

# Jonathan

Jonathan is a shining example of loyalty.

Loyalty is one of life's most costly qualities and the selfless part of love.

To be loyal you cannot live only for yourself.

Loyal people not only stand by their commitments, they are willing to suffer for them.

Sometimes we are forced to deal with conflicting loyalties, Jonathan is an example of this.

Jonathan [meaning "God-given"] was the eldest son of King Saul by his only wife, so was his father's heir. [1 Samuel 14:49-50]

The fact that Jonathan was heir to Saul's kingship made his loyalty to David more wonderful. David, who had been anointed by Samuel to replace Saul as king of Israel. [1 Samuel 16:1-13]

The personal courage of Jonathan was shown in his encounter with the Philistines who outnumbered him greatly, also his dependence on God for victory of his foes. [1 Samuel 14:1-23]

Jonathan and his armour-bearer weren't much of a force to attack a huge Philistine army. But while everyone else was afraid, they trusted God, knowing that the size of the enemy would not restrict God's ability to help them.

God honoured the faith and loyalty of Jonathan and gave these two men a tremendous victory.

**1 Samuel 18:1-4** [NIV] *"After David had finished talking with Saul, Jonathan became one in spirit with David, and he loved him as himself. From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return to his father's house. And Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. Jonathan took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, along with his tunic, and even his sword, his bow and his belt."*

When David and Jonathan met, they became close friends at once. Their friendship is one of the deepest and closest recorded in the Christian Bible.

Their friendship was based on loyalty to God **not** just to each other.

They let nothing come between them, not even career or family problems debased their loyalty to each other.

Whenever their loyalty to each other was tested the bond became stronger.

They remained loyal to each other to the end.

**1 Samuel 23:15-18** [NIV] *"While David was at Horesh in the Desert of Ziph, he learned that Saul had come out to take his life. And Saul's son Jonathan went to David at Horesh and helped him to find strength in God. 'Don't be afraid,' he said. 'My father Saul will not lay a hand on you. You shall be king over Israel, and I will be second to you. Even my father Saul knows this.' The two of them made a covenant before the LORD. Then Jonathan went home, but David remained at Horesh."*

When Jonathan the Prince of Israel realised David and not he would be the next King of Israel, this knowledge did **not** weaken Jonathan's loyalty and love for his friend David.

Jonathan would much rather lose the throne of Israel than be disloyal to his closest friend David.

**1 Samuel 19:1-7** [NIV] *“Saul told his son Jonathan and all the attendants to kill David. But Jonathan was very fond of David and warned him, ‘My father Saul is looking for a chance to kill you. Be on your guard tomorrow morning; go into hiding and stay there. I will go out and stand with my father in the field where you are. I’ll speak to him about you and will tell you what I find out.’ Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father and said to him, ‘Let not the king do wrong to his servant David; he has not wronged you, and what he has done has benefited you greatly. He took his life in his hands when he killed the Philistine. The LORD won a great victory for all Israel, and you saw it and were glad. Why then would you do wrong to an innocent man like David by killing him for no reason?’ Saul listened to Jonathan and took this oath: ‘As surely as the LORD lives, David will not be put to death.’ So Jonathan called David and told him the whole conversation. He brought him to Saul, and David was with Saul as before.”*

Jonathan’s loyalty to David was tested when he found out that his father’s jealousy of David was making David’s life in danger.

Jonathan then persuaded Saul to be reconciled to David, but to do this he was facing the wrath of his father.

An evil spirit entered Saul and once again David’s life was threatened. [**1 Samuel 19:8-9**]

**1 Samuel 20:28-33** [NIV] *“Jonathan answered, ‘David earnestly asked me for permission to go to Bethlehem. He said, ‘Let me go, because our family is observing a sacrifice in the town and my brother has ordered me to be there. If I have found favour in your eyes, let me go to see my brothers.’ That is why he has not come to the king’s table.’ Saul’s anger flared up at Jonathan and he said to him, ‘You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don’t I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you? As long as the son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established. Now send and bring him to me, for he must die!’ ‘Why should he be put to death? What has he done?’ Jonathan asked his father. But Saul hurled his spear at him to kill him. Then Jonathan knew that his father intended to kill David.”*

Even when his own life was in danger Jonathan remained loyal to his friend David.

Jonathan again loyally defended David before his father Saul and this nearly cost him his life.

From then on every meeting with his friend David had to be strictly secret.

**1 Samuel 31:1-6** [NIV] *“Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell slain on Mount Gilboa. The Philistines pressed hard after Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-shua. The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically. Saul said to his armour-bearer, ‘Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me.’ But the armour-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armour-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. So Saul and his three sons and his armour-bearer and all his men died together that same day.”*

Jonathan’s life ended as he loyally fought beside his father Saul in battle against Israel’s enemies.

**2 Samuel 1:17-27** [NIV] *“David took up this lament concerning Saul and his son Jonathan, and ordered that the men of Judah be taught this lament of the bow (it is written in the Book of Jashar): ‘Your glory, O Israel, lies slain on your heights. How the mighty have fallen! Tell it not in Gath, proclaim it not in the streets of Ashkelon, lest the daughters of the Philistines be glad, lest the daughters of the uncircumcised rejoice. O mountains of Gilboa, may you have neither dew nor rain, nor fields that yield offerings [of grain]. For there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, no longer rubbed with oil. From the blood of the slain, from the flesh of the mighty, the bow of Jonathan did not turn back, the sword of Saul did not return unsatisfied. Saul and Jonathan, in life they were loved and gracious, and in death they were not parted. They were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. O daughters of Israel, weep for Saul, who clothed you in scarlet and finery,*

*who adorned your garments with ornaments of gold. How the mighty have fallen in battle! Jonathan lies slain on your heights. I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women. How the mighty have fallen! The weapons of war have perished!"*

This lament of David's tells us much about Jonathan as seen through the eyes of his closest friend, but also about David's character.

David had every reason to hate Saul, but he chose not to. Instead, David chose to mention the good things that Saul had done and to ignore the times when Saul had attacked him. It takes courage to lay aside hatred and hurt and to respect the positive side of another person, especially an enemy.

By saying that Jonathan's love was "*more wonderful than that of a woman*" David was **not** implying that he had a sexual relationship with Jonathan. The Hebrew word used is from the root word "*ahab*" referring to the affection felt for a friend.

Homosexual acts were absolutely forbidden in Israel. [**Leviticus 18:22; Leviticus 20:13**]

David was simply restating the deep loyal brotherhood and faithful friendship he and Jonathan had. [**1 Samuel 18:1-4**]

Lessons we can learn from the life of Jonathan are that loyalty is one of the strongest bonds of courage and friendship.

Loyalty to our Creator God puts all other relationships into correct perspective. [**Luke 14:26-27, 33**]

Jonathan showed this loyalty to God in his life and the decisions that he made

Loyalty, the basis of all true friendships, can involve personal sacrifice.

The conflicting demands of any relationship can lead to a feeling of betrayal, if we deal with them only on a human level.

If we let our friends know that our ultimate loyalty is to our Creator God and His Word the Christian Bible, many of our choices will be much clearer to our human friends.

Any loyal friendships can have a legacy beyond our death for future generations. [**2 Samuel 9:1-12**]