

# The Heights Baptist Church

1 SAMUEL 16:12-13; 23:15-16; 2 SAMUEL 12:1-14 • 9/19/2021

## MAIN POINT

We need friends who will help us become better people by encouraging and challenging us to walk with Christ.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**If you're on social media, how many of your connections would you say are truly your friends?**

**What characteristics separate true friends from acquaintances? What obstacles can hinder us from forming better friendships?**

These days when you ask, "How many friends do you have?" people often start calculating the number of Facebook friends, Twitter or Instagram followers, or contacts in their phones. In our fast-food, microwave, disposable world, it's all too easy to pass through life with lots of acquaintances and scores of connections. Yet few people have true, close friends. Ironically, many people feel lonely and isolated, even while being surrounded by masses of connections.

The number of friends and acquaintances is not important. What matters is the quality of those friendships. We should surround ourselves with people who help make us stronger, better followers of Christ. We will look at three men who befriended David and how they helped David be a man after God's own heart.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 SAMUEL 16:12-13.

**What did God say to Samuel regarding David?**

**What role did Samuel play in making David a better person?**

**What impact did this encounter with Samuel have on David?**

God sent Samuel to Bethlehem to anoint the next king. David was not on anybody's radar to be somebody important, but God directed Samuel to anoint him. David's physical characteristics were nice, but since God had already told Samuel how he judged (16:7), they were irrelevant. Instead, God looked at David's heart. David had a desire to search after God's own heart (Acts 13:22).

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 1 SAMUEL 23:15-16.

**What was accomplished when David and Jonathan met in secret?**

**How did Jonathan's actions and words encourage and strengthen David?**

We need friends who will help us find strength in God. Jonathan encouraged David not to be afraid. Jonathan knew that David would be king over Israel and that Saul would not be able to lay a hand on him (23:17). Jonathan would not help his father hunt down David (23:18). Jonathan's presence was surely a blessing to David. Godly friends are important sources of encouragement during times of hardship and adversity.

**What are some ways Christians can help one another "find strength in God"?**

| ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ 2 SAMUEL 12:1-14.

**How did Nathan use the story to convict David?**

**Why was the parable Nathan told to David so effective? What did David admit after Nathan spoke?**

It probably took great courage for Nathan to confront the king. We need friends who will tell us the truth—no matter what. Nathan did not directly condemn David for his sin. Instead, he let David condemn himself. The prophet played the role of an advocate for a person who was in need of justice.

Nathan confronted David with his sin by equating him with the wicked man of the story: You are the man. Nathan then delivered a three-part oracle of judgment against David consisting of (1) a description of God's gracious dealings with David in the past (vv. 7b-8), (2) a listing of David's relevant sins (v. 9), and (3) a declaration of God's resulting judgments (v. 10). All of these statements were designed to convince David of the seriousness of his sin and to drive him to repentance.

**When have you had a friend confront you over your sin? How did you respond? What did that experience teach you about the importance of spiritual accountability?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**Of the three types of friends in this study—those who make us better people, those who strengthen us, and those who are truthful with us—which one could you most benefit from at this time?**

**Who can you look to in your life to be the kind of friends these men were to David?**

**Who among your friends needs your encouragement and strength?**

**Who among your friends needs you to be bold and honest with them?**

## PRAYER

Ask God to direct us to the people we need to lean on as the kind of friends who will help us grow in Christ. Ask God to show us how we can be that kind of friend to others.

## COMMENTARY

| 1 SAMUEL 16:12-13

When David was brought in from the field, his favorable physical traits were immediately obvious: he was first of all “ruddy” (v. 10; Hb ’admônî), either possessing red-tinted hair or a bronze complexion; he possessed “a fine appearance” (lit., “beauty of eyes”); and he was “handsome.” However—especially in light of v. 7—these physical assets were no proof that David was God’s choice; at best they were irrelevant. What mattered was the young man’s heart, and only God could judge that. The Lord removed all suspense from the situation with his word to Samuel: “Anoint him; he is the one.”

Obediently, Samuel opened the “horn of oil” (v. 12) and decanted its contents on David’s head before his brothers and the elders of Bethlehem. The shapeless, invasive fluid used in the ceremony served fittingly as a symbol of the mystical presence of God. As the oil worked its way into the individual’s hair and pores, it symbolized the divine presence entering into the one being anointed.

When David, the youngest of the sons in Jesse's family (cf. 1 Chr 2:13–15), was selected as the Lord's anointed, he joined a venerable crowd of Torah patriarchs selected by God in a way that confounded social norms. Other men who were not firstborn but who were selected by the Lord over their more socially powerful older brothers include Seth, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Ephraim, Moses, and perhaps Abraham. It seems that the biblical record deliberately creates the impression that Yahweh prefers to use disenfranchised members of society—earlier in 1 Samuel the barren woman Hannah and the child Samuel—to do his most significant work (cf. Mark 10:31; 1 Cor 1:27).

In David's case more than mere symbolism was present in the anointing ceremony: "The Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power" (v. 12), even as had been the case previously with Saul (cf. 10:10). What is more, it stayed with him "from that day on"; this made David's anointing superior to Saul's (cf. v. 14). The coming of the Spirit, an event that was primarily spiritual in nature, had major implications for the political future of Israel; after this event the political landscape of Israel would be forever different.

## | 1 SAMUEL 23:15-16

One of the locations in which David and his men stayed was "Horesh in the Desert of Ziph" (v. 15), an otherwise unknown location. While there, David "learned that Saul had come out to take his life." Jonathan was as well informed about David's location as his father (cf. 20:2). Unencumbered by the limitations of traveling with a large armed force, Jonathan was able to get "to David at Horesh" (v. 16) before his father could. His purpose was as noble as his commitment to David; he "strengthened his hand in God" (NIV, "helped him find strength in God").

Jonathan encouraged his friend by reminding him of the trustworthy promise the Lord had made to him earlier—"you will be king over Israel" (v. 17), and then by suggesting some implications of this divine promise. Because the Lord was overseeing David's rise to kingship, David had no need to "be afraid." Because the Lord was with David, Saul would not "lay a hand on" him. Because it was the Lord's decision to install David in the nation's highest political office, David was not revolting against the Saulide dynasty as Saul had charged; thus it would be possible for David to fulfill the divine plan and maintain harmonious relations with the Saulides. Jonathan could "be second" to David in the new order. The Lord's plans for David were not hidden (cf. 2 Sam 5:2), nor were they the product of David's imagination: even Saul knew them.

During this final recorded meeting, David and Jonathan confirmed and extended commitments they had made to each other on previous occasions (cf. 18:3–4; 20:14–16). Afterward

“Jonathan went home,” apparently choosing not to join—or being barred from joining (cf. 20:30)—his father’s militia in the task of tracking down David. For his part, “David remained at Horesh.”

## | 2 SAMUEL 12:1-14

Nathan’s story was about a rich man and a poor man. The rich man’s wealth included “a very large number of sheep and cattle” (v. 2), suggesting that he—like David—was a shepherd. The poor man’s penury was reflected in his lack of livestock; he “had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought” (v. 3). What the poor man lacked in material wealth he made up for in compassion. Truly the lamb was loved “like a daughter.” The prophet’s comparison of the poor man’s ewe to a “daughter” (Hb. *bat*) who slept (Hb. *šākab*) in a man’s arms creates a not-so-subtle lexical linkage between the beloved lamb and Bathsheba (Hb. *bat-šebaʿ*), who previously was portrayed as sleeping (Hb. *šākab*; v. 4) in David’s arms.

When the rich man in Nathan’s story had a guest journey to his residence, he followed the Mediterranean rules of hospitality by preparing a sumptuous meal for the visitor (cf. Gen 18:5–8; 19:3). Yet when the rich man did so, he violated protocol and propriety (as well as the Torah) by using a stolen lamb for the purpose rather than his own.

David, acting in his role as presiding judge in Israel’s royal court of justice, interrupted the narrative at this point to pronounce judgment against the sinful party. Enraged, David first expressed his instinctive feelings—“the man who did this deserves to die”—and then rendered a verdict duly prescribed by the Torah (cf. Exod 22:1)—“he must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity” (v. 6). Because of the high-handed and cruel nature of the rich man’s actions, the full Torah penalty would be imposed. David’s own Torah-violating behavior had not robbed him of his commitment to impose the requirements of the Torah on others!

Of course, when David condemned the rich man’s sin, he also condemned himself, as Nathan emphatically declared. Then without waiting for a response from the stunned king, he launched into a stern judgment oracle consisting of three sections: first, a background section (vv. 7–8), where the Lord described the favorable treatment David had been accorded over the years; second, an enumeration of David’s offenses, both Godward and manward (v. 9); and finally, a declaration of the penalties associated with David’s offense (vv. 10–12).

In a remarkable display of humility and contrition, David confessed his guilt in the single most significant dimension of his sinful act: “I have sinned against the Lord” (v. 13; cf. Ps 51:4 [Hb. v. 6]). David had certainly also sinned against Uriah, Bathsheba, and unnamed soldiers; but those

offenses were derivative and secondary in nature. Had David not rebelled against the Lord's Word, these persons would not have been murdered or abused.

David's confession came with immediacy, without denial, and without excuse; the Lord's forgiveness was equally direct and unrestrained. It also was without cost: forgiveness was granted the king without requiring him first to make animal sacrifices or give great gifts to the Lord. In an unadorned fashion Nathan responded to David by declaring that "the Lord has taken away your sin."