

SON OF THE KING

1 Samuel 13-31 (NASB)

David Bruce Linn, Pastor-Teacher

20 July 2010

All Rights Reserved

Late one night I received a distress call from my older son, Christopher. He sounded frazzled and little bit crazed. He was in the basement of the house he and his wife had recently purchased, and he had his head almost inside the business end of his water heater. "Dad, there's water raining right down on the element!" he cried without much introduction.

The back story to this moment of crisis begins when both of my sons were little. I have always been a fix-it kind of guy. When stuff is broken, my first impulse is to fix it. I have a sloppy workbench area in the basement with all sort of spare parts, many of which I pick up on the side of the road. So I had this dream of raising my sons to be fix-it men in my own image. When they would get a flat on their bikes I would involve them in the repair. I did like my dad did when the car needed work, I would just have them sit beside me as I worked on it and talk them through the process.

I was disappointed to discover that the more I tried to involve them the less they wanted to do it. I wanted them to start fixing their own flats and working on their own stuff. I wanted them to work with me when I was fixing things. But eventually they just decided that it was not fun for them and began to refuse. Maybe I was overbearing or controlling or any one of many fatherly faults. Apart from little spurts of effort when they really did not want to throw something away, they withdrew from the fatherly fix-it mentoring process almost completely.

That is why I was so surprised to get my son's call late that night. He had been told to junk his fairly new water heater, and he was simply not going to give in. He paid the plumber for his opinion, contacted the manufacturer, and obtained the replacement part. This part was so deep in the bowels of the water heater that it required a complete tear down to replace it, including undoing all of the gas lines. He had done all of this before calling me. It turned out that he had done the retrofit just fine, including a careful leakdown test of the gas lines. The water was merely some condensation in the flue because of the weather conditions and it soon disappeared.

The reason I tell you this is that I was immensely encouraged and blessed to see my son taking charge of this situation! I had been discouraged that I had not passed on my beloved tinkering and fixing habit, and yet he had caught it anyway. The inescapable conclusion is that my example had impacted my son far more than I had imagined. He had absorbed the concepts of repair and also the drive to avoid going to the store every time something breaks.

This gives us a great insight into fatherhood and manhood in general. Our personal example as men will probably have a bigger shaping effect on our sons, daughters, and other men than anything we teach directly. So what exactly should our example be? In this study we will discover in the life of a Hebrew man named Jonathan a collection of traits that would be a credit to any man. Ladies will discover that most of these traits apply to women as well. They are in no particular order.

MAN OF WAR

First, Jonathan was a man of war. Jonathan was the son of Saul, the first human king of Israel. Saul was a headstrong and ultimately incorrigible father, while his son was the picture of nobility. Jonathan was the heir to the throne according to bloodline, but God had chosen him for a different role in the kingdom. The first word about Jonathan in the Bible reveals him as a warrior and leader of warriors: **"Now Saul chose for himself 3,000 men of Israel, of which 2,000 were with Saul in Michmash and in the hill country of Bethel, while 1,000 were with Jonathan at Gibeah of Benjamin. But he sent away the rest of the people, each to his tent. And Jonathan smote the garrison of the Philistines that was in Geba..."** (1 Samuel 13:2-3a). Jonathan served his father and his country in defense of the land against the invading Philistines. The Philistines were at that time constantly threatening Israel from the south. When they were not actually attacking Israel with armies, they were harrying the land with bands of heartless marauders. In this context, the only honorable thing for a man to do was to go to war in defense of home, family, and country.

As obvious as it seems, this is a hard pill to swallow for modern Westerners. In America we have been lulled to sleep by many decades of having no foreign invaders on our shores. It has been easy in this localized peace to multiply the speeches, articles, and books decrying the male role of warrior. Psychological analysts say that it is intrinsically bad, ruining the home and disturbing the social fabric. Others do a historical analysis and proclaim that the warrior characteristic of men has been the main cause of political trouble in the world. Even the church has become embarrassed by men of war like David and Jonathan, often promoting a feminized view of manhood in its place.

But I ask you: When the drug-crazed home invader smashes in your window while you are asleep, do you think your wife wants you to be to be a negotiator or a warrior? When rioters are running for your door to kick it down, as happened to my family when I was a boy, do you want the man of the house to discuss or defend? When terrorists park an SUV laden with explosives on the main street of your city, as happened in New York, do we want the government to send a response team of social workers or warriors? At moments like those we want and need warriors. Jonathan was a man who not only fought the invaders himself, but who led others in doing so. We need men today who know when to fight for their family, their church, and their country.

Jonathan eventually gave his life for his God and his country: **"Now the Philistines were fighting against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. And the Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchi-shua the sons of Saul"** (1 Sam. 31:1-2). It has been well-said that if there is nothing you are willing to die for, then you really have nothing worth living for.

MAN OF FAITH

Secondly, Jonathan was a man of faith. While Jonathan lived he displayed a remarkable character of faith in the one true God. One day when the Philistine army was arrayed against Israel Jonathan slipped away on a bold plan to attack the garrison of the enemy with no one but his armor-bearer to watch his back. In so doing Jonathan struck upon one of the most profound facts of faith. God is not limited by our humanity. **"Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, 'Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the LORD will**

work for us, for the LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few" (1 Sam. 14:6). If Jonathan was trusting in his own strength for this attack he would have to be considered either extremely brave or extravagantly foolish! Few of us are as courageous as Jonathan, but any one of us can face the risk and choose to step out in faith.

Then Jonathan put out a "fleece," or test, to see if God would grant him victory: **"Then Jonathan said, 'Behold, we will cross over to the men and reveal ourselves to them. If they say to us, 'Wait until we come to you'; then we will stand in our place and not go up to them. But if they say, 'Come up to us,' then we will go up, for the LORD has given them into our hands; and this shall be the sign to us'"** (1 Sam. 14:8-10). How did Jonathan know that God would answer his question this way? I do not know. I also do not think that God communicates to us like this very often.

But realize that the faith preceded the fleece. Jonathan never would have gotten to put the test before God if he was not already trusting the Lord for victory against insuperable odds. The reward of God for such faith was dramatic: **"So the men of the garrison hailed Jonathan and his armor bearer and said, 'Come up to us and we will tell you something.' And Jonathan said to his armor bearer, 'Come up after me, for the LORD has given them into the hands of Israel'"** (1 Sam. 14:12). In the first response to Jonathan's faith the Lord enabled Jonathan and his armor-bearer to slay about twenty men. But the Lord had bigger things in mind. The Lord brought a great earthquake, and in the midst of the confusion Saul arrived with the army of Israel. The Philistine army was taken off-guard and ultimately driven back to Philistia (see 14:46).

One man's faith grabbed hold of the blessing of God for a whole nation! This should teach us not to put limits on what God might want to do in our home, our church, and our country. I am confident that every man faces situations which seem insurmountable. When some trial comes upon you it can sometimes seem that there is no way out. That is the time to walk by faith like you never have before. Jonathan could have said: "Well, that garrison is well-protected in that mountain pass, and the whole army is right behind them. This situation is hopeless!" Instead he launched out in faith and said: **"...Perhaps the LORD will work for us, for the LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few."**

Aren't you tired of living with small thoughts of God, with constantly wondering: *What kind of impact can I have?* Train yourself to repeat the words of Jonathan: **"...The LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few."** This does not mean we should be foolish with our resources, but God is eager to reward faith! He is not limited by our manpower, bank balance, or any earthly limitation. God is looking for men of faith like Jonathan to change the world!

MAN OF WISDOM

Thirdly, Jonathan was a man of wisdom. After Jonathan's taking of the garrison and before the Philistines were driven from the land Saul gave a most foolish order: **"'Cursed be the man who eats food before evening, and until I have avenged myself on my enemies!'"** (1 Sam. 14:24b). The army of Israel walked into a forest and found honey but no one would eat it. Jonathan had not heard the order and did what any wise soldier would have done. He scooped honey with his staff, ate it, and was immediately refreshed by one of the most powerful energy foods on earth.

Someone then told him about the foolish order. **"Then Jonathan said, 'My father has troubled the land. See now, how my eyes have brightened because I tasted a little of this honey. How much more, if only the people had eaten freely today of the spoil of their enemies which they found! For now the slaughter among the Philistines has not been great'"** (1 Sam. 14:29-30). Driving invaders from the land is hard work! Why would Saul make such a foolish order? It is an example of the capricious use of authority. It was an order which had no rhyme or reason other than to prove to Saul that he was in charge.

It was a pathetic display by a man who was lacking in both earthly and spiritual discernment. Even worldly commanders try to avoid capricious orders because it undermines trust in the leader. Saul also lacked even the rudimentary discernment to see that the success of his army to this point was all because of God, not him. Jonathan's remark displays the obvious truth which seemed to have escaped his father Saul. I do not say that one should always speak such an evaluation of your leader out loud, but always be certain to exercise the same kind of wisdom.

Wisdom is the application of truth to life. It requires two things: knowing the truth, and seeing the best thing to do with the truth. We need men of great wisdom today. The trend to elevate individual choice has given birth to a people who decide most things based upon emotion rather than truth. The man of God must be a man of wisdom, seeking the truth of God and seeking the Lord in prayer to know the right thing to do based upon the truth.

For example, when your friend considers running away from his family for emotional reasons, tell him the truth as revealed by the prophet Malachi: **"Take heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. 'For I hate divorce,' says the LORD, the God of Israel..."** (Malachi 2:15b-16a). When you see yourself on the verge of making any decision based upon emotion run to the word of God to reconnect yourself with the truth. Remember this: Your gut does not know the Lord, so do not follow it!

MAN OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Fourthly, Jonathan had a remarkable capacity for brotherly love: **"Now it came about when he had finished speaking to Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as himself. And Saul took him that day and did not let him return to his father's house. Then Jonathan made a covenant with David because he loved him as himself. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was on him and gave it to David, with his armor, including his sword and his bow and his belt"** (1 Sam. 18:1-4). This was not merely the capacity for strong affection, but involved a moral component revealed by the covenant between them.

Many men retreat from such strong relationships lest they be misunderstood in the modern pro-homosexual environment. It can be hard to be friendly when other men are on the hunt for sin partners. I was in a store once looking for hardware, and as I was trying to decide what to buy I struck up a conversation with a man in the same aisle. He was very friendly, but then he began following me all around the store. I finally escaped him and as I was leaving I realized that it was my fault. I had stuck my keys in my belt on the side used by homosexuals in that part of the country when they are seeking an encounter with a stranger. Oy! It makes you want to avoid talking to people, never mind developing such a strong bond as Jonathan and David. But deep brotherly and sisterly relationships are a gift from

God, and we must not let a lost world steal that gift from us.

The fact that David reciprocated such a deep brotherly love is revealed by the words of David at Jonathan's funeral: **"How have the mighty fallen in the midst of the battle! /Jonathan is slain on your high places. /I am distressed for you, my brother Jonathan; /You have been very pleasant to me. /Your love to me was more wonderful /Than the love of women. /How have the mighty fallen, /And the weapons of war perished!"** (2 Sam. 1:25-27). David was a man after God's own heart, and Jonathan was a man after David's heart. I think that Christian men have wonderful thing to recover from our cultural decadence. Genuine brotherly love is a godly thing.

MAN OF PEACE

Fourthly, it may seem strange to say but Jonathan was both a warrior and a man of peace. What a strange scenario he had to face! Saul had disobeyed the Lord so many times that the Spirit of the Lord was removed from him. God sent Samuel to anoint David king even while Saul was still on the throne. This sent Saul into a rage in which he often chased David, his own son-in-law and Jonathan's best friend, all over the desert to kill him. If Saul had succeeded in murdering David Jonathan would have become the next king yet it was Jonathan who entreated his father to let David live: **"Then Jonathan spoke well of David to Saul his father, and said to him, 'Do not let the king sin against his servant David, since he has not sinned against you, and since his deeds have been very beneficial to you. For he took his life in his hand and struck the Philistine, and the LORD brought about a great deliverance for all Israel; you saw it and rejoiced. Why then will you sin against innocent blood, by putting David to death without a cause?' And Saul listened to the voice of Jonathan, and Saul vowed, 'As the LORD lives, he shall not be put to death'"** (1 Samuel 19:4-6).

Jonathan consistently acted as a peacemaker between David and his father. He had to do this repeatedly because Saul was under the influence of a murderous evil spirit. What an important role for every man of God! Jesus said: **"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God"** (Mat. 5:9). Peacemakers are called sons of God because they prove that they have received the very character of God within themselves. All of redemptive history is the unfolding of God's plan to bring peace upon the earth by reconciling his rebellious creation to himself. Godly men know when to fight and when not to fight. When it is time to fight, they are warriors, and when it is not, they are men of peace.

MAN OF LOYALTY

Sixthly and finally, Jonathan distinguished himself as a man of loyalty to God, his country, his father, and his friends. In the final divide between David and Saul, Jonathan set up a signal for David to discover if his life was still in danger. If Jonathan shot his arrows on one side of the rock where David was hiding it was safe, but if he shot them on the other side, it was not. It turned out that David was irretrievably banished from the king's court, and Jonathan remained loyal both to his father the king and his beloved David by arranging this signal. Their parting was a touching moment between warrior-brothers: **"...David rose from the south side and fell on his face to the ground, and bowed three times. And they kissed each other and wept together, but David more. And Jonathan said to David, 'Go in safety, inasmuch as we have sworn to each other in the name of the LORD, saying, 'The LORD will be between me and you, and between my descendants and your descendants**

forever.' Then he rose and departed, while Jonathan went into the city'' (1 Sam. 20:41b-42). Sons of the King of Kings are men of loyalty.

Men, what do we want to be? Jonathan was born as the son of an earthly king, but by faith he became a man of war, a man of wisdom, a man of brotherly love, of peace, and of loyalty. He had a poor example and yet he became the finest of men. We desperately need godly, loving, sons of the King of Kings like him! We need fathers who stick by their wives and families no matter what happens. We need men like Todd Beamer from the Alliance church in Princeton, New Jersey, who said the Lord's Prayer and then, with a group of others, rushed the hijackers on his plane on September 11, 2001. We need men like Dwight L. Moody who was told that the members of his Sunday school class were awaiting him on the streets of Chicago, and he went and got them. We need men like Martin Luther, John Wesley, Albert Simpson and a host of others who believed God and then threw themselves into his work, not knowing exactly what would come, but knowing that our God rewards the faithful.

If you had a good example of manhood, thank God for it. If not, thank God that you have the perfect example in your heavenly Father. You have the perfect example of masculinity in Jesus Christ. I challenge you to be genuine sons of the King of Kings by faith! Your example will inspire others more than you can imagine.

If you have not yet given your life to Christ, you do not yet have God as your Father or the ability to follow Christ as your example. Manly men face the truth—in this case, that we are all sinners who need the atonement of our sins purchased for us by Christ on the cross. Be a man! Confess your sins to God honestly, and then embrace your new commission as a soldier of the cross. Your new life will begin immediately as a son of the King.