Preschool–Grade 6

David and Jonathan

Sunday School Lesson for Preteens (Ages 11–12), 45–60 minutes

Main point: A true friend is faithful at all times: Jonathan kept his covenant with David even when it cost him his father's favor and his own claim to the throne.
Bible passage: 1 Samuel 18–20. Students read 1 Samuel 18:1–4, 20:1–4 and 20:35–42 out loud themselves.
Memory verse: "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." *Proverbs 17:17 (KJV)* and "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." *John 15:13 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each student, paper or a notebook and a pen for each student, a whiteboard and a marker, and one take-home sheet for each student.
Before class: read 1 Samuel 18–20 and 23:16–17. Write both memory verses on the board. Decide who reads which verses.

1. Opening game: What Makes a True Friend? (5–10 minutes)

Write on the board: *A true friend is someone who...* Students call out endings, and you write them all. Then each student picks the one they think matters most and says why. Say: "Keep this list. By the end of class, we'll see how many of these Jonathan did for David, and what it cost him."

2. Bible story: Students Read It (15 minutes)

Read out loud: 1 Samuel 18:1–4. Old words in this passage:

- **knit** (18:1): tied together; **loved him as his own soul**: cared about him as much as he cared about himself
- **covenant** (18:3): a serious promise made before God
- **stripped himself of** (18:4): took off; **girdle**: a belt

Tell the next part in your own words: David behaved himself wisely, and the LORD was with him (18:14). But when the women sang, "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (18:7), Saul was very **wroth**, very angry, and "eyed David from that day and forward" (18:9). He cast a javelin at David, but David escaped (18:11). Saul told Jonathan and all his servants to kill David (19:1). Jonathan warned David, then spoke good of him to Saul: David had not sinned against him (19:2–5). Saul listened for a while (19:6), but later threw his javelin at David again, and David fled (19:10).

Read out loud: 1 Samuel 20:1–4. Old words in this passage:

- **iniquity** (20:1): wrongdoing; **seeketh my life**: is trying to kill me
- **God forbid** (20:2): that will never happen; **grace in thine eyes** (20:3): your favor, your friendship
- **whatsoever thy soul desireth** (20:4): whatever you want

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Tell the middle in your own words: David would hide in the field during the new moon feast (20:5). Jonathan and David renewed their covenant in the name of the LORD, and Jonathan asked David to show the kindness of the LORD to his house forever (20:14–17). The signal: David waits by the stone Ezel, Jonathan shoots three arrows, and what he tells the lad gives David the answer (20:19–22). At the feast, Saul said that as long as David lived, Jonathan would never be king (20:31). When Jonathan asked, "what hath he done?" Saul cast a javelin at his own son (20:32–33).

Read out loud: 1 Samuel 20:35–42. Old words in this passage:

- **lad** (20:35): a boy; **make speed, haste, stay not** (20:38): hurry, don't stop
- **artillery** (20:40): his weapons, the bow and arrows
- **wept one with another, until David exceeded** (20:41): they cried together, and David cried the most
- **forasmuch as we have sworn** (20:42): because we promised; **my seed and thy seed**: our children and grandchildren

3. Questions to ask (15 minutes)

1. Saul said that while David lived, Jonathan would never be king (20:31). What did Jonathan give up by staying faithful to David? Read 1 Samuel 23:17 for what Jonathan later said.
2. Jonathan honored his father, but he would not help him do wrong (19:4–5). How can you respect your parents and still stand up for what is right?
3. Look at the list from the opening game. Which ones did Jonathan do? Mark each one with a verse:
    - Gave his best (18:4)
    - Spoke up for his friend when he wasn't there (19:4)
    - Kept the secret and the plan (20:39)
    - Kept his promise in the name of the LORD (20:42)
4. Years later David asked, "Is there yet any that is left of the house of Saul, that I may shew him kindness for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Samuel 9:1). What does that tell you about David's side of the covenant?
5. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). How did Jesus go even further than Jonathan?
6. Who is a friend who needs you to be faithful right now? What would that look like this week?

4. Memory verse (5 minutes)

Old words: **loveth** means loves, **adversity** means hard times, and **greater love hath no man** means no one has more love. Read both verses together. Then students cover one phrase at a time and quiz a partner. Say Proverbs 17:17 this week; keep working on John 15:13 next week too.

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5. What this means for us (5–10 minutes)

Say: "Jonathan was willing to lose a throne for his friend. Jesus did more: He laid down His life for us. God loves you, and 'all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, God who came as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). 'Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Corinthians 15:3–4, KJV). Jesus also said, 'Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you' (John 15:14, KJV). We obey the gospel the way Peter preached it: 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) We **repent**, turning from sin, and our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are buried with Jesus by baptism in His name, all the way under the water. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we rise to walk in newness of life, a brand-new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the Holy Ghost, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, which means as He gives the words (Acts 2:4). Jesus called this being born of water and of the Spirit (John 3:5)."
Pray with the students, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

6. Activity: Journal (10 minutes)

Each student writes privately. No one has to share. Write these three prompts on the board:

1. Who has been a Jonathan to me, a friend who loved me at all times?
2. Is there a friend who needs me to stand up for them, keep a secret, or keep a promise? What will I do?
3. Write a short prayer asking God to make you a faithful friend.
   If there is time, invite a few volunteers to share one sentence. Early finishers can do the **David and Jonathan crossword** (vbshq.com/puzzles/david-and-jonathan-crossword).

This week: read 1 Samuel 23:16–18, when Jonathan went to find David in the wood and "strengthened his hand in God." Say Proverbs 17:17 every day.

7. Prayer

"Dear God, thank You for the faithful friendship of David and Jonathan. Make us friends who love at all times and keep our word. Thank You that Jesus laid down His life for us. In Jesus' name, amen."

About King Saul: answer honestly and gently if students ask. Saul was jealous because the LORD was with David and had departed from Saul (1 Samuel 18:12). The lesson tells Saul's javelin attacks plainly (18:11; 19:10; 20:33) but leaves out the details of 18:17–27 and 19:11–24. If students ask about "the evil spirit from God" (18:10), say simply that Saul had rejected the word of the LORD (15:23), and the Spirit of the LORD had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit troubled him (16:14). Don't go beyond what the text says.

About "loved him as his own soul": keep the Bible's words (18:1, 18:3, 20:17). They mean Jonathan cared about David as much as he cared about himself: a true, faithful friendship sealed by a covenant before God.

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