

## Who is Your Father? – 1 Samuel 20:1-42

### Introduction:

I often tell the story about how I moved twelve times in the first twelve years of my life. That took us to at least seven different communities and sometimes more than one house in a community. As a boy, and even to my teen years, I never thought anything about this. Then as an adult I started to ask “Why so many moves?” My initial research revealed my father’s quest for a piece of land, and a job secure enough to care for the family and purchase property. Later I discovered some of the moves were prompted by the personality of my father. He was uncompromising in his stand for doing what was right, and in some of the small communities his bosses did not appreciate that stand. This resulted in a loss of job, which necessitated another move.

On reflection, I realize that as a teen I did not know as much about my father as I thought I did. Now things make sense as mom explains the reasons for our moves, and what my father was like (He died when I was eighteen years old).

In our passage, Jonathan thinks he knows his father. Yet through a series of tests he discovers he was completely wrong about his father and his intentions. Not knowing his father led to great danger.

If people misunderstand what our Heavenly Father is like it also can have serious consequences. King Saul revealed he was not to be trusted. Our Heavenly Father is quite the opposite. David understands the heart of the Heavenly Father, and our passage helps us trust God more.

### Two Differing Opinions – 1 Samuel 20:1-3

1. David seeks out his friend and covenant partner, Jonathan, and asks him some important questions. What are they? What is David feeling? (v. 1)
2. What is Jonathan’s response to David’s opinion of King Saul’s intentions? What reason does he give for his opinion of the situation? (v. 2)

3. Why does David think Jonathan does not have a true picture of what is happening in regards to King Saul and David? (v. 3) What is David's opinion of his situation in regards to the king?

### **The Commitment – 1 Samuel 20:4-23**

4. What is Jonathan's commitment to David according to verse 4?
5. What is David's plan to reveal the heart of the king towards him (vss. 5-7)? How will David and Jonathan know the heart of the king?
6. What do we learn about the character of David in verse 8? What is his attitude towards Jonathan?
7. Jonathan pledges his loyalty to David by saying he will do what (v. 8)?
8. In verse 10 David asks a very practical question. What is it?
9. Why might Jonathan have taken David out to the field (v.11)?
10. Jonathan pledges to tell David what the situation is with his father. Something is revealed in verse 14-15 about what Jonathan thinks the future will hold. What is it? What request does Jonathan make of David?
11. What do David and Jonathan do in verse 17? Is this important?
12. What is Jonathan's plan as to how he will send a warning to David in regards to the attitude of the king (vss. 18-22)?
13. What does Jonathan do in verse 23?

### **The Reaction of the King – 1 Samuel 20:24-34**

14. Where was David when the feasting began for the new moon festival (v. 24)? Where was the king?

The beginning of a new month or moon was always celebrated by special sacrifices, followed by feasting, at which the head of a family expected all its members to be present. David, both as the king's son-in-law and a distinguished courtier, dined on such occasions at the royal table, and from its being generally known that David had returned to Gibeah, his presence in the palace would be naturally expected.<sup>1</sup>

15. In verse 25 we get a partial list of people at the feast with the king for the new moon festival. Who is there? Who is Abner? (note his location)
16. King Saul was able to overlook David's absence the first day. What reasoning does Saul have for David's absence (v. 26)?
17. On the second day of the festival, when David is still absent, King Saul now is looking for answers. Who does he turn to for answers (v. 27)?
18. In verses 28-29 Jonathan gives the reason (supposed) as to why David was not at the table. What reason is given the king?
19. In verse 29 Jonathan's response to the king may have betrayed David's intentions. Jonathan says David said, "let me get away to see my brothers." The word used here, *malat*, suggests someone who is running away or fleeing trouble. How does King Saul respond to Jonathan's explanation (v. 30)?
20. What is the king's response to his own son (v. 30)? How might that have affected Jonathan?
21. In verse 31 King Saul reveals his plans for David and why. What is his plan and why is this the direction he plans to go?
22. Jonathan asks a simple question of his father, "What wrong has David done?" Instead of an answer, what does the king do (v. 33)?
23. What does Jonathan now know about his father? What is Jonathan's response to his father's attitude to David (v. 34)?

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<sup>1</sup> Jamieson, R., Fausset, A. R., & Brown, D. (1997). [\*Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible\*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 188). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

## **A Sad Farewell – 1 Samuel 20:35-42**

24. The next day, as pre-arranged, Jonathan heads to the field to deliver the message to David. Who does Jonathan bring with him? (vss. 35-36) Why?
25. In verse 37-39 Jonathan sends a message to David. What is the message?
26. With the servant boy gone, David comes out of hiding. What does he do in response to the message he has received from Jonathan? (v. 41)
27. Jonathan reminds David one more time of the covenant they made with each other (v. 42). What was the covenant?

### **Conclusion:**

“A true friend is someone who stays behind for you when everyone else is leaving.” Jonathan was a true friend to David. When the king was pursuing David to kill him, Jonathan put his own life on the line to protect his friend. In the process Jonathan discovers what his father is really like, and what his father’s intentions are, both for David and Jonathan. His father would not change his mind about David, no matter what Jonathan said. What a sad day for Jonathan as he saw what his father was really like.

Meanwhile we see David trusting God to protect him and guide him. Despite King Saul’s designs to destroy him, David is kept safe by the people God brought into his life. People like Jonathan, a most unlikely ally. God would be his “refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.”

Through David’s relationship with God we get a glimpse of the Heavenly Father. We see that the God of Israel is the God Jesus taught us to call “Our Father who art in Heaven.” Unlike the unpredictable gods of the pagan nations around them, the God of Israel shows “unfailing love” to His children. Once again we see that though the focus may be on David, the main character is still God in these history accounts of Israel.