



Pastor Nate Young
David: The Friend

July 3, 2022

Series: David

1 Samuel 18:1-5; 1 Samuel 20

**BIG IDEA - THROUGH THE FRIENDSHIP OF DAVID AND JONATHAN,
WE SEE A MODEL AND VALUE FOR OUR OWN GODLY FRIENDSHIPS**

Welcome. Good morning. Happy July 3. My name is Nate Young. I'm one of the elders here at the church, and it's my joy and privilege to preach to y'all this weekend. Normally, when I'm up here, there's a guitar strapped on me. That's my mode. That's my comfort zone. I hope my mouth still works without it. We're about to find out.

Anyway, a little bit about myself. My wife and I were on the launch team. We've been here since the beginning. We're part of the problem. We're part of the reason the church is growing. We had two cute little kids here. Come on, man. Look at how cute those kids are. Right? Are you kidding me? I'm showing people pictures of my kids all the time these days. They're so cute.

We had our kids here. This church is our family. This church has become our home and our family, and we have our best friends in the world here. Like that video we just watched, some of my best friends have come via my DNA group. I have great friends in my DNA group. I love my DNA group. My wife loves my DNA group. The restaurant Breakfasttime loves my DNA group. They love some of y'all's DNA groups too. I've seen y'all there.

In any case, DNA groups are great. They're wonderful, but those of us who have tried them or who are in them know they can be kind of tricky at times. They're hard to get right. Likewise, friendships can be a bit tricky. Friendships are hard to get right, but if we get them right, the positive effect on our lives is incalculable.

We're talking about friendship today. We're continuing on in our series on David and looking at probably the most famous friendship of all time. I don't know of one we're talking about 3,000 years later other than Jonathan and David. We're going to be looking at their friendship.

There's consensus out there on the importance of friendship. There's a lot out there. There have been all of these studies done...mental, emotional, and health benefits. You even know this yourself. You care very deeply about the types of friends your kids are making, those of us who are parents. Right? Very deeply.

One study I saw... I thought this was interesting. As you age, the effect of social ties on extending life span is twice as powerful as that of exercising. So, maybe go to the gym with a friend. Maybe that's better altogether. I don't know. In any case, we know friendships are important, but there's not a lot of consensus on how we do them right. There's not a lot out there.

There are marriage conferences and leadership conferences and work conferences and parenting conferences, but not friend conferences. Ridiculous. No one has ever been to a friend conference. I think the reason there's not a lot out there on how to do them is because we don't even know what it means anymore.

To say you're my friend is a bit of a squishy thing to say now. Did you click the button on Facebook? Do we enjoy time together? Are we golfing buddies? Is it something deeper? Is there more commitment attached? I think we all know that, yes, it is a good friendship, but how much deeper on the spectrum? What are we aiming for? We don't know.

So, in times, in topics where there is confusion about what to shoot for, it is helpful to look to the Bible to see if it says anything about that topic. It's not culturally conditioned by our cultural moment that's wacko from time to time. So, that's what we're going to do today. We're just going to look to the Scripture.

Here's where we're going today. We're going to talk about the necessity of friendship according to the Bible, then we're going to look at the narrative of David and Jonathan's most famous friendship, and then we're just going to circle back and look at the ingredients of the friendship of Jonathan and David that we see so we can apply anything helpful to our lives.

So, *necessity of friendship*, *narrative of friendship*, and *ingredients of friendship*. I know Kyle would have alliterated that. He would have found a word that starts with *N*, not *ingredients*. It is a requirement of preaching here, let me let you know. I will alliterate later. Okay? So, if it's uncomfortable, it's coming.

01 NECESSITY OF FRIENDSHIP

We first see it in design. Look at God. Look at the Trinity...the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in perfect relationship with himself. The Godhead *is* a friendship would be one way to look at it. He creates man in his image and puts him in a garden. Perfect garden, perfect relationship with God, but there's a malady in creation. What is it? Man doesn't have a friend, a human friend.

The creation of Eve, the fact she was even created, speaks to the fact that man needs a friend. A wife, yeah, but more fundamental than that, a friend. As we're looking at the garden, a helpful thing to think about in our culture... In our culture, people will trample on friendships and relationships in order to climb up the ladder of success...more money, a promotion, whatever the case may be.

That's foolishness, because you're not going to get so high that it's the garden of Eden, and even in the garden of Eden, it's not enough without a friend to share it with. So don't do that. If you have a great friendship, don't trample it to get up the ladder. We also see, biblically, that friendship is essential to get us through the hard times in life.

You think, "That seems like a lot. Essential? What about just a great relationship with my spouse and my pets and whatever AI is suggesting something to me to watch on Netflix tonight to drown it all out?" Well, the third is ridiculous. You need more than that. Right? But let's talk about the second one...pets. Seriously. Some of you all love your pets. We love our pets.

Let's look back at the garden. Adam is in a garden. He's naming animals. He doesn't have a friend. It's not enough. We need more than that. So, let's talk about the spouse. Is that enough to get you through life's hard times? Yeah, I think so, but what is it about the spouse? What gets you through the cancer diagnosis? Is it the sexual chemistry? It's the friendship. Right? We know this.

A good marriage is a good friendship, and a good friendship is a good marriage. So we know this. Let's look at Ecclesiastes 4:9-10. It says this very clearly. ***"Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!"***

We need a friend. We need a fellow. We need somebody who will lift us up when we fall. We need friends to get us through the hard times in life. That's the occasion of

David and Jonathan's friendship. David is about to enter the most dangerous season of his life. That's when the friendship with Jonathan starts, and it carries for a few years to get him through that most dangerous season of his life.

02 NARRATIVE OF DAVID & JONATHAN'S FRIENDSHIP

So, let's look at the friendship of Jonathan and David. Let's start with who even is Jonathan. We haven't talked about him much these last couple of weeks. Jonathan is Saul's son. He's prince in Israel. He's heir to the throne. He's a good guy. We first meet Jonathan in 1 Samuel 14. He's on the battlefield, and he's in this tactically precarious situation where there's a garrison of Philistines that has the high ground, and Jonathan and his armor-bearer are alone on the low ground.

He says, "God, I'm trusting you for a victory here for your glory, for your people." He overtakes this garrison of Philistines. God comes through and gives him the victory. So, he's courageous. He's a man of great faith. He's a war hero. It's in the Bible. I mean, that event is in the Bible. Great guy.

How did Jonathan and David meet? We don't know exactly the start of their friendship. The text doesn't say, but it stands to reason it's when they're spending a lot of time together, when David is welcomed into Saul's court as his musician and armor-bearer before the David and Goliath episode. We don't know how long that is. Probably a couple of years.

That's how your friendships start. Right? That's how my friendships start: in situations where we're spending time with each other...at the workplace, at school, in church, on the sports team, or whatever. That's the soil to start a friendship. But something very unique and interesting happens in chapter 18, verse 1. Here's where we're going to start reading.

This is the first time the Bible explicitly talks about their friendship. Right after the David and Goliath episode, it says this: ***"As soon as he [David] had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."*** Okay. Whoa. Really intense, really fast, like, in an instant. "As soon as..." In this moment, they have this conversation.

The souls being knit together... This is very strong language. It's kind of like, at first glance, "What's going on here? This seems interesting." Well, I think C.S. Lewis says something to us that helps us understand what's going on here. C.S. Lewis says friendship can go to a deeper level... A deeper level can be discovered when two

people with similar passions or experiences create a bond around those passions or experiences.

Now let's see what just happened. David just got done trusting God for an individual military victory on the battlefield, explicit about his faith. God gives him the victory for his glory and his people's good, like the varsity version of what Jonathan had just done in chapter 14. They have this "You too" moment. Jonathan is like, "Oh, you too? I knew you believed in God, but I didn't know you believed in him like *that*. Now I see your faith in action on the battlefield, and he's coming through for you too."

They start this fast, tight friendship bond. That's the faith component, but then the military component... I think it's hard to overstate that as well. Those of us who haven't been in active combat (me)... I don't think we get this, but there have been studies done on this. They even use familial language...the band of brothers, the bond between soldiers.

One study I saw that was done shows Libyan frontline soldiers in the 2011 conflict... They surveyed them. Forty-five percent of them said their bonds with their fellow frontline soldiers were stronger than their own family bonds. Very interesting. So it's a tight bond. It's a faith-based and military-based bond, I think, that Jonathan and David have.

Okay. Let's see what happens after that. This bond happens. Verse 2: ***"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."***

So, he's making a covenant and giving him some things. We'll come back to that. He's committing to him. ***"And David went out and was successful wherever Saul sent him, so that Saul set him over the men of war. And this was good in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants."***

It's hard for us, again, to overstate the meteoric rise to fame David has after David and Goliath. I was trying to think of a modern-day example of something similar. I couldn't think of one, so here's a hypothetical. Think Justin Bieber. Why Justin Bieber? Well, David is the king's musician. Is there a more famous musician than the king's musician in that time? I don't know. Probably not.

So, think Justin Bieber, circa 2003 or 2004, in the wake of 9/11, where it's the war on terror, and Osama bin Laden is public enemy number one. Imagine if Justin Bieber were to land a plane in the Mall of America and walk out by himself holding the

disembodied head of Osama bin Laden. It's goofy, but, epic rise to fame. I think it's kind of like that.

So, David gets wildly famous in an instant and is made a general in the army. God has given him great success, and everybody loves him. Publicly, he's being praised, but privately, he's in peril. Why? Because as fast as his fame is rising, Saul's jealousy is rising. There's one critical part where the women are singing songs, and they're saying, "Saul has killed his thousands, and David his tens of thousands."

Saul's jealousy turns him murderous. In this season, Jonathan contains the evil for David between his dad and his best friend, David. Saul, multiple times, mostly privately... Publicly, he's a political ally, actually, but privately, he's trying to murder David.

In this season, Jonathan is running interference, and he's David's safe space and David's confidant. It kind of boils, and it kind of grows. It grows into chapter 20, which is where we're going to pick up again. David comes, and he meets Jonathan in private, in secret. He's kind of on the run at this point. Starting in 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."' Saul is very secretive. Interesting. "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.'"

That's what friends do. Right? In a time of need... "Hey, what do you need? I'll do it for you." They don't distance themselves from weakness. They step into it. "How can I help?" So, Jonathan and David talk about a plan to discern together what Saul's true intentions are. We'll pick it back up at verse 14. Jonathan says:

"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, they make another covenant together, a second friend covenant. Then they go and execute this secret mission where David is in hiding and Jonathan learns, "Okay. Indeed, my dad does actually want to kill you. That's what his true intentions are." They get back together. They meet together in secret again, and this is where we'll finish the narrative. Verse 41:

"And as soon as the boy had gone, David rose from beside the stone heap and fell on his face to the ground and bowed three times. And they kissed one another and wept with one another, David weeping the most. Then Jonathan said to David, 'Go in peace, because we have sworn both of us in the name of the LORD, saying, "The LORD shall be between me and you, and between my offspring and your offspring, forever." And he rose and departed, and Jonathan went into the city."

This is where their friendship ends...in tears, kind of tragically. Jonathan goes back to be with his dad, and David is on the run. Jonathan ends up dying with his dad in battle. They never see each other again. This is their friendship.

03 INGREDIENTS OF FRIENDSHIP

What do we see in their friendship? What qualities, what ingredients that might be helpful for us do we see in the friendship of Jonathan and David? Well, the first one jumps completely off the page. It couldn't be more obvious. We could use a lot of words for it, but I'm going to say *constancy*, *commitment*, *loyalty*. Friends stick. Friends show up when you need them. They're constant. They're there when you need them.

They're covenantal, even, in the case of Jonathan and David. They make two friend covenants. This isn't a normal thing to do, but they do this. It's very intense. We don't have time to talk about what exactly a covenant is in Hebrew culture, but suffice it to say, it's a very intense commitment where, if one of the two parties breaks the covenant, blood will be shed. That's how intense it is. It's a very intense commitment, and they make it to each other twice.

The first covenant (we read about it back in chapter 18)... The substance of it is, essentially, Jonathan recognizes... We don't know exactly at which point this happens, but Jonathan recognizes, "The heir to the throne is actually you, David, not me. I recognize the God I love has anointed you, not me, and I'm giving you my princely items."

He gave him his sword, his bow, his belt, and his armor in this first covenant, and he committed to, "Hey, David. I'm not fighting you for the throne. I'm committed to serve you as king." That's the first covenant. That's how committed he was. Then the second covenant is a few years later. It's in this last meeting they have together.

It's a contested throne situation where there's one throne and two families. It's a Harry Potter-style "neither can live while the other survives" situation. That's what's going on here. They don't know what the next step is, but they commit to, "Hey, whatever happens here, we're going to be committed to each other and each other's families, no matter what happens at the end of all this."

Normally, what would happen is one family got the throne and entirely eliminated the other family. This is why they commit to being there for each other's families. It's interesting, because we look at commitment like this, and we're like, "That doesn't comport with anything I see anywhere in my world and culture and life." So, let's slow down for a second and talk about this.

We have commitment issues in our culture. There are commitment issues in our culture. I've done a lot of thinking about this, trying to think about, "Why is that?" Why does the lack of commitment exist? I think it's about this simple. Our culture is preaching a lie, and it's very loud, and it's everywhere. It's saying, "This is how you get happy: by cutting all commitments to anyone but yourself."

If you believe that lie, you have to view all relationships from a consumer perspective. You have to. That's how you have to show up. David and Jonathan are covenantal, but if you believe the lie, you have to show up in every relationship as a consumer. It's interesting. Consumer relationships and covenantal relationships have been present in all cultures. Consumer relationships aren't bad. There's a place for them. The place is called the *marketplace*. That's where the consumer relationship is supposed to be.

Normally, that's where it has been confined to in a lot of cultures, but in *our* culture, this consumer mindset has broken free from the marketplace and has affected and infected my life and your life in all of these places where it shouldn't be...the family, our friendships, the way we relate to church, the way we relate to people at church, our civic relationships. The consumer mindset has infiltrated all of those places, and it shouldn't be there.

Let me just define terms here for a second. I think it's clear what I'm trying to say, but I want to be really clear about what I'm trying to say, because I think it's helpful. Here are some marks of consumer relationships. Your cost-benefit calculator is always going when you show up in a consumer relationship. Do benefits outweigh costs? If

so, I'm engaging. If not, I'm out of here. Your primary concern is the benefit of yourself in a consumer relationship.

We know this. Right? How do you show up to Walmart? Are you thinking about Walmart when you walk into Walmart? Do you want the good of Walmart when you go in there? No! It's ridiculous. The way you show up is "I am primarily concerned about me, and if Walmart is dumb enough to do something like run such a good sale they're losing money on it, I'm buying all that stuff." Right? That's how you show up. That's how consumers show up: concerned about themselves.

This is very helpful. Consumers show up thinking, "What do I need? How can you help?" They show up thinking about how they can use the giftedness of the other for their own advantage. They show up thinking, "How can I distance myself from your weakness?" If I see some weakness...space. Most importantly, consumers get to leave. There are often return policies, and they always get to leave.

Again, it's not wrong in the marketplace, but it's wrong in the family, and it's wrong in friendships. I said it has infected all of these places in our culture and our lives where it shouldn't be. One of the places I want to talk about, just to really drive it home, is the family...marriage. How has a consumer mindset infected our marriages?

Well, the most obvious way is divorce. It's a return policy. You get to run the cost-benefit on the back end after making a purchase and make a return if it doesn't work out for you. Divorce. I was surprised to find out (I thought this was very interesting) divorce rates are at a 50-year low right now...39 percent, down from 50 percent in the 70s. Okay. That sounds good. That sounds like progress. Right?

But here's what I think is happening. Marriage rates are at an all-time low. Fifty years ago, if you wanted a normal adult romantic relationship, even if you didn't want the commitment part, you kind of had to get married. Then if you decided, "Actually, you know what? Never mind," you got rid of the commitment part and got divorced. Nowadays, you don't have to get married.

There's a buffet of options in our culture for normal adult romantic relationships. When I was dating my wife... We dated all through undergrad. These were my options that I was aware of, at least: trying to be dating her, dating her, engaged, and married. We went through those steps. I don't know. Maybe like idiots, two weeks after we graduated, we got married. We just celebrated 10 years, so it's going great.

Now there are all of these options. Kids are saying things these days. (That's how you know you're getting old. Right? When you start saying, "Kids are saying things these

days.") I don't know what they're talking about, and instead of talking to one, I Googled "What are different types of relationships?"

Here's what I found: an article entitled "What Are the Different Types of Relationships?" verified by a medical doctor. I don't know how... Whatever. They're qualified somehow. Talking, dating, boyfriend/girlfriend, casual relationship, friends with benefits, partners, domestic partners, open relationships, and polyamory.

Geez, man! There's a buffet, and you can go shopping for which option you want. It's mitigate commitment. It's cut the commitment. It's trade the wife and kids for moving in together and getting a dog, and at some point, it breaks down. It falls apart. It doesn't work. That's a consumer mindset.

So, that was the counter-vision. Now the covenantal mindset, the covenantal approach to friendships. It's literally just the opposite. I'm going to read it again conversely because I think it's that helpful. Covenantally minded people show up without the cost-benefit calculator going. It's not going, because they're staying whether costs exceed benefits or benefits exceed costs. They show up as often as possible, primarily concerned with the benefit of the other person. That's how covenantal people show up.

This is so helpful. I think these questions are so helpful. Covenantally minded people show up asking these questions: "What do you need? How can I help?" Look. We're all needy and needed. You can't always show up all the time asking those questions, but do you *ever* show up asking those questions or are you always showing up like, "What do I need? How can you help?"

Let's talk about marriage. You can apply this whole sermon to marriage. A good friendship is a good marriage. A good marriage is a good friendship. How did you show up yesterday? Did you show up to your weekend like, "Hey, I need to go golfing. You can help by watching the kids for six hours today...again"? Sorry if that's offensive. But do we ever show up...?

Look. I'm just trying to help. It goes better when two married people are showing up...both of them...like, "What do you need? How can I help?" If that's happening, you can probably still go golfing sometimes. Anyway, I'm just trying to help. Then, finally, there are no return policies. You don't get to leave.

So, what kind of friend are you? Are you covenantal? Here's one good diagnostic question for us to ask: Who is around in the hard times when there's nothing to gain from being around you? Those are your friends. Those are your real friends.

Conversely, who are you around in *their* hard times when there's nothing to gain from being around them? You're a real friend to them.

In the good times, everybody is around. The consumer and covenantally minded person both are around, but in the hard times, consumer relationships evaporate and covenantal friendships are the only ones there. You see this all the time with professional athletes. Professional athletes, drafted in the first round, young guys in their 20s...

They move to a big new city and sign a contract worth tens of millions or hundreds of millions of dollars or whatever the case may be. They have a lot of new friends, but they have a sneaking suspicion none of them are their friends. That's why, in some of these interviews, you hear them clinging to their high school guys they used to go around with and some of their childhood relationships, because they don't know who their real friends are.

Do you know who knows who their real friends are? The bedridden person. They know. Those are the only people who are around. Do you show up for your friends when they're in need and there's nothing to gain? We're good friends when there's something fun on the social calendar, and we have a great time together, but all of a sudden, when you need help moving on the weekend and it's 95 degrees outside, I'm not as good of a friend anymore. Right? I do this. I shouldn't do this.

I had a friend in college. It was the first year after college, actually. He was a good friend, and his dad died tragically. He was riding his bike and was hit by a drunk driver. He died instantly. Tragic situation. I was having lunch with him about a month or two after that happened.

We were just talking. I was just checking in with him a little bit. He said, "Hey, thanks, man." We were on staff together at the same church. I was interning at my church. He said, "Thanks. Nobody else on staff here has checked in with me about this in the last month or two." Not great. I wasn't even being a good friend. It had been a month or two. Are we distancing ourselves from weaknesses?

Okay. Caveat here to this constancy one. Do we need to have the deepest level of commitment with everybody we're associated with? No. Safety tip: don't do that. We shouldn't be doing that, but we can expect to have as many close covenantal friends as we are a close covenantal friend to.

If we're always showing up like, "What do I need? How can you help?" we can expect they're showing up the same way. With the measure you use it will be measured back to you. That's a biblical principle. If we show up that way, we need to be careful,

because when we're really needy, they might take advantage of a return policy. Friends are constant.

Another ingredient we see in the life of Jonathan and David is friends are transparent. Friends open up to each other. They let each other in. Friends are transparent. We see this with Jonathan and David in multiple places. It's all over the place. Here are a couple of them.

Back at the beginning of chapter 18, verse 1, where it talks about the soul tie, the souls being united, and he loves him as his own soul...that whole thing... There's a lot of commentary about what that means, and there's not consensus about it, but it at least means they were exposing the deep parts of their souls to one another. They were being transparent.

They're very transparent in that last interaction where David is confiding in Jonathan. At the end of it, they're weeping and kissing together. These guys are military war heroes, political figures, weeping and kissing and letting each other in. Could you imagine *our* political figures doing this as friends? It's very unusual, but we see that they're doing this. This is an ingredient in their friendship.

Kids are doing this all the time. Kids are letting each other in all the time. They're starting friendships a lot better than us as adults. Like my daughter. I have a 3-year-old. I love her to death, but she is letting people in all the time. We're in the Panera parking lot, and she's running away. I'm like, "Hey, it's dangerous. Don't run..." This happens all the time. "Don't run away in the parking lot or you're going to have a consequence. No Daniel Tiger. You can't watch Daniel Tiger for the rest of the day."

She probably wasn't going to watch it anyway, but she has big feelings about it. "Oh no! I want to watch Daniel Tiger!" She's crying. She's screaming at the top of her lungs. She doesn't have the capacity or the filter to not be transparent, but we as adults... Oh, we're really good at it. We're really good at not being transparent, but to the extent we're doing this, we're not good friends, because friends let each other in.

Why don't we do this? I'm going to ask this question kind of a lot in this section, because I think it's helpful for us. I'm really bad at this, and I think a lot of us are really bad at this, opening up, even with our closest friends. Why don't we do this? Well, first, the consumer mindset. We're selling. "I'm a good time, and I want you to pay me by liking me. I'd rather you like fake me than real me." The consumer mindset. That's not a real friendship.

We're also doing this, I think (this one is a little darker, but I think this is a reason), because we like how it feels when we sense that somebody is jealous of us. We like

that. We don't talk about it, but if we sense that somebody is looking at us and thinking, "Oh, *that* guy. He looks like he has it all together. It looks like he has a great walk with the Lord, great family, good job..." Whatever the case may be. "I wish I could trade my life with *that* guy's life."

If we sense that, we like how that feels. That's not friendship. Friends don't do that. Friends aren't seeking to impress each other. Jonathan and David are not doing this in their friendship. Friends let each other into their deepest thoughts and feelings. They let each other into their decision-making process. We see David do this with Jonathan. He has a decision to make about how to handle Saul, and he goes to Jonathan about it.

It's not just, "Hey, comment on this decision-making process." They actually make a plan together about how to handle Saul. Friends let each other in on their decision-making process. I think we don't do this a lot of times because we just don't want other people to know we lack wisdom. We just don't want other people to know, "Hey, I have no idea what's going on." We'd rather roll the dice and see if it works out for us.

How are we doing this? I think we're doing this all the time, but here are a couple of examples. I think one place is some of you have an elaborate decision-making process about a romantic partner or the process of how to identify and date romantic partners. It's elaborate. It's well thought out. You're executing it, and no one has a clue the criteria and how you're doing that.

Are you making good decisions? I hope so, but I don't know. That's kind of the point. Nobody knows. I hope so. It's possible that the butterflies in your stomach, the way that person makes you feel, might be at a conflict of interest with what's actually good for you, so it would be helpful to let in some good friends to that process. Just let them in. Just talk to them about it.

Another place I think we do this... Oh man. We're doing this all the time. The older we get, we're doing this all the time. Money. Immense secrecy around money. The opposite of transparency is secrecy. We're doing this all the time. For example, some of y'all just bought a bigger house or bought a new car on a max leveraged car loan or are financing some extent of your lifestyle on credit card debt.

Am I saying, "Wrong, wrong, wrong"? No, I'm not saying that. But how do you know if it's wrong? Is it just you and your brain trying to figure it out and trying to do it? If you're keeping that process completely secret for your entire life... Things in a secret garden tend to grow mutant. They tend to grow in a bad direction eventually.

This leads us to the last way friends let each other in. Friends let each other into their flaws. David is doing this to Jonathan. He's like, "Hey, your dad is trying to kill me. Have I done something wrong? Tell me. I want to know. Have I done something wrong?" This is confession and accountability.

Hebrews 3:13 is such a helpful verse. This is such a good verse. It says, "Exhort one another daily, lest you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Listen to this. This is so important. This verse implies that if we're not talking to each other about how we're doing, our sin is growing up and we don't know. That's the deceitfulness part. "Lest you be hardened by the deceitfulness of your sin." Lest I be hardened by my sin.

Things that are secret, things that are not talked about, tend to grow mutant. It's like... Have you guys seen *Stranger Things*? Anybody? Two people. I'm sure more than two people have seen it. Anyway, in *Stranger Things*, season 2, Dustin has that cute little pet, Dart. It's not a cute pet. Right? But he thinks it is. He's feeding it candy bars, and he's keeping it secret in his room, but it's a Demogorgon.

It grows up into a monster. It eats his cat. That's not a cute pet. Some of us have sin in our lives that we think is a cute pet. We're feeding it in our room, and nobody knows, and it's growing up. It's not going to be good for us. So, what would be a helpful thing to do about that? Exhort each other. I would recommend giving out what I'm going to call *hunting licenses*.

Guys, if you have a friendship where you feel like you can do this, it's so valuable. Don't give it up. Giving out some hunting licenses. This is what a hunting license is. It says, "Hey, I want to be humble enough to admit that in the wild forest of my life, there is sin lurking and growing that I'm not aware of that you might be able to see. You have a hunting license. It's open season. You can come hunting. You can pull the trigger and kill the sin."

Here are a couple rules of engagement for getting these things out. They're dangerous. Right? Hunting licenses are dangerous. First rule: actually give them out. Be explicit about it. Don't say, "Oh yeah. I have a couple of guys. They know they can talk to me about my stuff." No, they don't. Would you feel more comfortable talking with somebody if they explicitly invited you into that or if they didn't explicitly invite you in? Obviously, if they did. So actually give them out. That's the first rule.

Second rule: when a friend pulls the trigger, you don't get to be like, "Oh, no. That's not what's going on here. How dare you? Don't approach me like that about that. How dare you?" They'll never pull the trigger again. They're not trying to kill you; they're trying to kill your sin. That's a good friend who's willing to do that. You might *think* they're trying to kill you because of how one with your sin you are, as you grew

it up in secret, and it's wrapping itself around you. Your friend is trying to help you when they do that.

I hope not many of us have had this experience, but maybe some of us have, where you have this 10- or 15-year sin struggle that you realize way too late. You didn't ever talk with anybody about it, and it almost blew up your life, or it *did* blow up your life, or it's *about* to blow up your life. I think we can avoid that situation from ever happening. I actually think it's foolproof if we give out some of these hunting licenses and are responsible when our friends come and use them.

Think about David. I wonder if David and Bathsheba ever would have happened if Jonathan was still around. I don't know. Maybe. Probably not. A guy who knew his soul as his own soul probably would have said, "Hey, man. Not good for you. You need to be at war with the guys. That's where you need to be right now." It probably never would have happened.

Safety tip. Transparency is scary. This stuff is hard. Do we let everybody into every layer of everything? No. Absolutely not. The people who get invitations to the lower stuff were responsible at levels one, two, and three in the basement. That's who gets invited deeper into the basement.

Okay. I've thought about how you guys might be feeling at this point. A new guy up here, talking about friendship. Easy. Now, 35 minutes into it, we're like, "Okay. The deep transparent mutual knowing of myself and exposing of myself and the self-sacrificial constancy... I don't know, man. That sounds pretty hard." Some of you are like, "I tried that. I tried to let somebody in. It didn't go great. I'm not doing that again. No way. Not doing that again."

You have the desire, maybe, to be a constant and transparent friend, but you don't have the power to actually do it. Some of you guys are more introspective than others, and you've looked deep down in there. You've seen some stuff, and it grosses you out. You don't want to let anybody else see that stuff, because you're afraid that if they see it, they're going to be like, "No thanks. I'm out of here."

Some of you are not introspective for precisely the same reason: because you have a sneaking suspicion something is gross in there, and you don't want to look at it. You don't want anybody else to look at it. You don't have the power to be a transparent, constant friend because you have not experienced transparent, constant friendship. You haven't been on the other side of it where somebody gets close to you, and they see it, and they stay.

This is only possible... You guys know where I'm going with this. This is only possible fully, completely with one person, and his name is Jesus Christ. Some of you don't know him. I want to tell you about him. Jesus Christ gets close. When he gets close, he sees the gross stuff, and he doesn't say, "Never mind. Gross. I'm out of here." Nope. This is what he does.

He sees all of it. He sees you down there with it. He takes all of it and puts it on his back. He gets on a tree. He spreads his arms out. They get nailed down. His feet get nailed down. He bears the wrath of God for it, because it *is* gross. He doesn't get down. He stays. He's the friend who stays. He's constant. He could have. When it was getting hard on the cross, he could have said, "Never mind. Call in legions of angels. I'm out of here." He didn't. He stayed.

You're saved by the friend who stays. He's so transparent. He's so open to you. I mean, his arms were nailed open. Could they be more open? He's so transparent. He's so open to us. Some of you guys are like, "I tried friendship like that. I don't want to do it again." Jesus is saying, "Try it again. Try it with me. It's going to go better this time."

There's another group of us in here who... You're saved. You know Jesus. He's your Savior, but you don't know his friendship where you need it the most. There are floors in your basement he doesn't have access to. Do you know his friendship, for example, in the car on the way home from your boyfriend's house after going too far physically with him again, knowing he's not the right guy and you probably need to end it?

You're ashamed, and you're just crying and having a hard time in the car. Do you know his friendship right then? That's when he wants to be your friend: right then, right in the car. That's when he wants to be your friend. You're not in the car, and he's not over here like, "Okay. Get better. Fix that. Have a good month. Break up with him, and then we can be friends again." Nope.

This is what he does. You read about it in Ecclesiastes. He walks over, and he picks you up. When you fall down, he picks you up. He's your friend in it. He already knows. Tell him. He already knows. He wore it on his back on the cross. Tell him. Talk to him about it. Experience that level of his friendship.

Do you know his friendship with the coworker who you have feelings for that are stronger than feelings you've had for your wife in a decade? You feel so ashamed. You're a Community Group leader. You shouldn't be having those feelings. You're ashamed, and you hate it, and you kind of love it at the same time.

You're not talking to anybody about it. You're not talking about it to Jesus. He is like, "No, I want to be your friend right then." That's where he wants to be your friend: on the way to the office, at the office, afterward...right then. That's when he wants to be your friend.

Do you know his friendship in these places? You're going to find that he doesn't come over and say, "Gross." He says, "I already bore this on the cross, and we're going to get through this." That's what he says. Would y'all bow your heads and close your eyes with me?

Jesus Christ, before you called us, before we even existed, you knew all of it...*all* of it. Still you loved, and still you stay, and still you made a covenant, a friend covenant with us in your own blood, and it isn't going to be broken. You're not going anywhere.

Help me. Help your church. Help these people. Help us to experience the deeper layers and the deeper levels of your friendship. As we experience it, would you create in us the power to be that type of constant, transparent friend with our friends? We love you. We pray this in your name, Jesus, amen.