

MESSAGE TRANSCRIPT //

SIGNIFICANT OTHER | FRIENDSHIP

KYLE RILEY | MAY 29, 2022

Traders Point, how are we doing today? That it so good. It's good to be here. I just want to take a moment to welcome everybody at all of our campuses—love all of our campuses equally, but a special shout-out to our Downtown campus, that's my home, that's my family—everybody tuning in online, we're so glad that you are with us.

If you are just joining us right now, I have the privilege of wrapping up a sermon series that we're in called *Significant Other*. And what we've been doing is we have been walking through what God's Word has to say about relationships.

I don't know about you, but I've been deeply impacted by this series. It has challenged me with things that I have needed, and it has provoked some really great conversations, I would say, both at home and also within the church, with a few people here.

We've just been acknowledging that there is this reality, I think we all can agree, that some of the best and most rewarding aspects of life has to do with relationships. And I think we could agree that some of the most challenging and painful things about life have to do with relationships.

And on the surface it may seem like: How can those two things coexist? That seems a little contradictory. How can something that has the potential to be so life-giving also have the potential to be so hurtful and cause so much destruction? It almost seems like a paradox.

But what we've been seeing is that it is all rooted in the creation story. Back in Genesis, in chapters 1, 2, and 3, God created Adam and Eve; He created them to live in union together. He created them to have beautiful fellowship, both with Him and with one another. And it was beautiful. It was perfect, until chapter 3 happens, and sin enters the world and things go really south really fast. And it breeds pride and selfishness, and self-preservation begins to happen causing a rift between their relationship.

Today pride and selfishness and self-preservation still cause us to have conflicts within our relationships. It's a natural byproduct of who we are. But thanks to Jesus, Jesus has come to both redeem and reclaim that brokenness that exists so the we can find hope in Him and in all of our relationships, whether that's in marriage, or whether it's in dating, or our sexuality—no matter what it is, all of our relationships are impacted both by the results of the fall but also by the redemption that is available through Jesus.

So I think all of these types of relationships are important, whether that's marriage or dating but today I want us to focus on a particular type of relationship, one that I think is so essential to our well-being but also to our growth as people and especially our spiritual growth and that is friendship, friendship.

I think you all would agree that friendships deeply impact us in some tremendous ways. And I want you to think back in your life over some of the most memorable moments

that you've had, the milestones, the celebrations, the trouble that you got into growing up, the trouble that you still get into today as an adult. They likely included a friend. Friendships are extremely valuable.

And I couldn't help but think of some of TV's most notable friendships, friendships over the years that have made us both laugh as well as cry. My mind got to running and I came up with a list of a few of them.

Golden Girls: come on, any *Golden Girls* people in here? Blanche, Dorothy, all of the crew. *Friends* right? Classic: Ross, Joey, Chandler, Phoebe, Monica, Rachel—got to love them. One of my favorites, *A Different World*, what about *A Different World*? Ron, Willy, Dwayne Wayne? Classic. I love it.

I know I probably lost Gen Z up to this point. You are like, "I'm not tracking with you."

Hold with me. I've got you. *Stranger Things*. Come on: Lester, Will, Lucas, Mike.

Man, talk about getting into some trouble, it's these guys. I don't even have to say it [*The Office*]. Dwight Schrute and Michael Scott, arguably one of the funniest friendships that exist.

One of my favorites, can't leave this out, *Martin*. Man, what do you all know about *Martin*? Pam, Gina, Tommy, Kole, Marty Marr. *Martin* gave me permission as a kid to kick my friends out whenever they made me mad. Just like, "Get out."

I think it's obvious that our society values friendship. It values what friendships bring into our lives. It values all of the elements of friendship. And that's because God made us this way. He made us to be in connection with one another.

And God even points to that in His Word. Over and over again we see these valuable friendships that exist all throughout Scripture. Friendships like Naomi and Ruth. Paul has this friendship with Silas and Timothy and Barnabas. Aaron and Moses. And then even Jesus with His 12 disciples, particularly with his inner three: Peter, James, and John. Man, the Bible is replete with friendships.

Today I want us to focus on a particular friendship, one that you may or may not be familiar with. It's the story and the friendship of David and Jonathan. It can be found in 1 Samuel, chapter 18. So if you have a Bible or a device with a Bible on it, go ahead and turn to 1 Samuel in the Old Testament.

Before we get there, in chapter 18, I kind of have to catch us up to what has been going on up to this point. Jonathan is the oldest son of King Saul. And Jonathan is this incredible warrior. He is probably in his mid-20s during this time. Many of us are familiar with who David is. Even if you didn't grow up in church you've likely heard of his claim to fame: Goliath.

David and Jonathan actually meet shortly after David has just taken down Goliath. In fact, in chapter 17, right before this, it says that David killed Goliath and then Saul called over to David and he wanted to actually have a conversation with him. He was like, "Who is this young boy? Bring him to me so we can have a conversation."

And the Scripture says that David comes to Saul still holding the chopped off head of Goliath in his hands. They left that part out of Sunday School growing up, but I think that is so dope. David just walks up still holding the head of Goliath in his hands.

So they have this conversation, he and King Saul, and then right after that he meets King Saul's son, Jonathan. And that's where we're going to pick up in chapter 18, starting in verse 1. Let's look at what it says. It says:

"After David had finished talking with Saul," still holding Goliath's head, "he met Jonathan, the king's son. There was an immediate bond between them, for Jonathan loved David. From that day on Saul kept David with him and wouldn't let him return home."

Look at this:

"And Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, because he loved him as he loved himself. Jonathan sealed the pact by taking off his robe and giving it to David, together with his tunic, sword, bow, and belt."

I want to put a pin in that. Hold on to that because we're going to revisit that last verse here in a little bit.

I think there is a lot here in these two verses that we're just going to highlight and lift out of the text to see how we can apply this to our lives, because they have the potential to really speak into how we should navigate our friendships.

The first thing that we see is that there was an immediate bond between them. That's what the Scripture says. The first thing that happened is... I think it's one of these types of connections like some translations say; they were actually one in spirit. And we don't know what particularly caused them to connect or to have this immediate bond, but something did.

Actually, on the surface there weren't too many things that really united them. There weren't a lot of similarities between them, so that's what I think is funny about this.

David comes from the rural countryside and Jonathan is a city boy. David is the youngest of his brothers. Jonathan is the oldest of his brothers.

David had never experienced battle or war prior to killing Goliath. Jonathan was like Rambo. He was an incredible warrior. He once killed 20 people by himself. It was him and his sidekick. So we don't know what commonality they had but there was something that caused them to look at one another and say, "Hey, we can be friends."

I think the same thing happens to us today. Once we unite with somebody and we find out that we have some kind of similarity, there's something there that is, "Hey, like, we could possibly develop a relationship here."

Author and theologian C.S. Lewis, whom we've referred to a couple of times throughout this series, talks about what it's like to initiate this kind of friendship. Look at what he says. He says:

The typical expression of opening friendship would be something like, "What? You too? I thought I was the only one." ... It is when two such persons discover one another, when, whether with immense difficulties and semi-articulate fumbblings or with what would

seem to us amazing and elliptical speed, they share their vision. It is then that friendship is born. And instantly they stand together in an immense solitude.

It's almost like that scene from *Step Brothers*. Anybody know what I'm talking about where Dale and Brennan have been having this beef up to this point and they find out they have some similar interests and they were like, "Did we just become best friends?" "Yep."

"Do you want to go do karate in the garage?"

"Yep."

Lewis says there is something when we bond with somebody, we have this bond and it unites us: whether it's a similar interest, a shared experience of some sort, whether we have some kind of commonality, something that unites us. And I think that that is so imperative for us to know. Whether it's sports or fitness or faith—there is something that tethers us together with somebody else.

I think on the surface it seems like it's relatively simple, right? And it seems like that shouldn't be so hard. But have you ever tried making friends as an adult? It's so complicated. We make it so complex.

I think that when we are kids it seems like it is so easy. Like you're on the playground and you're trying to find somebody else. It's like, "Hey, you've got on the same red shirt just like me. You want to be friends? Great come over. Let's play some video games." As an adult, man, we make it way more complicated than what it needs to be.

I found this example of what it is like to make friends. And I think it is so true. For one, say, "We should hang." Do not hang. Six months later say, "We should hang." Schedule time then. Canceled. Respect the cancellation. Reschedule. Actually hang. Say, "We should do this more often." Number 10, die.

This is my wife. Every time we get together with friends there is always something coming up: sick kids, busy schedules, you name it. Sometimes we just blank on the fact that we made other plans with somebody else. And it's like, "How do we tell these people that we can't hang with them anymore?" Awkward.

But, we have this tendency to put some of the most valuable things that we need in life, including friendships, on the back burner. Let me say, just because it's complicated, it doesn't mean that we abandon the pursuit of cultivating deep, meaningful friendships that God wants us to have.

And here is why:

Friendship fulfills our desire to belong.

If you are taking notes, write that down. Friendship fulfills our desire to belong. All of us have this desire, whether we want to admit it or not, and God wants us to experience the richness of having friends to share our lives with.

But there is also this enemy who does not want that to happen. There is an enemy who wants to isolate us and get us alone and to feel the results of loneliness and depression and keep us from making these intimate and deep friendships. And he wants us to

actually look for things outside of friendship in order to fulfill this need so that he can really just turn up this dial on our loneliness and depression.

I think it is interesting that although we live in a world that is more connected than it's ever been, our world is also lonelier than it has ever been before. In His book called *The Wisdom Pyramid* which I highly recommend, *The Wisdom Pyramid* by Brett McCracken, he talks about the effect and the presence of loneliness. Let's look at what he says as a result of that. He says:

Loneliness has the same impact on mortality, [look at this] as smoking 15 cigarettes a day, making it more dangerous than obesity as is increasingly regarded by governments around the world.

He would go on to say:

Generation Z are living their lives through their phones, and they are not happier. With lives characterized by ever present screen time, texting and social media, Generation Z has been defined by rising rates of depression, loneliness, anxiety, sleeplessness, and suicidal ideation.

And I would argue that this isn't just applicable to Gen Z. I think all of us have felt the effects of this, especially in the last two years. In fact, U.S. Surgeon General, Doctor Vivek Murthy, recently said:

Our country is experiencing an epidemic of loneliness driven by the accelerated pace of life and the spread of technology into all of our social interactions. With this acceleration [listen] efficiency and convenience have edged out the time-consuming messiness of real relationships.

Satan is having a field day with this. He uses our pride and our busyness and the illusion of self-sufficiency to keep us from creating the bonds that are meant to be life-giving and mirror our relationships with God.

And maybe you might be hearing this and thinking, "No, not me, Kyle. That doesn't really apply to me. I have friends." And that's great. But based on the numbers, somebody either near you, next to you, or around you is feeling the effect of what I just described and I think we need to look past the surface level acquaintances and the social media followers that we are so prone to cling to in our day and we have to look for something a lot deeper, something that God has always meant for us to have, people who we can truly confide in and experience the hardships and pain of life with.

David and Jonathan knew exactly that they needed this as well, which is why they didn't just say, "Hey, let's be friends," and left it at that. They did it something meaningful, something to really solidify this. Look at what it says again in verse 3:

"And Jonathan made a solemn pact with David..."

And we don't know all of the details of what this pact actually looked like. We don't know if they took some verbal vows or if they cut open their palms and shook hands, like blood brothers. But they did something tangible, something that was going to anchor them in their commitment to one another. Something that would remind them

that they were friends so that it wouldn't just stay ethereal; it wouldn't just stay surface level.

It was almost like they knew that their friendship was going to be tested at some point in their lives. And, man, would it be tested. I think if you continue to read on in the story that you would see that David starts to gain fame and notoriety as he becomes this prominent warrior and Jonathan's dad, Saul, is not there for it. He is like, "I am not about this up-and-coming, rising star. I'm going to do everything I can to take him out."

And in verse 14 it says:

"David continued to succeed in everything he did, for the Lord was with him. When Saul recognized this, he became even more afraid of him."

Saul's fear would end up turning into anger and jealousy and bitterness, so much so, that he hunts David down and pursues him in the wilderness chasing him from town to town to town. And he even tried to get his son, Jonathan, to assassinate David.

Keep in mind up at this point David has actually been appointed by God to be the next king after Saul. And so while Jonathan probably had every right, being the rightful next king in line—because he's the oldest son of Saul, he should have been the next king—he had every right to be jealous and bitter and allow that to cause a rift in their relationship, but he doesn't.

In fact he runs to David during his most meaningful and lowest time of need, and he actually is an incredible friend. Look at what it says in verse 23 as David is in the wilderness, running from Saul, Jonathan comes to him in an incredible moment of need. It says:

"One day near Horesh, David received the news that Saul was on the way to Ziph to search for him and kill him. Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God." Man, I love that. He said, "Don't be afraid.... My father will never find you! You are going to be the king of Israel, and I will be next to you, as my father, Saul, is well aware." And then look at this. It says, "So the two of them renewed their solemn pact before the Lord..."

Here what we see is this element of constancy and loyalty that should exist within friendships. But more than that, I love how Jonathan made an encouraging statement in his faith and even challenges him throughout their friendship, which leads me to my next point if you are taking notes:

Friendship requires encouragement, challenge, and commitment.

And here, what we're going to do is we're going to break down each one of these three elements: encouragement, challenge, and commitment because they are so crucial to life-giving, God centered friendships.

Let's start with encouragement. The Scripture says that Jonathan went to find David and encouraged him to stay strong in his faith in God. Encouragement is so powerful. Man, it fuels our soul, especially when it comes from somebody close to us who we love, and we trust.

Proverbs 27:9 says:

“The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.”

Man, when I have a friend who says, “Kyle, I believe in you. Kyle, I love you. Kyle, I am for you, and I am with you. Kyle, I am encouraging you in your walk with Jesus. Man, keep going,” man, it is so life-giving, especially for someone like me. One of my top love languages is words of affirmation. Man, I just eat it up and I need it.

But I’m actually on the other side of trying to be this friend. I’m actually trying to become more encouraging. I don’t know about you, but, man, that’s not one of my strengths. It doesn’t really come easily to me. I have to work at it.

I have a friend and once a month we get together at six a.m., and we get breakfast together and we have these really meaningful conversations. We check in on each other, “How are you doing? How is marriage? How is your walk with Jesus?” And in the past year it has just really blossomed into something that I didn’t even know that I needed.

A couple of weeks ago, I am in Costco, and he called me, FaceTimed me out of nowhere and he said, “Hey, man. I just need an ear right now. I’m struggling. Life is hard. And I just need you to be there.” And I wasn’t trying to fix it. I wasn’t trying to do anything to solve the problem. I was just there. I was present with him.

We ended up scheduling dinner together and we got together, and we talked for over three hours about life and what we were experiencing right now. And I left dinner and I felt like there were some things that God wanted me to say that I didn’t say during our time together.

I normally would have brushed it off, pray for him when I got home. But something nudged me to actually just pick up the phone. And I sent him a voice memo, a voice text. And I just said, “Hey, man. I know life is really hard right now, but I want you to know that you are an incredible father. You are an amazing husband. You are a great brother to me.

“And we don’t do this enough, especially as men, especially as Black men. I want you to know that I have your back and that I admire your walk with Jesus. You inspire me.” I just told him, “Hey, man. Keep going.”

And I think we need to do that more within our friendships. I know I need that. When he has done that for me it has been some of the most life-giving encouraging words that I’ve ever received and I need these words to keep on going in my walk with Jesus, as a father, as a husband, just as a person living life. We cannot, we cannot, minimize the power that our words have, especially when it comes to honoring and being Spirit led in the way that we encourage our friends.

The second thing that we have to do within our relationships, within our friendships, is we have to challenge. We have to challenge. Proverbs 27:17 says:

“As iron sharpens iron, so a friend sharpens a friend.”

And man, I hear that proverb a lot. I’ve even seen the first half of it in gyms, on the wall, plastered up there, “Iron sharpens iron.” Get after it together. Push each other. I think that’s great, but I think that there is something that is more to that proverb.

Have you ever seen iron being sharpened? I'm not a blacksmith. It's hard to believe looking up here. But I've seen it done before. When iron is sharpened there are sparks flying. There is heat and there is fire. And there's clashing and there is banging, these little hammer thingamabobs—mallets? I don't know what they are.

What's my point? When it comes to relationships, challenge is painful. It's painful. It's hard. It means that we have to have some hard but crucial conversations. We have to have the relational equity to give our friends permission to speak into areas of our life, even if we don't want it but we know that we need it.

We have to be able to say, "Hey, I don't think that is a wise decision to make." "Hey, I don't think the post that you made on social media is the best representation of Jesus. Man, would you consider taking it down or re-phrasing the way that you said that? Let's talk through that."

We've got to be able to say, "Hey, sis. I see that you're starting to become really close with that person who is not your husband. And I love you. And I don't want your husband, your family to get hurt. Let's talk about this."

We've got to be able to say, "Hey, bro. Man, I know that you gave into temptation last week. And please know that there is grace available for you, but I'm challenging you and I'm praying that you would not give in this week. Let's walk through this hand in hand. If you are tempted this week, pick up the phone and call me."

We've got to be able to challenge our friends in our relationships. And it's because we love them. Because we love our friends we challenge them, not from a place of superiority, but from a place of, "Hey, I'm a fellow sinner walking this life out with you. Let's do it hand in hand. I want to help you look more like Jesus."

The third thing is commitment. And we'll talk through this really quickly. Proverbs 17:17 says:

"A friend is always loyal, and a brother is born to help in times of need."

It's this idea that, "No matter what happens, I'm not going anywhere. I'm devoted to this friendship, and we have to see it flourish together. We have to stay constant. We have to stay committed to this friendship."

And I think this is probably the toughest one of them all. I think this is where we struggle the most. And I personally know the pain of having a friendship either deteriorate or a friendship that didn't last. And maybe you can relate.

Maybe the reason that you are checked out or you haven't really been listening or it's hard for you to hear what I'm saying is because you are thinking in the back of your mind, "Kyle, I had that. I had what you are talking about. At least I thought I did. At least I thought I had that type of friendship."

And maybe you are wounded over the friendship that no longer exists. Maybe there was a season of your life where you thought that a friend who was loyal, but somewhere along the way, he stopped returning the texts, he stopped reaching out, he said some mean and hurtful things to you, or talked about you behind your back. Or, maybe life just

caused you guys to go your separate directions and you're wounded by the friendship that is no longer there.

And if you're honest it has hardened your heart and you've built walls around it and you are rejecting the idea of letting anyone get close to you again because you are like, "I don't need that again. I don't need that pain. I don't need that hurt."

I'm going to say, "I hear you. And I understand." Can I just propose to you this? Today may be the day that God is asking you to just fully surrender and forgive so that your heart can become tender again and so that you can experience the rich love that is needed in relationships.

Some of us have experienced deep friendship wounds that have made us bitter and cynical and closed off. I know because I'm the one who gets the emails. I get the prayer requests. I get the counseling sessions when there has been some relational trauma, even from friendships, that have caused some deep wounds and you're hurting and you're lonely.

Let me just tell you, God wants to heal that because you need the encouragement you need the challenge, and you need the commitment from a loving friend. Don't give up on that.

I think the last thing that we haven't really wanted to point our attention toward as we look back at that initial interaction of David and Jonathan is we see something that is really undergirding their friendship and that's this deep, brotherly love that they had for one another. And it's incredible to really look at that. In verse 3, if we look at that again, it says:

"And Jonathan made a solemn pact with David," and look at why he made it, it says, *"because he loved him as he loved himself."*

And my question as I read that over and over and over again this week is: Does that type of love exist today between friends?

I want to be careful because I can't generalize. I can't say it applies for all friendships, for all relationships, but I also wonder: Does it exist today? And do we truly express this type of love?

I would say: not really.

There is something that really prevents us from getting to the deep and intimate kind of relationships with our friends. And honestly, the more that I've pressed into it, the more I begin to realize that a lot of it has to do with our view of intimacy. We have tethered intimacy and romance together. And we think that we can't have intimacy without it being romantic, weird, or even mushy.

But until we understand that we can have deep, intimate same-sex relationships without it being romantic, there will always be this emotional line that we never cross keeping us from experiencing the healthy relational intimacy that God designed for us to have within our friendships

Stan Allberry wrote a book called *Seven Myths About Singleness*. It's another one that I highly recommend. *Seven Myths About Singleness*. And he talks about it in his book. Listen to what he says. He says:

In the west we have virtually collapsed sex and intimacy into each other. Where you have one you are assumed to have the other. We can't really conceive of genuine intimacy without it ultimately being sexual.

He goes on to say:

The sad reality is that there is now apostrophe of friendship for our western culture and sadly for much of church culture as well. Friendship is largely dispensable. When it comes to intimacy our focus is on the romantic and the marital. But this is all a far, far cry from what the Bible has in mind when it talks about friendship.

In summary what Stan is saying is that you can, and you should have meaningful same-sex friendships that involve emotions and intimacy even outside of your marriage.

So I know you're probably sitting there saying, "Yes, my spouse is my friend." That's great. Guys, you need another godly Christ-centered man in your life speaking into your life. Women, you need another godly Christ-centered woman speaking into your life.

And some women are like, "No, I'm the only friend that he needs. He don't need no other friend. Them lies." No, sis, he needs that. And I promise you, I promise you he will become a better husband and a better father as a result of that. So I encourage, I implore you to pray about what that looks like within your marriage.

The more that I asked: why does this not exist? I had a hard time coming up with answers. Why do you not cross this emotional line when it comes to God-centered, same-sex friendships?

I don't want to categorize or single anybody out, but I just want to take a moment to talk to men in all of our rooms right now. Men, when was the last time you told one of your close male friends, "I love you"? Don't worry. I'll wait. When was the last time you said that and why?

I think there are a number of reasons why. We come up with so many creative ways to express our affection for one another. Peace and love, bro. Power to you, man. More love to you. Don't let us just be texting, just hitting you with the fist pound emoji. We're so good at coming up with creative ways to express our affections toward one another indirectly that we can even mouth the words, "I love you," to one of our close male friends.

I think that there are a number of reasons for that. Maybe you grew up and you didn't hear it from another man in your life. Maybe it is just a little too emotional and weird for you.

Or, maybe it's this last one. I'm not just talking about men. I'm talking about people in general, maybe it requires vulnerability. Maybe it requires you to actually expose yourself emotionally to another person and the thought of that causes you to be guarded and closeminded. You'd just rather say, "I'm good without that. They know I

love them." Anybody ever thought that? "They know I love them. I actually just show them that I love them."

But there is something powerful about verbally saying to somebody, "Hey, I love you." And you can say that without being romantic. And we have to come to this spot where we say, "I'm willing to get back to what was always meant to be in God's creation story." Remember what Aaron said? He said that before Adam and Eve were husband and wife, they were friends. But they were also naked, and they were unashamed.

Friendship is an opportunity where we can be naked and unashamed with somebody else who sees every part of us. True, intimate friendships are an invitation to return to what was always meant to be.

And in these relationships we say, "Hey, man. You cannot hide anything from me. I know you at your best. And I'm with you at your worst. And I'm not going anywhere."

Friendship is an opportunity to be fully seen and fully known.

Some of us are hurting and in desperate need for these types of friendships. And if you don't have one, man, I pray that you begin to seek one out because they are so needed. All of us, I don't care who you are, have this deep desire to be fully seen and fully known. And all of us need a friend who is willing to see us for who we really are and love us anyway.

So, I want to get very practical right now because some of you are just like, "Tell me what to do. It's great. Thanks for the information. What do I do with it?"

Well, I think, not to generalize, but I think all of us can find ourselves in one of these three camps depending on where we are relationally. But let's just break each one down.

Maybe you are in a season right now where you just need to pray and prioritize.

Pray and Prioritize

Maybe that is your action step today. Maybe you're in a season where you say, "I'm being honest. I am a little lonely right now. I don't have any God-honoring, Christ-centered, Spirit-led friendships in my life with another guy or another woman and I just really need to seek that out during this season." And your first step is that you pray that God would send those people into your life.

But you don't just stop there because they are not going to come knocking on your door. You have to put yourself in spaces, which is to prioritize. Put yourself in spaces where you can begin to connect with other people and meet some people.

If you're here at church it's a great place to start. If you're not connected, it's in a small group or on a serving team. I can't tell you the amount of people I meet downtown and they're friends. And I'm like, "How did you guys meet?" And they are like, "Oh, well, we're in group together." Or, "We used to be in group together and that group has since dissolved but we still have this cool, deep friendship that exists."

And I think that is incredible. Our environments that exist are meant to not only help you serve people but for you to connect with others, and walk alongside of each other and

encourage one another in each other to walk with Jesus. So maybe that is your first step.

Maybe you don't need to pray and prioritize right now. What you need to do is you need to:

Evaluate

Maybe you have some friendships in your life where you need to take an honest survey of the quality of those friendships. You need to ask yourself some hard questions, "Are my friends leading me closer to Jesus or are they pushing me away from Jesus? Are my friends there for me when I need them or are they only around when they need something from me?" Take an honest evaluation of your friendships.

And maybe, just maybe, this is a season to distance yourself from those relationships for a season and you need to go back to number one and pray and prioritize because God wants to give you something so much more when it comes to relationships in your life.

Or maybe you're in a season where you need to:

Name and Nurture

Maybe you're the person, "Kyle, I have Christ-centered friendships in my life. They push me. They help me look more like Jesus." I would say, that is phenomenal. Name them. Maybe your action step right now is to write them down and don't just write down the names, maybe today you send someone a text, maybe you pick up the phone and you call someone. Maybe you speak life into somebody. You thank somebody for the friendship that you have.

And then you begin to intentionally continue to nurture those relationships, nurture those friendships, cultivate what it looks like to have healthy friendships in your life because they don't just happen, they don't just maintain themselves.

Listen. Anything that is not growing is either dead or dying. That can go for friendships. That can go for your marriage. You have to be intentional about creating opportunities to nurture those friendships in your life and watch what God does with them. Watch how He allows you to experience what it is like to be in fellowship, actually with Him, because our relationships, our friendships mirror our relationship with God.

Find one of those three camps that you might be in and take a step.

You know, I couldn't help but realize as I was studying for this sermon the sacrificial and the generous language of verse 4 in the text. Take a look at it. Again it said:

"Jonathan sealed the pact by taking off his robe and giving it to David, together with his tunic, sword, bow, and belt."

And this doesn't seem like a big deal. But actually it was. Giving his robe and weapon to David wasn't just a generous gift and it wasn't just a kind gesture. He actually had the right to hold onto those things. This is significant. If you read a couple of chapters before this, the Israelites were getting ready to go into battle against the Philistines and it says that there was shortage of weapons in Israel. Imagine that. A shortage of something back then.

And it says that Jonathan and Saul were the only two individuals who had swords. And here we see Jonathan giving up his sword to David making himself vulnerable and exposing himself. That was huge. He was giving up his weapon to somebody he just met.

But more than that, as I said, Jonathan was next in line to be king, traditionally. But David had been appointed by God to be king. So by Jonathan giving up his robe and giving his weapon and giving his clothing to David, he was laying down his right to be king and giving up something for his friend. He was creating an opportunity for there to be true fellowship and for Israel to be led.

And as I looked at that, I was like, "Man, that has Jesus all over it. That has Jesus all over it." Jesus didn't come to be served but to serve. Jonathan was serving David in this moment by giving of himself.

And as Philippians 2 says, Jesus gave up His divine privileges for us by leaving heaven and being born as a human. Jesus voluntarily gave up position and power and took the position of a servant.

So much of what Jonathan did for David is a foreshadowing of what Jesus would come to do for us. Jonathan gave up his privileges as future king so that David could one day reign over Israel. Jesus gave up His privileges as eternal king so we could one day reign with Him forever.

Jonathan encouraged David at his darkest moments of life reminding him of the commitment he made to David. Jesus meets us in our darkest moments of life reminding us of His commitment and His faithfulness to us.

Jonathan put his life on the line so that David wouldn't experience death. Jesus laid His life down so that we could experience life.

Jonathan sealed his promise to David by giving him his sword. Jesus sealed His promise to us by giving us His Spirit.

Jonathan knew everything about David and called him friend. Jesus knows everything about you and me, the good and the bad, and still He calls us friend.

We serve a God who not only calls us to be in life-giving relationships with others, but who truly desires a relationship with us where we can be fully known and fully loved.

Somebody in here today needs to either hear for the first time or the first time in a long time, no matter what you've done or what has been done to you, no matter what mistakes you've made, no matter who has turned his back on you, no matter who has walked out of your life, no matter how much you have experienced the inconsistency of relationships in your life, man, there is a God who sees you fully, who knows you fully and loves you more than you can ever imagine.

Scripture says that there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. And I want you to know that His name is Jesus. And Jesus would go to a cross and walk out of a grave so that you can experience what it is to be seen and known and loved. And you can trust in Him today.

I think all of us can have this opportunity to see how our vertical relationship with God impacts our horizontal relationships, mainly our friendships with others, and we can come to this deep intimate place where we are truly exposing all of who we are, our good, and our bad, our flaws and our ups and our downs. And we're saying, "I'm going to be constant; I'm going to be committed, I'm going to encourage you and I'm going to challenge you. And more than anything, we're going to create this space where we can be fully seen and fully known."

Let's pray.

God, thank You. Thank You for who You are. God, in this moment I pray over the person who came in here and is lonely. God, I pray for the person who is experiencing deep depression and deep isolation. I pray for the person who Satan is trying to attack with emotions and feelings of unworthiness where nobody sees him, he is not connected. Man, I pray right now that You would remind each one that You see them.

God, I pray that those of us who do have friendships, Lord, that we would take an honest evaluation of whether those friendships are helping us look more like You or are subtly and unconsciously pulling us away from looking like You.

And, God, I pray that You would give us the boldness to make a decision to reevaluate and pray. That You would send people into our lives.

We thank You for the relationship, the friendship that existed between David and Jonathan and how they had this intimacy that allowed them to be fully seen and fully known.

God, would You allow us to not be afraid to cross the emotional lines with another guy or another girl in our lives, so that we can form these intimate, intimate relationships that You have called us to be in?

God, remind us of Your faithfulness. God remind us that You are the ultimate friend.

God, remind us that You came to us in our darkest moments and that You see us and that You promise to never leave us or forsake us. God, we need You. We need You in our lives right now. We need to be reminded that You have not left. That You are the same God who worked in David and Jonathan's relationship, and You can show up and be present in our friendships right now.

So, God, I pray that You would cover those who are hurting right now. I pray that you would cover those who need to be reminded of Your presence.

We thank You, Jesus, for who You are and all You've done. It's in Your name we pray. Amen.