



grow. pray. study.

June 14, 2020 “A Time to Step Up” – Rev. Dr. Emanuel Cleaver III

Scripture: 1 Samuel 19:1-7

Questions in this GPS marked with an arrow bullet point are particularly recommended for group discussion. Group leaders may add other discussion questions, or substitute other questions for the marked ones, at their discretion.

Jonathan stood up for David

MONDAY 6.15.20 1 Samuel 19:1-7

Talk about a more-than-awkward situation! Saul, Israel’s first anointed king, was a failure. The prophet Samuel had already anointed David to be the next king (cf. [1 Samuel 15:35-16:13](#)). Saul, in typical absolute monarch fashion, ordered the “pretender” to the throne killed. But Saul’s son Jonathan, the assumed “crown prince,” heir to the throne, stood up to his father and defended David, a man he valued as a good friend.

- Recent events have challenged us to stand up for people we may not know personally. David was Jonathan’s friend, but there are parallels. Jonathan’s act had political and legal costs. “To help one whom the king considered to be his enemy was a treasonable act... To will for another what is best for them, whatever the cost to self, is what true love is.” * Standing up against racism risks having some people accuse you of hating your country or law enforcement. Jonathan did not shy away from that risk. Do you?
- But there was also a personal cost to Jonathan’s standing up for David. King Saul, after all, was Jonathan’s father. “This took courage because those in power seldom like to be challenged in their judgment and those who question their decisions are apt to be accused of disloyalty.” * What ways, in your life or those of others, have you found of standing up for what is right while seeking to maintain relationships strained by that stand?

Prayer: Lord God, give me the courage to stand up for suffering, oppressed people, not just when it’s easy or popular, but when it’s right. Amen.

* Both quotes from Kenneth L. Chafin, *The Preacher’s Commentary Series, Volume 8: 1, 2 Samuel*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 145.

A renewed threat to David’s life

TUESDAY 6.16.20 1 Samuel 20:1-23

In yesterday’s reading we heard King Saul swearing to his son Jonathan, “As surely as the LORD lives, David won’t be executed” (1 Samuel 19:6). But one of Saul’s failings was that his promises only held until his next mood swing. In the rest of 1 Samuel 19, the historian wrote that Saul tried to pin David to the wall with his spear (19:10), kill David in David’s house (19:11) and arrest him (19:20). So David was not paranoid to ask Jonathan, “How have I wronged your father that he wants me dead?”

- No one wrote this history as we have it until at least after David became king, and perhaps long after his reign. The story didn’t just show a strong friendship. It also revealed that David did not become king by devious maneuvers that cheated Jonathan out of his place as crown prince, but that Jonathan actively

stood up for and shielded David. Do you believe how people achieve power or influence matters? Why or why not?

- In verse 13, Jonathan said to David, “May the LORD be with you as he once was with my father.” Scholar John Goldingay wrote, “Both halves of the sentence are worth pondering. The first is a wish that God may prosper and advance David, never mind if Jonathan loses. In the second, the grievous feature is the past-tense verb. God used to be with Saul, which meant that things went well for him. Now God is not, and they do not.” * Are you able to have a “never mind if I lose” attitude when friends prosper and advance? How do you develop that?

Prayer: Lord God, guide me to be fully the person you made me to be. But save me from the jealousy that feels lessened when other people maximize their ability, even if it’s different from mine. Amen.

* John Goldingay, *1 and 2 Samuel for Everyone: A Theological Commentary on the Bible*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011, p. 97.

Saul’s tragic malice became clear

WEDNESDAY 6.17.20 1 Samuel 20:24-33

As scholar Kenneth Chafin noted, “There is a sense in which Jonathan was trapped between his love for his father and his love for his friend.” * As you read from “outside” the story, reading that “Jonathan realized that his father intended to kill David” may feel like, “Gee—finally!” But if you’ve ever dealt with a parent or friend who is “slipping,” for any reason, you may better understand Jonathan’s reluctance to accept the malicious obsession that gripped his father.

- Despite Saul’s cruel, unreasonable accusations, and even his physical attack, Jonathan didn’t shift to angry charges against his father. He simply kept pressing his stand-up question: “Why should David be executed? What has he done?” Has someone else’s anger ever distracted you from the course you aimed to follow? How can you develop the kind of control and focus that Jonathan showed?
- Saul tried to hide the real reason for his anger, saying to Jonathan, “Neither you nor your dynasty will be secure.” Jonathan had already accepted that David would become king. Saul’s real issue was his dynasty, his legacy. How can you avoid hiding from the real reason(s) for your anger (which can be hard to know or express) by trying to make it look more selfless than it really is?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, Saul drifted farther and farther from the path you yearned for him to walk. Give me a heart like Jonathan’s that continues to look for the best while standing up against what is wrong. Amen.

* Kenneth L. Chafin, *The Preacher’s Commentary Series, Volume 8: 1, 2 Samuel*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 152.

** Zondervan, *NIV, Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible*, eBook (Kindle Locations 66778-66783).

Unshakeable friends parted in *shalom*

THURSDAY 6.18.20 1 Samuel 20:35-42

Jonathan had to use the elaborately coded way they’d agreed on to warn David that he couldn’t stay in Saul’s court, that the king was set on killing him. He didn’t try to discredit his father (“the boy had no idea what had happened”), and despite their deep friendship he didn’t sign up to run off and travel with David. But the two friends parted in peace, *shalom*, the great Hebrew word that expressed the deep well-being that ultimately can only come from God.

- Jonathan’s story ended sadly. David valued him far more than his father did. And his life and Saul’s ended in tragedy. “There is a sense in which Jonathan was faithful to his father at a much higher level than Saul could appreciate. Jonathan bore his father’s anger and hostility without denouncing him. He never turned against him, never left him, and died beside him in battle [cf. [1 Samuel 31:1-6](#)].” * Are you able to stand up for what’s right even though that does not always guarantee an earthly “happy ending”?

- [1 Samuel 18:1-4](#) placed the start of Jonathan's deep bond with David right after David defeated the Philistine giant Goliath (a feat neither Saul nor Jonathan had attempted). Jonathan specifically named that as he stood up for David (cf. [1 Samuel 19:5](#)). How easy or hard do you find it to honor and remember other people's successes? How can you learn more about the many ways (too often hidden or ignored) that people of color have made our world better (e.g. the 2016 film "Hidden Figures")?

Prayer: Lord God, lift my eyes from my own prominence or glory. Give me, like Jonathan, the ability to value and stand up for all your children in all the diverse splendor of gifts you've created. Amen.

* Kenneth L. Chafin, *The Preacher's Commentary Series, Volume 8: 1, 2 Samuel*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, p. 156.

There's more—"Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son"

FRIDAY 6.19.20 2 Samuel 4:4, 9:1-13

The story of David and Jonathan had a lovely Biblical sequel. At their final parting, Jonathan said, "The two of us made a solemn pledge in the LORD's name when we said, 'The LORD is witness between us and between our descendants forever'" (1 Samuel 20:42). That was not just nice words. David, secure as king after a struggle with Saul's "house" (cf. [2 Samuel 3:1](#)), asked, "Is there anyone from Saul's family still alive that I could show faithful love for Jonathan's sake?" In fact, there was.

- A new ruler (then or now) often aims to wipe out anyone linked to a former ruler. It's likely that Mephibosheth, limited by his feet hurt in a childhood accident, lived in hiding. He asked David why he cared about a "dead dog" (verse 8). David used the Hebrew word *hesed* (the same word that expressed God's deep covenant love) three times for what he wanted to show Jonathan's remaining son. What does seeing how David kept his promise to Jonathan tell you about his heart?
- Don't you wonder what went through Mephibosheth's mind when he got the news that King David had summoned him to appear? Many preachers have observed that David's act in extending *hesed* to Jonathan's son is an early image of what God gave all of us in Jesus. What feelings does the prospect of facing God after your earthly life ends trigger in you? God offers *hesed* to all of us; only you can choose to refuse it.

Prayer: Ruler of the cosmos, I see a dim reflection of you in the faithful love your servant David showed. Teach me how to trust your *hesed* toward me, and to extend it to others as David did. Amen.

A double-cross, followed by more mercy

SATURDAY 6.20.20 2 Samuel 16:1-4, 19:24-30

One of David's sons, Absalom, led a rebellion that forced David to retreat from his capital city of Jerusalem (cf. [2 Samuel 15](#)). Saul's former servant Ziba, who'd helped David find Mephibosheth, now tried to capitalize on the confusion by painting Mephibosheth as an ungrateful traitor (16:3). After David quelled the rebellion, Mephibosheth told a different story (19:26-28). David chose not to try to untangle this "he said/he said" situation, but exercised generosity toward both men. Mephibosheth ended the story on a grace note (verse 30), showing his appreciation for all of David's generosity toward him. It's easy to imagine David smiling as he recalled the pledge of faithfulness his much younger self had exchanged with his loyal friend Jonathan.

- God's faithful love, we believe, can force even bad situations to produce good results in the lives of those who trust God (cf. [Romans 8:28](#)). In today's reading we see how God's mercy acting through David brought good even out of Absalom's rebellion and Ziba's likely opportunistic lying. And all that began, of course, in Jonathan's willingness to stand up for David even against his royal father's obsessive jealousy and rage. The sweep of this story reminds us that God many times seems to work on a much longer-term time frame than we have the patience or attention span for. In what ways can you already see good

coming from the pandemic and the protests that have roiled our country and the world since March? Can you envision good results that may take longer to develop and show themselves?

Prayer: Loving God, you are always patiently, tirelessly working in my world, and in my heart, to bring about good. Keep me open and receptive to what I see you are doing and trusting when I cannot yet see. Amen.

Prayer Requests – cor.org/prayer *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

Carol Rendina and family following the death of James “Jim” Rendina (husband), 5/14/2020

Brad Burrows and family following the death of Carole Burrows (mother), 5/26/2020

Dennis Weaver and family following the death of Dean Weaver (father), 6/1/2020

Kelli Bauer and family following the death of Sandy Luft (mother), 6/3/2020

Judy Baker and family following the death of Donald J. Larson (father), 6/4/2020

Cinda Bowers and family following the death of Wendell Sisk (uncle), 6/5/2020

Patricia (Pat) Dunnavant and family following the death of Ken Cassity (brother), 6/6/2020

Robert Dye and family following the death of Amanda Dye (daughter), 6/6/2020

Melissa Scott and family following the death of Gary Madson (father), 6/7/2020

Jamie Swain and family following the death of Bonnie D. Swain (mother), 6/7/2020