked because, remember, Jonathan was there when Goliath was mocking the Lord and mocking Israel. Jonathan had the chance to stand up and fight but didn't. David did. Jonathan rejoiced over David for the faith that even he lacked.

So how do you see people? Do you see people like Jonathan? Or do you see people like Saul? What's your inclination? Is it to rejoice with or is to resent? The only way to be the kind of friend Jonathan was—the only way to do that is to make yourself second. That's what he is doing, making himself second for a friend. And make no mistake. The way that Jonathan is serving David is not in a way that doesn't cost him anything. Jonathan helping his friend, David, serving him like this is a massive, massive sacrifice for Jonathan.

Flip back to chapter 18. I want us to see what he gave up. Look at verse one again, "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 who Jonathan is. Jonathan is the one in the position of power. He's the one who is in power yet he's the one who initiates the covenant. He didn't have to do that. He wasn't obligated to do that. He's the prince. He could do whatever he wanted. But he chose, out of his own good nature... Jonathan, right here gives up his status, his security, and his skill for his friend David.

His status was his robe. Remember Jonathan is first in line for the throne. He's going to be king after Saul and yet he just gives his robe to David. What he is doing by giving his robe to David is that he is saying, "Hey, I'm not the king—you are." He just gave up his royalty. He just gave up the throne. That's like you winning the presidential election next year in a landslide and then turning to your closest friend and saying, "Here, here's the oval office. Take it. It's yours." He just gave up his status as future king.

His armor was his security. Later on in chapter 20 Jonathan and Saul are arguing about David. And Jonathan is trying to protect and keep David safe. Saul gets ticked off and throws his spear at him. He throws a spear at his own son. Saul had this thing with throwing spears. If he ever got mad, no rational dialogue he just threw a spear at you. Jonathan doesn't care. He puts his own life on the line to protect his friend. He gave up his security for his friend.

His bow was his skill. So Jonathan had a little bit of Robin Hood in him. He was an all-around great warrior but his specialty was his bow. So by giving David his bow he's saying, like we saw earlier he's saying, "Whatever you need—whatever I can do for you... Hey, David, I'm going to serve you. So by giving you my bow here's what I'm saying to you David, 'Here's my skill, take it. Here's my talent, here's my gift—it's yours, take it.'" By giving David his bow he is saying to David, "Hey, man. I've got your back. I've got your back." And there's nothing better to hear from a close friend than, "I've got your back."

Then he gives David his sword. And what he would have done is hand his sword, hilt first, to David. So in this context, to do that, to hand someone your sword like that is a sign of vulnerability. You hand somebody your sword, they can just grab it and kill you on the spot. So, by giving David his sword he's saying, "My life is in your hands. I'm giving you my life."

He just gives up his status, his security, his skill, and his life for his friend, his future kingdom, his wealth, his livelihood, even his own physical life. And he knows how this could play out. Jonathan knows what this could mean because in this context a new king would often kill off the entire remaining line of the previous king. They would do that in order to get rid of any potential rivals or enemies to the throne. So, Jonathan knows that by giving David his throne, by giving David his life, he himself might be the first person to be killed even though he's innocent and honorable.

He doesn't care. He gives up his livelihood and his very life for his friend because he wants to see his friend succeed. A real friend thrives when his friend succeeds. How do you do that? How do you thrive like that? Do you get great satisfaction whenever you are able to help friends succeed?

How do you get to the point where you are willing to let go of everything that you have for someone else? You know, it's one thing to let go of a privilege or something that is temporary, it's an entirely different thing to let go of yourself, your status, your security, your life for another. How do you do that and how do you do it and make sure that it's not just lip service?

Here's how you do it. Before Jonathan made a covenant with David, before he let go of everything he had for his friend, he loved David. He loved him. One of my favorite verses in all of Scripture is John 15:13, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." That's Jonathan. But you have to love before you can ever let go of yourself. Jonathan loved before he let go. His loved allowed him to let go.

This is the beauty of the gospel. Whenever you get to the point where you are willing to love and let go in front of Jesus, whenever you're willing to say to Jesus, "Hey, I'm not the king You are," at that moment Jesus doesn't call us subjects and He doesn't call us servants, He calls us friends. This is Jesus talking in John 15. This is right before He's arrested, right before the crucifixion. He's talking to His disciples and He says, "Hey, what I'm about to go do, I'm about to go die for you and this is going to be the greatest act of love the world has ever known."

The way He describes who the greatest act of love is for is one of the most thrilling things in all of Scripture. He doesn't say that the greatest act of love is a groom dying for his bride. He doesn't say the greatest act of love is a father dying for his children. He doesn't say it's a sibling dying for a sibling. He doesn't say it's a king dying for his servants. Those are all relational descriptions of who Jesus is to us. But in His very last moments, the King of Glory, Jesus, the Son of God, God Himself said, "I'm going to die for My friends." The last relational description Jesus uses to describe those who follow Him is friend. It's friend.

Let that sink in. Friend. Let that shape your perception of who God really is. Friend. God's not standing behind you waiting for you to screw up so He can nail you. That's not who He is. He is not some isolated and distant Judge just keeping a ledger. He's not silent and unapproachable because of Jesus who is God, and He now calls us friends. I can't convince you of that. All I can do is tell you the truth. As I sat in my office this week I prayed that if you know Christ, if you're in Christ, that you would be overwhelmed by the fact that Jesus calls you friend.

If you don't know Christ, if you're not following Christ I prayed that you would be overwhelmed by the fact that the Living God, the God of the universe is offering you friendship. The cross is the greatest invitation to friendship that the world has ever known.

Whether you know Christ or not, whether you are following Him or not, I also prayed that you would have the courage and faith to let go of whatever it is you need to let go of. What do you need to let go of before the Lord? What sin do you need to let go of? What status do you need to let go of? What security do you need to let go of? What skill do you need to let go of? What do you need to let go of before the Lord and then have the courage and the faith to say, "I'm not king You are."

Jonathan loved David as his own soul. Then he made a covenant with him. Then he let go. Jesus loves us as His friends and He made a covenant with us and then He let go. Just like Jonathan, Jesus is in the position of power. He is the One in power. And He is the One who initiated the covenant with us. He didn't have to do that.

One of the most classic questions for Christianity is, "Why did Jesus have to die on the cross?" And the answer to that question is actually very simple. The answer to it is He didn't have to. He didn't have to at all. He wasn't obligated. He's God. But He chose to. What does that say about our God? Grace is not out of obligation, grace is out of generosity. We worship a God who is not obligated, we worship a generous God. And without grace you and I, we're condemned. But He chose to. He chose to out of His own good nature.

And just like Jonathan gave up his robe, He took our filthy rags and said, "Here, here's My righteous robe. Here, you can have My royal robe. It's yours. Take it." Just like Jonathan, Jesus gave up the throne. He got off of His throne, put on human flesh, came, suffered, and died so that He could hand us the key to the throne room. Just like Jonathan, Jesus died for His friends because a real friend thrives when his friend succeeds.

You and I, without the gospel, without grace we cannot succeed. Who do you think thrives when He gives it to us? Jesus. Who do you think is glorified when we succeed through His grace and His power? Jesus. He has no needs Himself but He put aside Himself so that we could have the chance to become a friend.

Jonathan is the biblical description of friendship. Jonathan a model of Jesus and here's why he is. Jonathan was nothing less than a man who was freed from worldly thinking and self-concerns so that he could truly love. And who doesn't want to be around someone like that? Someone who is not caught up in the patterns of the world, who is not wrapped up in the thinking processes of the world, and who is not wrapped up in his own selfish ambitions. Who doesn't want to be around someone like that?

Who doesn't want to be around people who love the Lord first and it's obvious, who put everyone else second, and who willingly put themselves third, people who you never have to wonder about their loyalty, you never question what their motives are, people who want you to succeed, people who want you to grow.

Who doesn't want to be around someone who you can trust the deepest parts of yourself with? Someone who makes you feel like you are the most important person in the world to them in that moment. Who doesn't want to be around someone like that? That was Jonathan.

This is how we become attractive. This has to be our attraction as Christians to other believers but, most importantly, to the world. Here me on this. People will not be attracted to the music and they will not be attracted to the lights. People will not be attracted to an awesome building, they will not be attracted to fantastic programs, and they won't be attracted to Creekside Middle School because it's a great facility

for our first multisite. All of those are great things. Great things and they're intended to engage. That's their purpose. They are tools but they won't attract.

People will be attracted to a community that is saturated and transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ where everyone present, at their core, loves their Lord their God with all of their heart, strength, soul, and mind and who loves their neighbors as themselves. They will be attracted to Jonathans.

Traders Point, this is not something that we should be. This is something that we have to be. People will be attracted to our friendship. They will be attracted to the way that we love each other. Jesus says, "Hey, if you lift up My name, I will draw all men to Myself." We have nothing to do with drawing people. That's the work of the Lord. We have nothing to do with it. But what kind of church do you think Jesus wants to draw people to? A church full of Jonathans or a church full of Sauls? What kind of church do you want to be a part of? A church full of Jonathans or a church full of Sauls?

Truly love Jesus first so that you can love others truly. And have love for others enough that you can love them like Jesus did. He loves people enough to tell them the truth with grace and humility. If you don't love other people, you don't really love Jesus because love for Jesus and no love for others—that's an oxymoron. Those things don't mix. But when you are a part of something that is bigger than yourself, when you're able to let go and be a part of that, that's when you'll be truly free to love. Then you'll be a Jonathan.

The more this life is about you; the more miserable you're going to be. That's just how it is. There is going to be a hole that never gets filled. In fact, that hole is only going to get bigger. But whenever you let go, that's when you become free, that's when you are overwhelmed with joy. And this is the way it works with the Lord. With the Lord the way up is always down, it's always down. Love for the Lord and love for others is the summation of our faith and only faith makes us willing to be lesser. That's the only thing.

Jonathan had the faith to make himself lesser. Jonathan had the faith to let go of everything he had in front of his friend, in front of the king, which is exactly what made him like the one true King. In their relationship, in their context sin would have made Jonathan and David bitter rivals. It would have killed them both. It would have—but faith made them loving brothers. We all need loving brothers, we all need loving sisters in our lives. We need Jonathans in our lives. We need to be Jonathan.

Friendship is a gift from the Lord. If you have friendships that are built around a common passion for the Lord, friendships that have depth, and vulnerability, and transparency, and consistency those friendships are invaluable, they are priceless. God has blessed me with a few of those friendships and those guys, I'll tell you what, I'll charge hell with a Super Soaker with those guys.

Yesterday was the anniversary of D-day. I can't imagine what it was like to storm the beaches of Normandy but I have to guess that what was driving those guys was the friend next to them. Friendship is a gift. It's meant to be enjoyed. And the purpose of it actually goes much deeper than that. We can talk on, and on, and on about the purpose of friendship but here are three purposes.

Number one: Friends encourage. Encouragement from a close and trusted friend is invaluable. That will rejuvenate, that will sustain. If you encourage a close friend that will drive him—that's like wind in the sails. Here's what you do with your friends. Encourage them, encourage them, and then encourage them some more. Encouragement is the investment paid for friendship.

Number two: Push. Your real friends push you toward Jesus. They push you to grow in Jesus. Your closest friends, do they push toward Christ or do they push you away? Do you push your friends closer to Christ or away from Him?

Proverbs 27:17 is a classic verse. It says, “Iron sharpens iron so that one man sharpens another.” I love that verse. It’s so true. Iron sharpens iron. But what does wood do to iron? If you take a piece of steel—you take a blade to a piece of wood, what’s it going to do? Is it going to sharpen it? No, it’s going to dull it, right? Do your closest friends sharpen or do they dull you? Are they iron or are they a piece of wood? Are you a piece of iron or are you a piece of wood?

Now, I’m not saying that you shouldn’t have non-Christian friends. That’s not what I am saying at all. In fact, that’s entirely unbiblical. Jesus had non-Christian friends. Your non-Christian friends are in your life and you might be the only Jesus they ever know. It’s vital, it’s important but your closest friends have to push you toward Christ—they have to. And you have to push your friends toward Christ and not away. And if you don’t know if you push your friends toward Christ or away, ask them.

Number three: Friends correct. Real friends call each other out when needed but it’s always, always in love and it’s always with the intention of blessing the other person. So if one of my closest friends comes up to me and says, “Hey, Matt. I see this sin in you. I see some error. I see something in you that needs to be addressed.” Well, I’m going to be like, “Well, you know what?” I’m going to be like, “I know that you love me. I know that you only want me to grow. I know that you invest in me. So brother, if you’re saying this it must be true. What is it?”

You don’t speak with that kind of directness to someone unless you’ve invested in them way ahead of time, and a lot. Encouragement doesn’t come right before correction. Encourage your friends long before you ever have to come to a point of correction and then love your friend enough to call him out in a way that builds him up and glorifies the Lord. It’s for his blessing.

And love your friend enough to listen because what’s harder? Receiving loving correction from a close and trusted friend or giving it? That loving correction that’s coming from a trusted friend might feel like a punch in the gut to you, but that punch in the gut to you—that breaks your friend’s hand because he doesn’t want to have that conversation with you.

You don’t want to hurt your friends. You want them to thrive. You want them to succeed. Proverbs also says that faithful and trusted are the wounds of a friend. So have enough love to correct. Have enough love to listen. Have enough grace to do both because friendship is a privilege. In fact, at the same time it’s a necessity. Friendship is basically non-negotiable with Christians.

I few years ago, Kelly and I ran a marathon—we were talked into running a marathon with some friends. Let me just say—why are you starting to laugh? Nine o’clock did that too. I’m feeling kind of insecure now. Let me just validate your laughter. That was a terrible idea. It was a terrible idea. There is no such thing as a runner’s high. It’s a myth. It doesn’t exist. I’m never doing that again. It was hard. That marathon was really hard. But what made it infinitely better, made it much more enjoyable, was running it with friends.

So, following Jesus is not always rainbows and butterflies. There are going to be some huge mountaintops when you follow Jesus. We saw some of those today, baptism—huge mountaintop. But there are also going to be some deserts. There are also going to be some valleys. And if Jesus went

through deserts, if He went through valleys, if Jesus went through trials and suffered and He lived a perfect life, what makes us think that we won't go through the same thing? So, when that happens, your friends are the ones who step up.

Following Christ is a race, it's not a sprint. It's a marathon. And in this marathon of following Christ—your friends are your running mates. They are the ones who are encouraging you, who are pushing you, they are the ones running over to the drink table and grabbing you a cup of water, they're the ones who are pointing out a pothole. And you are doing the exact same thing for your friends because there are going to be times when your knees hurt. There are going to be times when you are dehydrated, where you are cramping up and you feel like tapping out—that's going to happen.

Your friends are the ones who step up next to you and run with you. Maybe they even pick you up if they have to. And you do the exact same thing for your friends. Our friends are our running partners. We all need Jonathans. We all need to be Jonathans. Let's be that. Let's be a church of Jonathans.

I'm going to pray and then we're going to go into a time of communion where I just want you to reflect on the fact that Jesus died so that He could call you friend. Let that overwhelm you.

Father, thank You that we can enter into the throne room and call You Father, and call Your Son Jesus friend. How patient are You. How gracious are You. How great are You that You would call us friends. That You would call someone like me who is a terrible friend to You but You still love me and say, "No, you're My friend, Matt."

Lord, I pray that You would overwhelm us with Your grace and Your generosity and the invitation to walk with You as a friend. Father convict, encourage, open hearts, soften them, break them. I pray that You would sanctify and edify the church right now. That Your Spirit would move. I pray that You will bring children to Yourself. I pray that people will come to know You for the first time.

May we be a church that is full of Jonathans. We want to be like Your servant, Jonathan. We want people to walk in here and we want to meet people out on the street Monday through Saturday and have them say, "Man, those guys look a lot like Jesus. They look a lot like Your servant, Jonathan."

Father, give us the faith to make us willing to let go of whatever it is we need to let go of in front of You and say, "Jesus, You are the King. I'm all in." Thank You for Your word. We love You. It's in Jesus name we pray. Amen.